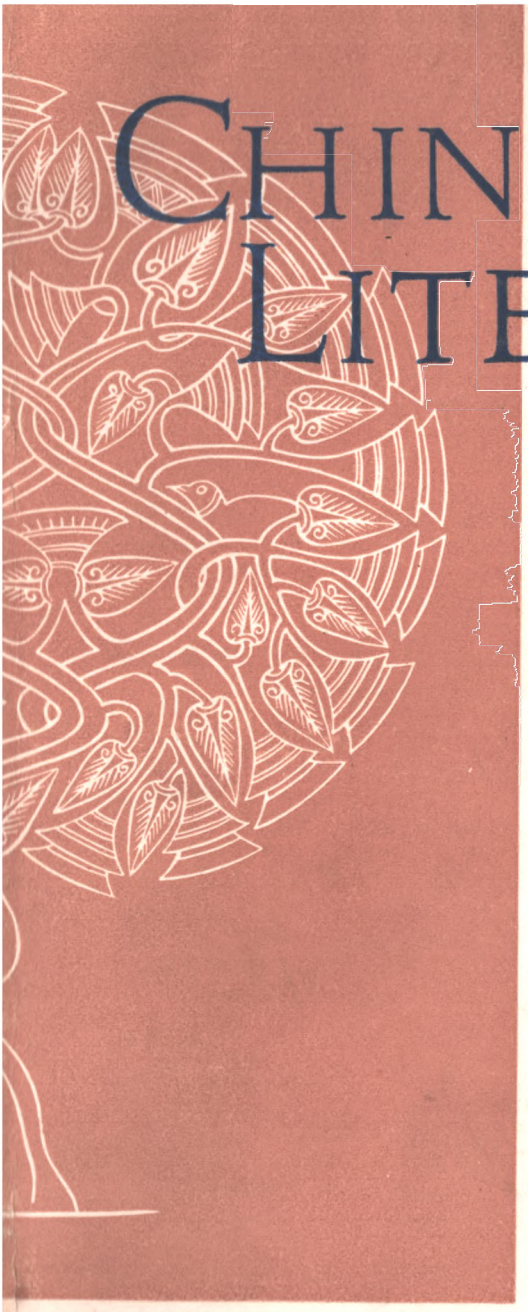

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A VILLAGE ELDER

LIU CHI

I

Night fell in the village under the hills. The sky was clear and a bright moon hung above the winding mountain path. The Milky Way wheeled slowly overhead. The nip in the air foreshadowed the approach of cool autumn days. Insects chirped lustily at the sides of the road. Locally they say they are telling us to "Hurry, wash and iron your clothes; get them ready for the autumn."

We strolled leisurely down the noisy path and crossed a humped-back stone bridge. A group of children were gathered at the cross-roads; they were waiting for Uncle Wu. Under the hazy moonlight, they seemed like a flock of chirping sparrows, busily discussing a certain Uncle Wu's trip to the provincial capital. He had gone to get the new foreign pigs for breeding, and they were wondering why he had been so long, and what could be keeping him.

"I'll bet anything Uncle Wu's coming tonight. You remember that I sneezed? As a matter of fact. . . . I'm going to sneeze again right now."

"Yes, I'm sure he's coming tonight. Who wants to bet on it? I'll wager my rock-pigeon that he'll come."

Who was this Uncle Wu? I asked Yuan Chun-tien, the co-op worker who was showing me round, and he gave me Uncle Wu's full name, Wu Sung-ming, and reminded me that I had already met him. I remembered immediately, because, when we met, Yuan had said, "This is the big brother of our whole co-op—'Uncle Wu' to all the children. He's had a hard life, but now he's one of the most able members of our co-op."

I recalled him clearly now, a husky, medium-sized man, very sunburnt, with a beard. In spite of his sixty-odd years, he was as sound as anyone: his eyes and ears were good, and his teeth could grapple with peanuts and raw turnips without any difficulty. He walked as erect as a young man and strode easily across ditches and up mountain paths. One minute you'd see him standing at the edge of the village exchanging a joke with someone and the next at the

door of the township government office, a document in his hands, saying, "Here I am again. The sun hasn't set yet, but this is my third trip."

He was hard-working and energetic. He loved a good joke and a good talk. You might say his mouth was like a bird cage with a hole in it — he wouldn't keep anything back. Talking was for him a kind of desire, a joy. At meetings he was always the first to speak, even if only a few words, but this was an asset — it broke the ice. He got along well with everyone, and he brightened the scene wherever he went, with his open, candid ways. He had a nickname, in the old days, "Old Pine Resin," which referred to his habit of bursting into flame at the slightest touch of fire. This still had some truth in it; he brought laughter and the joy and fire of life to everyone round him. The whole neighbourhood knew Wu Sung-ming, and all the elders claimed him as a brother or at least a kinsman. No matter which village he was in, he had only to catch sight, say, of an old man searching for pests among the tobacco patch to shout, "My good kinsman, how are you? It seems you haven't joined a co-op yet. Haven't you done any studying on the subject? Don't you find it a bore to work all on your own?" The two "kinsmen" would smoke a pipe together, and share a match in the friendliest fashion. The next moment, Wu's eyes would light on a younger man resting his bundle under a nearby tree, and would break off immediately to shout, "Hey there, nephew mine, I bet you've had a few cups on this visit of yours. Look at that flush on your face!" And before long he would be engaged in a confidential talk with this "nephew."

How was it old Wu Sung-ming had such a flock of relatives? The fact was that the "kinsman" would merely be the father of a young man who had married a young woman from Wu Sung-ming's village; as a member of the older generation of Canary Slope, Wu considered himself a kinsman to the bride's in-laws. As for the "nephew," he happened to be the son of one of the numerous old men who addressed Wu Sung-ming as brother and with whom Wu often drank a cup of wine. Wu and his horde of "relatives" had neither the same family name nor even belonged to the same village; they were not real kin, not even distant cousins.

As Old Wu went on his way, he would often stop in one family or another to have a couple of bowls of noodles. He would gulp them down, wipe his mouth and say, "I must be going, you know. Your two bowls of noodles have cost me about a mile. Save your meat dumplings for my next visit. I must get to the district office to deliver an official paper — an extremely important and urgent one." Chuckling and shouting farewells, he would leave on that note, go on a bit further, and then stop at yet another "kinsman's" house.

Here he might be after something for the co-op stables. He would come to the point quickly and if this "kinsman" should hesitate or look a little reluctant, Wu Sung-ming would promptly pounce on him for backwardness. "Come now, my dear kinsman," he would say, indignantly. "You must know we are taking the socialist road. Are you afraid the co-op won't be able to return this little thing to you? Why, we shall be having tractors soon, and you know what that'll cost! I hear in confidence that the government's going to lend us the most up-to-date farm tools. . . ." He would go on about the efficiency of the new farm tools until he had cajoled the "kinsman" into eagerly bringing out whatever it was Wu had come to borrow.

Yes, I remembered Uncle Wu! His had been a long hard way, before he became what he was today. The older people in the village all knew the story of his life.

Yuan Chun-tien asked me to sit down and, puffing at his home-dried tobacco, began to tell me the story of Wu's life. He too was waiting to welcome Wu. As a leading official of the co-op, he was even more eager than the children to see the old man and see the foreign pigs he was bringing back.

Wu was an orphaned child. In his youth, he seemed condemned to remain a poor bachelor. He did odd jobs in the orchards, or worked as a hired farmhand, or a cowherd. He learned to sing clapper ballads as another way of making a few coppers. He was good at this, and during slack days in the fields learned many a tune. He had a remarkably clear voice and handled the clappers well; his ballads fascinated the women and his clappers attracted all who passed by. But he only did this when work was slack. When ploughing and harvesting came round, he abandoned his art for field work, or any other job that was going, watching the orchard, keeping the fowls safe, or training his hand to a bit of peddling. Thus spring turned into autumn and ten, twenty years slipped by. And although his ballads charmed the womenfolk, and his voice attracted them, he remained a bachelor because he owned no property whatsoever.

Then one summer Wu got married very suddenly to a middle-aged refugee from the plains. She had been away on a visit with her youngest child, and returned to her home to find her husband and other children washed away by a flood. Without friend or kin save for the baby, she had come to Canary Slope, begging her way from door to door. It was Wu who drove away the savage village dogs who snarled at her heels and found food and shelter for her and her child, Little Bud. Always kind and warm-hearted, he took care of her and she, grateful and touched by his goodness, got fond of him, so they got married.

Their married days were good ones. Wu went to the fields every day and she cooked his meals. In the evening she always had the table laid and everything ready for his return, even on the days when he came back in starlight. At times when she was ailing and in her illness shed tears when she thought of the flood which had swept away her whole family, he would come back to comfort her, try to raise her spirits, and play with the child — he always did his best to cheer her up and make her well again quickly.

So it went on for more than six months, until an unexpected thing happened. One afternoon, she woke from her nap at the sound of a well-remembered and beloved voice, and her former husband appeared at the door. A long story followed: when the flood came he and their three children had clung to a piece of door board and managed to keep their heads above water. They were swept away, but managed to return home, asking all the way for news of the mother. Now, at last, he had found her.

Wu's life could no longer run on so happily. He reminded himself that first of all his wife was a mother and had three children at her home; she belonged to them and they had their life. He overcame his own heartaches, told the husband that he was willing to let the wife go back home and said he himself would be no more than a friend. The woman, tears in her eyes, entrusted Little Bud to Wu, and they parted.

Ten days later, unexpectedly bad news came. The reunited couple had crossed a hillside, little knowing that the local inhabitants dared not set foot there. It was where the Japanese soldiers had practice, on live targets. The mother was hit, and died with Little Bud's name on her lips, while the Japanese soldiers laughed in their blockhouse.

Wu took the news in silence, and became the more devoted to the child. As the days went by, as he sat at the same square table for supper with Little Bud, he now laid a third bowl. At New Years or on festival days, an extra winecup was added. One, two years went by, with always the extra place. Sometimes the child would ask who it was for, and Wu would tell him it was for his mother. "When will mother come?" To this Wu always said, "When Little Bud grows up." But mother never came back.

Mother never came back and Wu himself took to staying out till late into the night. Now and then he would bring home a stranger in dark clothes, whom the child was told to call "Uncle Recce." The little one knew that such uncles were secret uncles, to be guarded in his heart, and that he must never mention them to anyone.

So Little Bud kept what he saw to himself. And then he was sent with a message to one of the uncles and was caught on the way by Chang the Tiger and his brother, both of them traitors. Little Bud vanished from the sorghum fields. For three days Wu searched high and low for him, but all he found was his tattered little shirt, blood-stained.

Bitterness and hatred sank deep into Wu's heart and his hair began to turn grey. He became silent and reserved. The neighbours noticed that he sat for long hours on his doorstep smoking pipe after pipe. At meal times he ate at the little square table, still laid for three, with two extra winecups on special occasions. Some time later he learned how to gamble: cards, dice, mah-jong . . . all the varieties that gamblers fancied. He began to be seen strolling towards the blockhouse often, with a dead hare or a string of frogs in one hand. By then most of the Japanese soldiers in the blockhouse had been replaced by puppet Chinese troops, who had little to do all day long; they were at a loose end, and were fond of wine and gambling. When they saw Wu turning up with his game they would be overjoyed and promptly get out the dice and winecups. Wu would sit down with them like an old hand, and was soon chanting, "Four or five, give me a pair; be it duck or drake, I want a spare." Downing the drinks and playing like an expert he was apparently completely absorbed. Yet in reality he cared nothing for the silly game. He was there to obtain information from the enemy and to do that he had to pretend to be maty. While he was chanting, "I want a top one; make it two, three or four . . . " he was quickly taking note of what he wanted to know; and by the same night all the information would be in the hands of our guerrilla forces.

Soon the time was ripe to put a stop to the pretence. The guerrilla forces decided that the blockhouse should be taken by surprise one spring morning. As the puppet troops were drilling outside it, our machine-guns suddenly rattled. The bewildered enemy troops rushed back to the blockhouse, only to find the drawbridge up and the entrance closed. To the puppet captain's plea to open the door, Wu answered from the parapet, "Fool! Are you dreaming in broad daylight?"

The blockhouse was burnt down and the enemy troops taken prisoner, but unfortunately the traitors, the Chang brothers, escaped. Those local despots, dangerous snakes that they were, somehow managed to get away.

At this point my story-teller stopped his tale to put in a few words of his own. "When I came to this village myself," he said, "I went to see Wu often. He would talk about his Little Bud and about the Chang brothers. He kept a scythe by his bed and there

was a spear behind his door — he was very much on the alert. He was always friendly, and would always give me a drink and called me brother. A warmer-hearted old man you'd never have met anywhere, but he would go off into fits of brooding by himself, and at such moments no one could reach him. During the land reform the young people in the poor peasants' association elected him chairman of their club, and this began to put an end to his solitary moods. To us new ones he seemed to change a lot, but to those who knew him in the old days he had only reverted to his real, cheerful self again."

The speaker went back to his story of Wu.

After the land reform, mutual aid and co-operation started in the village. Wu's empty, lonely little yard became noisy and jolly. The co-op started a beancurd mill in his compound and Wu himself cleaned up the yard and cleared the well; just outside his compound, a new row of co-op stables was put up. The mules and horses neighed, and people went to and fro late into the night.

For Wu summer was no longer the same dreary time. His little patch in the compound was all green: the maize grew taller than the houses, and its ripe cobs trailed their bright tassels. Gourds and pumpkins rambled over the walls and the roof, and bean flowers hung thick at the windows. In the old days such abundance would have been too much for the neighbourhood children. Their itching fingers would have filched the gourds and pumpkins long before they ripened. But nowadays the children went to school, and those that were at the age when the temptation to climb the next door roof and pick the fruit and vegetables was hard to resist, understood it was important to protect the peasants' household production. By now no one remembered his old nickname, "Old Pine Resin." The children confidently called him Uncle Wu. This courteous address was adopted by all the children down to the littlest brother who was just learning to speak. As for Uncle Wu himself, he had become more open and more voluble. His voice became confident, and even his beard seemed more dignified.

Uncle Wu was a great favourite of the children, particularly the naughty ones. They hung round him like puppies, their eyes riveted to his face, alert for his orders. Uncle Wu had won this authority and respect among the young 'uns for his help during their hours of need. Most of them had, in attacking a fortress or leaping on an imagined enemy, accidentally overturned their mother's washtub, or knocked a pot or something off the table. Somehow there seem to be invisible hooks on their sleeves at that age! After such calamities they had to scamper out of the house with an angry mother brandishing the broom or the dolly-stick at their heels. As night fell and their stomachs began to rumble, Uncle Wu turned out to be a true

friend. They found shelter on his big warm *kang*, where their tears were quickly dried, while Uncle Wu laid the table and said soothingly, "There, there, don't cry. Just sit down here and eat with me. You've heard me talk about Little Bud? That seat over there is his. He was just like you, a clever, fun-loving little one." And he would go on to tell them a story. The calamity of breaking mother's pot or tub was soon forgotten in the magic of the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid. The naughty child was smiling and shouting with glee before the supper was finished, and the big *kang* seemed a wonderful spot for somersaults. There they could stay until the parents' annoyance had died down, or until evening fell, sometimes, when the child in question was sound asleep, his tousled head on Uncle Wu's soft hay pillow.

"He is such a lovable old man! The children buzz round him like bees. He is as happy as he is good. They do say that nowadays old men get a second youth, and it strikes me that it's true. I can't say I know any others, but I've certainly seen Wu Sung-ming grow young again." My story-teller finished his tale, as moved as I was. He sat for a minute gazing across the field, and then stood up suddenly to look closely at a light blinking up and down across the river, and seemed to be listening intently.

The moonlight lay like creamy gauze on the hills and groves. Fireflies danced round us and the beautiful autumn night rang with droning insects. Shouting with glee, the children began yet another noisy game. Then, clearly, across the river came the smart crack of a whip, and we could distinctly see the light of a torch. . . . A loud rough voice followed, "Where are the willing hands ready to help? The foreign pigs are here."

It was Wu Sung-ming. The children stopped their shouting, and the next moment were off like the rolling tide to welcome their Uncle Wu. One even dropped a shoe in his hurry, but he dashed off nevertheless, shouting, "Uncle Wu's come back! Uncle Wu's back with the foreign pigs!"

II

It was an event that stirred the whole village; old Wu Sung-ming was back with the foreign pigs.

Early next morning people came in crowds to see the wonder; it was better than going to a fair. What marvellous creatures the foreign pigs were, snow-white, with a slight hint of pink. They could in truth be called peach-blossom pigs. They had dainty small ears, tinier than flax leaves, and it was said that they put on a hundred and

eighty catties a year. The largest ones were said to reach eight hundred catties at full growth. Heavens, they'd be absolute monsters! And just look, how grand they were; why, their very trotters were shod in cloth wrappers. . . .

Surrounded by a roomful of visitors, old Wu Sung-ming sat on his brick *kang*, his legs curled up under him. His trip had been most exhausting and he felt a flush of fever. The old man's special method for treating such fevers was to pick some of the mint leaves which grew by the pond and stick them on to his temples. At the moment his whole face, with the exception of a red triangle round each cheek-bone and his bearded chin, was covered with mint leaves. But not all those mint leaves were sufficient to cool his fever. He was stuffing still more leaves into his pipe, and inhaling them with the tobacco. The room was pungent with the cool aroma of mint. It seemed more effective than snuff and whoever stepped into the room sneezed involuntarily. But the old man puffed at his pipe, and called, "Oh, won't someone get me a pot of tea flavoured with dried pinks? Mint leaves are good for fever but not enough for a bad fever like this."

All the co-op functionaries were there. They praised him and thanked him and listened to his account of his trip. He started from the red and green lights he saw in the provincial capital and went on to the hospitality of Old Chao at the provincial stock farm. He remembered, and repeated, every word Old Chao said about their co-op. "I'm not trying to turn your head, Old Wu," Chao had told him. "But really, your co-op has been progressing faster than a doubly-spurred steed. You can see, I believe, what I say by the fact that you're the one to get these foreign pigs to try out and breed from, not to mention the chickens we allotted you last time." Of course all this was merely preliminary chatter. It was only when we got to the matter of the foreign pigs' trotters and how they came to be wrapped up that Wu Sung-ming spoke with real animation and spirit.

"Ho, ho, don't forget foreign pigs are still pigs and pigs are meant to be kept in the sty to be fattened. They're not trotting horses, after all. Now, how far is it from the provincial capital to our village? They say it's a hundred and sixty *li*, but by god, when you add the uphills and the downhills and the roundabouts together, it's a good two hundred *li*, to say the least. What's more, these are foreign pigs. I was told they arrived on a steamship. Naturally they know nothing about rough mountain paths like ours. Just look at them, so white and dainty. You can tell at a glance that the meat is delicious and absolutely juicy. And look at their delicate little trotters. Are they made for mountain paths and long distances? Why, I hadn't got them halfway before they were all limping. What was I to do? Should I continue in spite of the poor creatures' blisters?

As it was, they were reeling and tottering like drunkards; it fairly made my head spin to look at them. Now comrades, we were at that bit of the road where there's neither village nor inn at hand. There was not even a hut in sight. Could I, a lone old man, carry twelve foreign pigs on my back? No! But the pigs were co-op property! What could I say to our members if I brought back maimed pigs? Why, it would be a loss to our very socialist construction. . . ."

His listeners were unanimous in expressing their sympathy over the awkwardness of the situation. One or two whistled in awe and someone said, "No wonder you got yourself such a fever!" The old man sipped his tea and sighed his satisfaction. He went on to tell about his flash of genius. It was nothing extraordinary, he said with quiet pride, to hit on the idea of turning the blue padded coverlet he carried with him into wrapping cloths; all he had to do was tear it into narrow strips. The coverlet was so worn anyway that there was no trouble with the tearing. But the job of putting the strips round the trotters was quite another matter. For one thing the pigs were raw visitors, and not used to good old Wu; it was only to be expected that they would behave strangely, for even human beings feel timid and suspicious in a new situation. Furthermore, they were only dumb, insensible creatures — swine, in fact! They didn't appreciate Wu's good intentions and made no end of trouble. It was more difficult than getting bitter medicine into a rebellious child. They squealed and squirmed and struggled wildly. Wu eventually got three passers-by to give him a hand. Even then they were all panting for breath before long. One of the helpers happened to be a hunter and he was no better at it than the others. He swore loudly. "Dreadful wriggly lumps, these pigs," he panted. "If it was a wolf to handle, I'd soon make it behave! One good stab of the knife, and it'd be quiet, all right!"

"You've got to remember a human being's only got two feet," said Wu, looking at his audience very seriously. "These pigs have got four. How many does that make altogether? Four times ten is forty and twice four is eight. Damn it! I had forty-eight feet to manage. No wonder it used up the best part of my coverlet."

The co-op officials brought dishes of partridge in chilli, and beancurd in shrimp sauce, and half a catty of well-matured sorghum wine as gifts to Wu. They also bought a length of cotton cloth from the local co-op to make a new coverlet for him; as for the cotton-wool for the padding, there would be plenty when the new crop of cotton was harvested. At any rate the old man's *kang* was always warm and the weather wasn't really cold yet.

Wine made the old man more talkative. He had more to say about the red and green lights, and the new breeds of animals he'd

seen in the provincial farm—the pink-eyed rabbits, the goats, and the deer with their long antlers. Then he had to hark back to the foreign chickens; it was from the same worker at the farm that the foreign chickens were sent to the co-op to be reared—Wu had the job of looking after them, too. Now he, the man who had reared five hundred foreign chicks, was back on the subject again, and his words flowed like an undammed waterway. The long tale of the foreign chicks began once again:

"It was at the break of dawn one morning early last summer, wasn't it, that the pride of the provincial stock farm, the foreign chicks, arrived. And weren't they lovely little things! Five hundred of them, all fluffy and white, with yellow beaks and legs and ears. That Old Chao at the provincial farm had told me to mind them. 'You be careful, Old Wu,' says he, 'these tiny things are Italian. I've told you already all about 'em, and how well they can do — all you need do now is to remember the name, Leghorn chicks.' He went on and told me that it's because our co-op is a really good one, a co-op that's going ahead fast, that his higher-ups decided to let us try to rear them and breed from them. Didn't he rub it in, too, that this was a good thing for us!

"All right. We had the honour of the chicks, but who was going to be put to look after these sacred creatures? What did we do? We had an open discussion meeting and everyone, as if with one tongue, put me forward. It's old Wu Sung-ming, they said, who was good at watching the orchard, and Wu Sung-ming who knew how to handle birds; they said I was the one who understood the nature of feathered animals—some even went so far as to compare me to the ancient who understood the language of birds. Anyway, I was elected, and everyone clapped, and shouted, and said that except for me, Wu Sung-ming, there was no one who could do this new job for production. That's all very well, I thought. No one minds a bit of praise now and then, and I don't say I wasn't pleased, but I wasn't sure whether I could do it. But I had no choice, had I? I was elected unanimously and I couldn't very well disappoint the people, could I? I'll do it, I said to myself, if I die in the attempt."

A murmur of agreement ran round the listeners. "That's right." "He took it on, good old Wu!" Eager contributors told more of the story. The actual number of chicks was five hundred, no less; five hundred little Leghorn chicks scattered like snowballs over the old graveyard, with Old Wu, long stick in hand, perched on a tall rock to watch over his brood, clucking away like a mother hen. The chicks twittered and chirped round him and the lonely graveyard was filled with sound.

You know these old graveyards, wilder and more desolate than an abandoned temple. Grass and shrubs grew rampantly by the crumbling walls, in the crevices and beside the grave mounds. Hidden in the tall grasses were prickly briars which seemed to lie in wait to tear the clothes of unwary passers-by.

It was such a place that was now used for the five hundred Leghorn chicks. The high walls made it easy to manage them, and the place itself was a good source of food. By May, when they came, there were all manner of insects, and in June the young crickets came on. The chicks ate all day, very happily, and grew fast. But before long, the five hundred had dropped to four hundred and eighty-five and then to four hundred and fifty. Fifty chicks gone, fifty Leghorn chicks! This was uncanny. Some losses, yes, but not fifty so quickly. Old Wu Sung-ming was criticized for negligence, but he was already extremely annoyed with himself. He borrowed someone's spectacles so as to see what was going on, and saw two chicks chirping frantically and running round in circles in a far corner. When he went over to investigate he found a huge green snake terrorizing them. Off went Wu to get something to kill it with—on his way he found another chick squeaking in the clutches of a weasel, but before the old man could do anything, it was carried off.

One by one the chicks' enemies were discovered. Big hawks circled overhead incessantly, the clumsy kind which is too slow to catch birds and rabbits and usually feeds on dead frogs and snakes. They could get these chicks, though, and cared nothing for the old man's cries. The grass grew fast in summer and greedy attackers closed in on the chickens from all sides. Wu raged at them, and with the speed of despair he got hold of a leather whip and an iron spade. Armed with these he managed, quite quickly, to kill two green snakes, dig out a fox earth with four foxes in it and smoke out two weasels. That more or less finished the enemy on the ground, but the hawks were still a menace from the air. Wu had a long bamboo pole for them, with bells and a piece of red cloth to it, and went into battle energetically with that, but despite all this some losses still took place.

It was a much more complicated job than watching the orchard; the enemy was of a different sort. Mint leaves became a permanent feature of Wu's face and he was muttering curses under his breath all the time, calling down the wrath of heaven on his adversaries, and challenging them to prove themselves tougher than imperialist agents. He found other weapons, a gong, a drum and a shotgun. He also had allies—his gang of youngsters. They made catapults with good rubber bands they acquired, and used sharpened mulberry twigs for arrows. The children were full of resource, beating at the drum, and pounding away on the gong. The graveyard rocked with

noise all summer—anyone might think a circus had come. And they won through. As the chicks grew bigger they learned sense, and knew that they must scurry into cover when they heard the gongs or drums.

They began laying on time, too — three months and twenty-nine days from the day they were hatched, according to Wu's count, eggs began to appear under the gourds. Pullet's eggs at first, of course, but getting bigger as time went on till some were nearly as big as duck's egg. The day came when Wu's Leghorn eggs were featured as a main dish at one of the co-op's celebration meetings, and Wu was warmly congratulated on his good work. The day two of his foreign hens were sent to the county show, Wu was beside himself with pride as he talked to his numerous kinsmen, nephews and sisters. His perennial fever had at last disappeared, and not a single mint leaf could be found on his face that day. He got slightly tipsy, as a matter of fact, and would have gone the whole length were it not that one of his young friends had that invisible hook sticking out of his sleeve which caught the winepot and put an end to further drinking.

"Oh, it wasn't easy!" he wound up with a sigh at the end of his much-told tale. He looked reminiscently out of the door. Two healthy white cockerels caught his eye. "Look at them!" he said. "We reared them, and we're popularizing them all right, aren't we? Why, it's only just over a year ago, but practically every household in the co-op — in the whole village, come to that — is raising 'em now." He grinned. "It's landed me in something," he said. "Since I 'promoted' foreign chick rearing, the folks will have it that I'm the one who can do things, and expect me to work miracles every time. I satisfied them by being a mother hen and now they want me to be a swineherd! Oh well, I'll try, but I must say those pigs know how to be a nuisance! Talk about foreign! They acted so foreign it was fair torture!"

III

Time was getting on and everyone gradually dispersed. Thoroughly comfortable with the sorghum wine inside him, old Wu Sung-ming sat dreamily on the *kang,* looking idly at the neat patch of white window glass. Those children did a good job on that, he mused. They mended that broken pane so well that it looks like a new one with flower patterns on it. The little room was cosy, festive and clean enough for the New Year holidays except for the absence of red paper-cuts. And the beancurd mill next door! Very convenient. He could see the new pig-pen through the mended pane, with

the patch of white Chinese cabbage and the rows of radishes beside it. On the left side was Wang uprooting some unwanted trees with a pickaxe and not far away Young Hsi was trampling clay. And the bean vermicelli mill would soon start operating. . . .

What with the beancurd mill, the cabbage patch, the pig-pen for the new pigs, and now the vermicelli mill going up close by, and the officials from the county and provincial town dropping in to help the work of the co-op and often staying overnight, Wu's place had become the most cheerful and busiest place in the village. The old man puffed on his pipe contentedly. He looked out through the window again and suddenly chuckled.

"Hey, just look," he called to the youngsters just outside. "We've got mills and gardens, offices and a pig-pen! All we lack now is a theatre."

That evening, one of his usual guests, the fourth child of some family, slept soundly by the kitten on the old man's *kang*; next door, the Youth League was meeting in the beancurd mill. Wu sat smoking, his ears listening to the buzz of voices round him and his mind busily turning things over. He meant to sleep, but sleep eluded him. It was not so much that the noise disturbed him but that he was thinking too much of the next day. There were so many things to be done: those pests to be got rid of in the growing tobacco, the maize ready to be cut and threshed, the cotton due to be picked. . . . And then there was the thorny attendance question to be tackled. Some people had been slacking and it was high time to criticize one or two he could think of. . . . It was the job of the co-op officials, really, to deal with all such things, but somehow or other these details kept on bothering Wu Sung-ming, an ordinary member of the co-op. It was an old habit of his, and he would tell himself sometimes, "Must keep an eye on these youngsters. They might easily overlook something. It's my job to keep them up to it."

He stuck two fresh mint leaves on his temples and lay down to sleep. But the next moment he remembered that there were some people coming from the Huanghuapo co-op to look at the foreign pigs the next day. You could count on them being properly impressed by these remarkable peach-blossom pigs; too struck for words they'd be, he wouldn't wonder. He could imagine their oohs and ahs. Let them wait till he told them how fast they put on weight! That was really impressive. Then another thought came in to disturb his mind. The precious foreign pigs hadn't even got a proper name tag on their pen. Ridiculous! Think of the provincial farm: the neat wire fence, the name tags with details, nice clear red characters on a white background, that was the proper way to do things. The old man could not rest on his *kang*. He fetched his writing brush, a few slips of wood

and his pocket dictionary. Looking it up carefully, character by character, he wrote:

"Foreign pig, Yorkshire — full growth 800 catties."

"Foreign pig, Berkshire — full growth 800 catties."

There was quite a lot to do . . . there were the Soviet-bred pigs, the Ukrainian White, the Black Spots and others. By the time he finished it really was late and time to go to sleep. But no sooner did he doze off than he heard a loud snorting from the Yorkshires. The thought rushed through his head that they had broken out of their pen and were feeding in the cabbage patch, furrowing the ground with their long snouts.

"Oh you wretched Yorkshires! Rebelling, are you?" he shouted jumping off the *kang* and rushing out. "Hey, hey, come on back." But the cabbage patch looked serene under the moonlight. There were no pigs in sight and the pen was properly closed. All was still except for a shooting star. The old man came back and calmed himself down with a pipe. But before long he was up again, dashing out of the door with only one shoe on and shouting just as loudly, "Hey, hey, come back. How dare you creep into the cabbage patch!"

The old man had very bad nights for a while. The row of four pens was a good job, even though old bricks and tiles went into the roof and the walls, but as it was harvest time the co-op hadn't been able to get hold of a carpenter, so they had no proper doors. Some old bricks and stones had to make do for the moment and Old Wu stacked them carefully every evening and removed them one by one when he let the pigs out in the mornings. It wasn't satisfactory. It was rough on his hands, let alone keeping him awake. He expected the pigs to discover the makeshift nature of the doors, organize themselves and batter them down one day. And it would be a calamity if they ruined the pens and ate the fresh young cabbages.

Indeed, Old Wu lost so much sleep since the arrival of the foreign pigs that his eyes became bloodshot and his legs began to get tired and aching. It didn't stop him tending the pigs with great devotion in the day-time, scrubbing them down and herding them to the best feeding grounds, but he got no gratitude from his charges. Pigs were pigs, in fact. They snorted and fussed and ran here and there, squealing, as though expecting a dreadful end at any moment. They seemed to have no remembrance at all of Old Wu's kindness, wrapping their clumsy trotters up in his own cotton strips. The poor old soul ran himself out of breath behind the ungrateful creatures. Long before the day was over his legs ached from the dashing up hill and down. And then to crown it with wakeful nights, and never a well-earned rest! While all the village was quiet and undisturbed, save for the noiseless fireflies flitting across the wall, he would often

Portrait (painting in the traditional style) by Li Hu

be up three or four times, lighting his pipe and listening for alien sounds.

There was of course another, deeper reason behind this. It wasn't always the Yorkshires he was worried about. He'd get out in a hurry, with only one shoe, and turn back to fetch the sharp spear which he still kept behind the door. Out in the night again, he would strain his ears, listening, and then mutter, "Bastards! Don't you dare harm anyone now!"

Bastards? The Chang brothers of course. Old Wu hadn't forgotten them, and still kept a sharp eye open for them. Hadn't they been spies and traitors, working for the Japanese? Murderers, no less, they were. Little Bud's blood was not the only stain on their hands by a long way. Why did they get away, why? They came back all right, when the Kuomintang army attacked the liberated area; Chang the Tiger appeared as a lieutenant in the landlords' brigade. They were caught once again, and tricked the two district militiamen who were escorting them back. They were being brought back to Canary Slope so that the peasants could settle their accounts with them, and on the way Chang the Tiger begged to be allowed to stop and relieve himself just as twilight fell. However, the rascal pretended to be in pain with a belly-ache, groaning and refusing to move, while all this time he was working his hands loose. He got them free, jumped at one of the unsuspecting militiamen and snatched away his gun. His brother joined in. In the scuffle one of the militiamen was killed and the other wounded while the two Changs got away.

Nothing definite had been heard of them since then, though there were several rumours — that they were in hiding in some big city, pretending to be pedlars, or that they had been seen selling savoury fried cakes on a certain street in Tientsin. But there was nothing to go by. One summer night a dark shadow was said to have slipped into the village and a militiaman fired a warning shot. A search was made but nothing untoward was found. The only evidence discovered at daybreak was a few footprints by the village wall.

But old Wu Sung-ming had never relaxed his guard, and since that night he was even more vigilant. The shouts and curses he aimed at the Yorkshires were his way of saying to any dark suspicious shadows which might be lurking nearby, "Don't think you can do anything now. Someone here is awake, and on the watch for you."

But nowadays he rarely brought out Little Bud's blood-stained shirt to brood over. The autumn nights were long, but his room was always cheerful. There were usually one or two children on his warm *kang* and their merry laughter and red-apple cheeks delighted him, and helped to obliterate the shadow of the stains on the little shirt.

"What a fine little one," he would mutter over one of the sleeping cherubs. "He'll make a really smart tractor driver some day." He would smoke on peacefully under the lamp, remembering first to pull some cover over the sleeping children. Yet it was for the sake of these little ones that the old man's vigilance was heightened even in such peace.

I stayed some time in the co-op, and enjoyed a number of the giant Leghorn eggs. The labour that had gone into the rearing of the chicks came to my mind as I ate, with the weasels, the hawks, the snakes and the drum-beating children. Wu Sung-ming pressed me to stay on so I could taste the meat from the foreign pigs. Of course I couldn't stay till then. I was sure, though, that the foreign pig rearing would be properly promoted in the village and that next year a few would be fat enough to be slaughtered. No doubt many a customer of the supply and marketing co-op would be enjoying the pork from the foreign pigs bred by the villagers before very long, but I don't suppose any of them would taste the bitter hard work Old Wu had expended in wrapping up their trotters, nor his pains in getting up night after night.

Before my departure I saw the co-op finally get hold of a carpenter who fitted proper wooden doors to the pig-pens. Harvesting was nearly over and the militia started night practice. The signal for night assembly rang out every now and then. The co-op had also taken precautions against early frost and bonfires were frequently started in the fields late at night. The evenings were no longer so quiet; something was always going on, and even the foxes dared not venture out of their earths. "I'm sure old Wu Sung-ming is sleeping at ease now," I said to the leading co-op worker. "Yes," he agreed. "He's not getting any younger and really has worked very hard for the co-op. I went in to see him last night and he was sleeping so soundly I'm sure I could have carried him off without his knowing it."

It turned out that we were both wrong. The very next night, the bell for the emergency frost alarm was suddenly sounded. The villagers rushed out to light the fires but before they got going someone discovered the temperature was still five degrees above freezing point. Now who could have started the alarm? The answer was obvious: everyone knew it was Wu Sung-ming, always so concerned about the welfare of the co-op. He must have got up in the middle of the night to look at the thermometer and with his sleepy old eyes misread the temperature, and started to ring the iron bell on the old plane tree.

Translated by Tang Sheng

THE LITTLE SISTERS

FU TSE

It was well after midday when our unit arrived at the place where we were to find our billets for the night.

We had got to a valley surrounded by sky-high mountains covered with pine, larch, oaks and many other trees and shrubs still bare of leaves although spring was drawing near. Through the bare branches and withered grass red sandstone could be seen dotted with patches of snow here and there. It was a beautiful scene under the setting sun.

The mountain stream bed was nearly dry: only at the lower levels were several small pools covered with thin ice. Higher up was no water at all, just a bed full of white round pebbles. Reeds and thorns grew thickly along both banks; they were withered and bare too.

The road by the stream twisted and turned up the mountain, through gorges, out again straight up a high peak, and then turning sharply back on itself. We could see it above us. The high peak, we knew, was the famous Mount Kil Myon, which we had got to climb the following day. Three months ago we had won a big victory there; one of our units had wiped out over a thousand enemy soldiers who had desperately held this mountain, and since then the front line had been rapidly pushed southwards. Today this place was well back in the rear, though it was still under heavy raids by enemy planes.

The interpreter sent by the local government led us across the stream. There was quite a pool here, covered with a thin layer of ice, so thin that you could break it with a finger. We walked over a line of stepping stones. Ahead was a huge dark mountain range, some hundred metres off, across unploughed fields, their last year's stubble still standing. There were small orchards on the slopes, separated by low stone walls.

Our interpreter pointed out the hut where we were to be billeted and left. We went down a path between two of the low stone walls to a hut at the foot of the mountain. As I went I began to search in my mind for my small Korean vocabulary, so as to have words ready

for the owner of the house, whoever it was. Some old man or woman, I expected, or maybe a young housewife. But to my surprise, when we got there, three little girls opened the door for us. For a moment I did not know what to say to them. They none of them looked more than six, and all three seemed about the same age, and all alike, with the usual short bobbed hair, and red, round faces like apples. They smiled when they saw us and shouted a welcome.

"Volunteers! Very good, very good!"

"Volunteers!"

I told the men to sit down and rest outside and went into the house myself.

"Where is your mother?" I managed to say in my halting Korean.

"Gone there!" They pointed to the sky-high Mount Kil Myon. They might have meant that she had gone to her relatives' or to shop —I didn't know.

I didn't know when she would be back either. . . . We'd got to cook ourselves a meal and heat water for washing, and the men had got to get some sleep. The interpreter was gone. How ever would we be able to talk such things over with these little girls?

They stood there staring at me. Of course they didn't know what I was worrying about.

"Are you going up there?" asked one of them—she had on a short red cotton-padded jacket. She pointed at Mount Kil Myon to make sure I understood.

I shook my head. What I wanted to say was that we weren't going anywhere, and we only wanted to stay overnight in their house. This was too much for my amount of Korean, though, and I tried to explain with gestures and some Chinese words thrown in.

The three pairs of eyes stared at me for a moment, then after exchanging glances among themselves, they beamed at me again and the three burst into a big laughter.

The girl in the red jacket suddenly came out with a few words in Chinese herself. She said something about "our . . . " and then said, "we don't know," but it all ended in giggles.

She must be the eldest of them, I thought—she'd have to be considered our hostess.

"You," I said, pointing to their house, "mine," and pointed to the soldiers resting on the ground. "Stay here." I tried to illustrate sleeping by gesticulating.

This time they understood what I meant, though the one in the red jacket, still laughing, made it clear that my Korean was awful.

Then she turned round, suddenly serious, and spoke to her two sisters. I could see her mother speaking from the manner the child adopted, the mother we had never met. I could see in her child a

resolute Korean woman who had undergone much hardship and suffering.

The two little things nodded and began to clear away the things from the raised part of the room, which served as the sleeping place. The eldest sister looked at them, and said something—it must have been to leave more space free. Then she turned to look at our men and began counting them. There was not going to be nearly enough room. She opened a door and went through another room. I could see into it: it was empty and I could not think why she did not suggest we should just go there in the first place. Perhaps they didn't want us to take too much space. Afterwards I learned that she didn't think the other room was warm enough, nor was there any matted space there. Anyway, now that it was clear we could not all get into the first room, she made up her mind and pulled me over to the door.

It was not much of a place, I must say. It did not seem to have been used for some time. It was quite bare, save for a few old straw sacks, and it smelt of mould.

I said it was all right, though, and she understood me, and beckoned to the men to come. She was a most considerate little hostess! Obviously still worried, she tried to express her apologies for the cold bare room, hugging herself to show that she was talking about the cold, and saying, "Awful, awful!"

I called the men in and we began to settle down. The smaller children came and tried to make some of us go into the other room. One of them, in her bare feet, scampered over and dragged me out by the hand, much to the amusement of the men, who, though tired, were very touched.

I went with them, but it was hopeless to think we could all get in there. I decided that two of the most exhausted men should sleep there, though. The children still tried to do their best to look after us, and helped me off with my kit, tidying it up, putting the food bag into the cupboard, and so on. The biggest one showed me where the cooking-pots were, and where the wood and water bucket were kept.

This sweet, practical kindness made me nearly forget my hunger. I could only smile at first. Then I pulled myself together and began to think of making some hot food. I picked the child up to hug her, and then told the men to get going on a fire and boil some water.

The children put their shoes on and came to help, showing us everything and trying to do anything they could, skimming around us like butterflies. We tried to stop them several times and make them sit down, but they just waved us off.

I was splitting firewood when the girl with the red jacket ran up and pulled at my sleeve. Obviously she wanted me to go and

see something, so, still holding the chopper, I followed her—to the kitchen, as it turned out.

It was a cheerful scene. One of the children was showing the squad second-in-command how to light the queer little Korean stove. He had got the wood burning well, and the light flickered over the child nestling against him, and his unshaven face. She was a proper "little teacher." When she told him to push a bit more wood in, he obediently carried out her orders. I grinned when I saw it, since I knew he was one of the quiet but stubborn sort, and it was an awful job making him do anything that he did not want to do. Nice to see him now, being so meek! Just then one of the men, Little Chou, called me.

"Staff-officer Feng, come here, quick!"

Little Chou was smiling all over his face as he tried to stop the littlest one getting right into the cupboard to fetch out their copper bowls. The child was so small that she couldn't reach the back of the shelf, and her legs were dangling in the air. I asked the eldest one to stop her, but she refused with a stern shake of the head.

I went over and pulled the child out gently. She pulled herself away, obviously cross with me, and looked at me with her lips pursed. She said something I couldn't understand and then began to pick up the bowls she had already succeeded in getting. The pile was much too heavy for her, and she caught her foot in a bit of firewood on her way to the stove and dropped the lot. Luckily they were copper and didn't break. We all laughed, and I wouldn't let the big sister reproach her. Little Chou picked the little one up and said it was the squad second-in-command's fault for leaving firewood all over the floor, to which he agreed in good humour.

The eldest child pulled at me again and I obediently followed her. She took me to a cooking-pot covered with a cloth and pulled the cloth off. Obviously she meant us to eat the food in it, three bowls of rice, one dish of sour vegetables and one dish of red pepper sauce. It seemed to be the supper that their mother had left ready for them.

I had a difficult time trying to explain that we had brought our food with us, but I convinced her at last and covered the food up again. Then we went back to the room. The three girls showed us everything which they thought useful for us, always with the sweetest smiles. We got the fire going well and got the rice cooked.

Little Chou came over to me to see about the food to go with the rice. "What about frying that salted fish?" he suggested.

"Um," I said, thinking that we still had several days to go and the fish was meant to be kept for later.

He knew what I had in mind, but said, "Oughtn't we to give our hostesses a treat?"

"All right, then!" I said. "Let's have the fish."

He was encouraged by this, and tried again. "How about opening a tin of meat, too?" he asked tentatively.

That's all very well, I thought. I gave him an inch and now he wants a foot! But before I said anything, he added hurriedly, "Only one tin, for them, not for us at all."

". . . All right!" I said, as though I was grudging it. Heaven knows I wasn't — I was in full agreement with him.

When the food was ready we ate outside under the eaves, with the special dishes set aside for the children. The second-in-command thought it was not enough, so he took some from our dishes to put with it. "That's right! Give them more!" the men said approvingly.

But by now our little guests had run over to the low stone wall, under the peach trees and begun to sing, first only broken phrases, and then a song in unison. When they finished one they discussed what to sing next and decided on the *March of the Chinese People's Volunteers.*

Spirit high, stout of heart,
The Yalu River we cross. . . .

They followed it with the *Bright Sky over the Liberated Area* and *We, the Workers, Have Strength.*

They were trying to sing them in Chinese for us, but they were not at all sure of the words, and those they knew they mispronounced, so we could only guess from the tune what they were singing, but they kept on very sweetly, and were quite unself-conscious about it.

"Some of our soldiers must have taught them," said Little Chou, who had gone over to them. "They're very clever, the little devils!"

"Who are you calling little devils?" said the squad second, disapproving of the expression. "D'you think you're so much better than them, eh? You'd much better see if we can't get them to eat something."

The men agreed vigorously and there was a general rush over to the children.

The children laughed and jumped down into the corn stubble on the further side of the wall, dodging being caught. Finally, one after another, they were captured and carried over to the house. They were a bit shy in the beginning but soon began to eat happily.

Then the eldest sister discovered that their dishes were different from ours. First she asked us to eat with them, but Little Chou went over, his mouth full, and said: "Don't you like this? Do have some."

The eldest child said something to the other two and they each picked up a dish and came over to our ring.

What could we do? We couldn't push them away. I started to say something, and Little Chou guessed what it was. "Let's open another tin!" he said promptly, to the great satisfaction of the men.

The squad leader stealthily opened a bottle of wine, took a mouthful and held it out to us saying: "Come on!"

I could not tell you how long we took over supper. We were all intent on seeing that the children had a good meal.

Afterwards they insisted on helping to wash the dishes. When it was all cleared away Little Chou and several of the others asked the children to dance for us.

As serious as ever, the eldest sister became the "director," and after a little discussion they began to put on their make-up by the stone wall. It is a Korean custom that when a girl is putting on make-up, she should be surrounded by other girls so as not to be seen by the audience, and they kept to this. Their make-up was nothing more than a package of powder which they found in their mother's wooden trunk which they dabbed on with a piece of cotton-wool. When they came out to the "stage" their little faces were as white as lime. They had wanted to search for proper costumes, but we wouldn't let them.

The performance began, starting with some Korean dances which we had already seen somewhere else, but they went on to some we knew nothing about. Solemn little things! They were as self-possessed as grown-up girls, and they danced as seriously as if they were on a real stage. After each dance finished they put their heads together to discuss the next, and we had to wait until they were ready. We were an enthusiastic audience, and encored them every time.

Dusk falls very early in the mountains. The last rays of the setting sun were on the opposite mountain tops, and the moon began to show through the tangled branches of the trees. The valley was still and quiet.

None of us will ever forget these three children dancing so gracefully in the moonlit valley. Their piping little voices, their childish movements under the peach branches, their self-possession. . . .

Suddenly there was a loud roar of aeroplanes from the mountains to our left, a roar which filled the whole valley. The next minute two fighter planes came low over us, so low that we could clearly see the smoke from their exhaust.

The three children were terrified and ran to us. The youngest one, trembling with fear, clung to the squad second. I called to the men to take the children and pick up what we could and take cover under the trees.

I stood under a pine tree with the biggest sister in my arms. She was trembling and burying her head in my shoulder. I could see

one aeroplane against the sky, machine-gunning up on the peak of Mount Kil Myon.

What are they raiding up there? Had we got some troops there? I worried as I watched, and then more enemy planes came up, and we could hear bomb explosions.

"They must have seen something," I thought. "I didn't know we'd got anybody up there now."

Suddenly the whistle of a bomb began to sound right over our heads.

"Lie down! Don't move!" I yelled.

Four bombs fell halfway up the nearest mountain. Smoke rose from among the trees and a big pine tree crashed. The narrow valley could not contain such a loud explosion. It sounded as if the whole mountain was bursting. The noise was deafening and reverberated among the mountains for a long time.

"Oh, mother!" cried the littlest sister.

The big sister in my arms leant forward and called to her. I could feel a hot tear trickle down onto my hand.

"Hold her tight!" I said to Little Chou, and then turned to the big sister. "It's all right, dear child!" I said. "Don't worry."

The enemy planes hung about for a while and then left. We went back to the house, but the children didn't want to dance any more. We tried to amuse them by teaching them to sing.

But now they seemed to have lost their spirits, especially the big sister. She tried to help us cheer up the two little ones, but she seemed to be listening for something all the time. At first I thought that they had been scared by the bombs, but then I realized that they were waiting for their mother to return.

She had told them that she would be back at night, I said to myself. I thought of the three bowls of rice ready in the pot, and imagined how she had kissed them good-bye and told them to be good girls and stay at home, and how she turned back to look at them every few steps as she went off.

The moonlight was bright in the mountain valley now, covering the trees and hill-tops with a milky mist; the water in the pools began to freeze again. Still the mother did not come back.

Surely she was a bit too bold! How could she let three such little girls spend the night by themselves in these lonely mountains? Something must have detained her. Perhaps now, I thought, she's already on her way back, coming carefully down the steep hill path.

The big sister broke away from us first. She ran over to the door, put on her shoes and went out. The two little ones followed her out. We were just starting a meeting, and I waited uneasily.

Just as we started we could hear the big sister's voice.

"Mother. . . ."

"Mummy, Mummy," echoed the other little voices. In the silent night the sound filled the valley.

"Staff-officer Feng!" called out the squad leader. The words burst out of him as though he was in pain.

"Little Chou," I said, "go and bring them in."

Off he went with two of the others.

"Mummy!" The voice rang out again a tearful, childish sound. Little Chou came back quickly. "They won't come in," he said. I got up myself and went out. There they were, under the moonlight, leaning against the stone wall, staring up towards Mount Kil Myon and calling their mother in turn.

"Little sisters," I said. I could hear my own voice was trembling, too. "Come in!"

The big sister turned round and ran to me. "We want mother," she burst out, flinging herself into my arms and bursting into tears. The little ones came after her. We picked them up and cuddled them in our coats. They were as cold as ice. Little Chou tried to distract the third sister by pointing at the moon and saying, with appropriate actions, that he would pull it down for her. He succeeded for a minute, but then she turned back again to stare at the great peak, standing so quietly in front of us.

"Take them in," I said. "It's too cold out here."

We went in and continued with the meeting. Three of us held a child each, and rocked them gently till they fell asleep.

When the meeting was over we put them down on their quilts side by side and covered them up. They looked so touching, those three little faces, like three blossoming flowers.

We put the candle out, and lay down ourselves, but I for one could not sleep. The way they had called for their mother, and now their gentle, deep breathing, beat at my ears. The guard outside kept on stamping his feet to keep warm. We had to go on the next morning, and still the mother did not come back. I was worried. Who would take care of the children? What ever could the mother be doing? My head was full of thoughts, until finally the fatigue of a long day's journey overcame me and I, too, fell asleep. I was suddenly awakened by someone talking. I didn't know what time it was. My first thought was that it must be the mother coming back. Then I woke up fully. It was a man's voice. Little Chang, the guard, was speaking outside to someone who had an interpreter with him. Then he opened the door and called me quietly.

"What is it?" I asked getting up.

"The interpreter and the village head."

I lit up the candle as the interpreter and village head stepped in from the cold.

"Don't get up," the interpreter said, "the village head's come here to see the children."

What ever does the village head want to see the children for at this time of night, I wondered. I felt more like telling him to find their mother for them. I sat there, looking at them, despite the earnest request of the village head that I should lie down again. He walked over, looking at the sleeping children, and sighed.

I couldn't help saying what I thought to the interpreter. He smiled bitterly and said briefly, "Their mother's dead!"

"What!" Little Chou turned over and sat up. So did most of the men. Like me, they had been awakened by the conversation.

"Dead!" the interpreter repeated sadly. "Those enemy planes got her on the peak of Mount Kil Myon just before dark."

"What?" "Those planes we saw!" "Why should they bomb her!" We all exclaimed in horror.

"Yes, they got her," said the interpreter. "They bombed an ox-cart. Both she and the driver were killed."

"Oh, damn them. Damn them for ever!" said the squad second, kicking at his quilt. The listening men echoed his words. The village head brushed the back of his hand across his eyes, and looked again at the peaceful faces of the sleeping children. He slumped down and spoke to me in Korean. "Their father was killed early this year and now. . . ."

The room was quite silent for a minute, and then I asked him what was going to happen to the children.

"The government will be responsible for taking care of them. Everybody will be good to them," he answered, adding heavily. "There are so many orphans like them now!"

He pulled the quilt back again over the littlest sister, and sat telling us bitterly of similar suffering the American invaders had brought to the mothers and children of Korea.

Outside somewhere I heard a cock crow and I looked at my watch. It was getting on for daybreak. The interpreter and the village head left; I lay awake till dawn. Now and then the smallest child kicked her quilt off, and the second sister called for her mother several times in her sleep.

When it was light outside we got up to cook breakfast. The three children were startled at first when they woke up, and then again busied themselves helping.

Our hearts were too full for us to tease them and play as we did yesterday. I saw the squad second fondly caress the middle one's hair and Little Chang carry firewood under one arm and the littlest

child in the other. Little Chou was sitting on the door-steps writing something.

The big sister chose me again, pulling me round by the hand. I looked at her apple-cheeked face, her short, bobbed hair, and her bright eyes . . . all the same as yesterday. Poor little creature! How could she know the catastrophe that has fallen on her!

After breakfast Little Chou showed me what he had been writing. He had a little package, and a note, which read:

Dear little Korean sisters,

Remember General Kim Il Sung and the Chinese People's Volunteers will look after you. The Korean and the Chinese people are one family, a family which loves you as warmly as your mother did. May you grow up in happiness!

Here are some humble presents. I want you to have them in memory of me.

One of the Chinese People's Volunteers
Chou Ta-hsing

In the package was a pen, a pair of gloves (which he had had for some time but which he could never bring himself to use) and a towel, one of the kind presented to the volunteers by the Chinese people.

I could not trust myself to speak. The squad second and Little Chang also had presents ready for the children. How should we give them? We decided to put them on the wooden trunk, and leave a letter for the village head with them.

We cleaned everything up, and packed our kit. When the men were all ready in the compound I went back in again to make sure that nothing was out of order. The rooms were all cleaned, the kitchen was tidied up. I went over to the cooking-pot. The three bowls of rice were still there, and beside them were a dozen pancakes which Little Chang had made.

The eldest sister ran over and took my hand. "Are you going?" she asked.

"Yes, dear little sister."

She began to cry. We all hugged them and kissed them goodbye, and took them into the house. But no sooner had we started out than they ran out again to see us off. They stood by the wall in the same place where they had been calling for their mother the night before.

The biggest one pointed at Mount Kil Myon and said: "Tell mother to come back quickly."

What could I say! I kissed them once more, and said I would tell her.

Mount Kil Myon was high, and the small path running up through the trees uphill was steep. We entered a gully where the trees were between us and the children, but at every gap when we could see them we would stop, and call and wave. The three children stayed steadfastly watching for us and waving back. They were so far off now that we could see only the colours of their clothes — a red dot and two green ones.

As we neared the actual ridge we moved into a thick pine wood and the children were finally out of sight. On top of the ridge we came to the highway again, turned a corner, and came upon a ruined ox-cart, spattered with blood.

We halted. No one spoke. We looked at the blood stains and the spent bullets. Little Chou picked up some used bullets and gave me one. I put it into my pocket, gritting my teeth.

Facing forwards over the great mountain ranges we marched on.

Translated by Chang Su-chu

HAPPY ENDING TO A FEUD

TSUN CHING

I want to tell you about the love of a young couple. But before I do that, first I'd better say something about the historic feud between their two villages, so that you'll understand the social background with which their romance was so closely tied.

In the lovely country along the eastern shores of the Wei River, nestling against the dike were two villages. One was called Han Family Village. It had a hundred some families, all named Han. The other—Ning Family Village—also had about a hundred families, and all of these were named Ning. The villages were less than a mile apart; when a dog barked or a rooster crowed in one village it could plainly be heard in the other.

It would have been only reasonable for these two villages to be very friendly and harmonious. But no, not only weren't they harmonious, they wouldn't even allow marriages between them. To explain the origin of this strange circumstance, I have to go back twenty years.

Twenty years ago, Han Pen-chung of Han Family Village gave his daughter Kuei-man in marriage to Ning Kou-erh, a butcher of Ning Family Village. This Ning Kou-erh was a dissolute rake. Wine, women, gambling—he was addicted to them all. His mother was a well-known shrew, famed for her cursing and quarrelling and stirring up trouble. After marrying into that kind of a family, Kuei-man suffered constant abuse. She hadn't crossed the threshold five days when Ning Kou-erh gave her a brutal beating.

From then on, life was hell for the poor girl. There was no end to the blows and the torments. While the others ate, she had to stand waiting on the side. She got only the cold left-overs. Less than ten days after she gave birth to her first child, her mother-in-law insisted that she grind flour. Kuei-man pushed the heavy stone roller of the mill until she collapsed in a faint.

Ning Kou-erh was often out roistering around half the night. She would have to wait up for him. If she was the slightest bit slow in opening the door, he showered her with kicks and blows. Kuei-man was a mass of welts and bruises all the time. In less than two

years, the pretty young girl was tortured into a creature broken beyond recognition.

But neither Heaven nor Earth responded to her pleas. In the old society, who could help her? Even when she visited her own family and told them about it, what could they do? The only comfort her tearful mother could offer was:

"Wives are all beaten until they become mothers-in-law. Stick it out, child. It's bound to stop some day."

But who knew when that day would come? Kuei-man hadn't the courage to face the years of misery stretching ahead. In the end, on New Year's Eve, while her husband's family were all busy making preparations for the holiday, she shut the door and quietly hanged herself in her room.

Now in this region they had a peculiar custom: While a daughter still lived, no matter how she suffered in the home of her in-laws, her family never said a word. But if she was tormented beyond endurance and, as a result, killed herself, her parents would rouse all the neighbours, and they would descend on the in-law's family en masse. This was called "obtaining justice." Strange, wasn't it? They hadn't even a word of advice for the living, but they demanded "justice" for the dead! Sometimes these quarrels developed into full-scale battles.

That was how the strife between Ning Family Village and Han Family Village started.

No sooner did the "bereavement notice" from Ning Kou-erh's family reach Kuei-man's parents than Han Pen-chung rushed to the clan ancestral temple and began pounding the bell. Dong! Dong! Dong! The urgent summons of the bell shook the quiet atmosphere of the Wei River. From every direction, villagers hurried to the clan temple; they soon jammed it full. Then, taking up clubs and spears, they surged forth in a murderous drive on Ning Family Village.

Under such circumstances, there were two things the side being attacked — the husband's side — could do. One was to compromise, to invite the "justice seekers" in and spread a feast for them; then, after everyone had eaten his fill, to accept the terms imposed by the members of the wife's family regarding her funeral, terms so harsh that they usually broke the husband's family financially.

The other alternative was to take up weapons and fight.

What determined the choice was the relative strength of the two contending forces. If the husband's side was weaker, they chose the first method. If they were stronger, they chose the second.

This time, Ning Family Village picked the second alternative; they felt they had the forces to defeat the attackers. Even before

the "bereavement notice" was sent, they had already summoned all their men and posted them on the village wall.

Battle was joined as soon as the Han Family Village contingent arrived, a fierce, bitter struggle, with rending cries, and dust rising to the heavens. They fought from noon till the sun was sinking in the west. Two men were killed, forty or fifty wounded, but there was no decisive victory for either side.

The following day, the two parties concerned went to the city and filed suit against each other in the magistrate's yamen.

Han Pen-chung, a stubborn man with a fiery temper and a brick-red face, was generally known as "Old Red Copper." Now he swore that the Han family would win this suit, even if it had to bankrupt itself in the process.

Ning Family Village was equally determined. Ning Kou-erh had his shady friends, and a shiftless kind of stubbornness of his own.

What about the yamen? Well, most of you know the old saying:

The door of the yamen toward the south opens wide.
A case but no bribe money?
You'd best stay outside!

One day, I would spend the most, and my chances would seem to be improving. The next day, you would be more generous with your bribes, and the case would start turning in your favour.

And so it went with this case. It began in the first lunar month. By the end of the year, the litigants had spent all their money and worn their legs out running around, but there was still no sign of a decision. Finally, the following spring, perhaps because the yamen officials felt they had already squeezed every possible drop of money out of the case, a shocking judgment was handed down: Ning Kou-erh was exonerated. Han Pen-chung was sentenced to five years in jail.

The announcement put the whole Han Family Village into an uproar. The fighting blood of the clan had been famed in the Wei River region for ages. How could they stand for such an insult?

Although they were powerless to change the unreasonable decision, they could let fly with their vengeful arrows at Ning Family Village. That very night, the entire Han clan, men and women, young and old, met in the clan temple and took an oath before their ancestral shrine: From that day on they would cut off all relations with Ning Family Village; intermarriages would cease.

This became a rule of the clan that went into effect immediately and continued ever since.

For twenty years, the severe rule was faithfully observed. Hatred between the two villages continued.

After the region was liberated in 1945, in the new society, their relations gradually improved. But the restriction against intermarriage remained. It seemed to have become a custom, a kind of eternal edict. Nobody opposed it, nobody proposed that it be abolished. People apparently had forgotten it, yet it was tactfully preserved — right up to the time of the opening of our story.

* * *

Of course no rule made by man could wall off the flow of love between young hearts — not with the two villages so close together. As the years went by, quite a few boys and girls had secret romances, even though they all ended in failure.

We won't talk about those. What we want to talk about here is the couple who won victory and changed the relations between their two villages.

They fell in love last spring. The boy, Ning Kuo-chiang, was the leader of his village's militia. The girl, Han Yu-ching, was the chairman of her village's women's association. Both were members of the Youth League, both were excellent workers in the fields, the hearts of both beat warm and strong. There's no need to go into detail as to how their romance started. Anyhow, like millions of other youngsters in this happy era of ours, they fell deeply and violently in love.

At first, they didn't give much thought to the barrier between their villages. But as their love grew more and more ardent, they began to become conscious of a relentless pressure.

Oddly enough, Han Yu-ching was the granddaughter of none other than Old Red Copper, who brought the suit against the Nings years before. He was still suffering from the rheumatism he contracted during his five-year stretch in a dark, damp jail cell. His back and legs ached whenever it rained. Now past seventy, with white whiskers adorning his coppery face, he was just as stubborn as ever, and time had done nothing to diminish the hatred buried deep in his heart. You can well imagine his rage when he heard that his granddaughter was in love with a young man from Ning Family Village!

He rose without a word on trembling legs, patted the dust from his clothes and marched straight home. His eyes gleaming like a baleful old wolf, he prowled round his courtyard till he found a thick club. This he brought to his room and placed behind the door. Then he angrily lay down on his bed and waited.

At dusk, Yu-ching returned from the fields. As soon as Old Red Copper heard her footsteps, he rose quickly and called to her. Yu-ching cheerfully hurried to her grandfather's room. She was very fond of the old man. He had loved her since she was a child. Whenever he had something good to eat, he gave her a piece. Returning from the fair, he was sure to bring her a toy, or a stick of candy, or a toasted sesame roll. And he continued this custom even after she grew up.

Although Old Red Copper had a violent disposition, he never once scolded his granddaughter. Whenever he lost his temper, she had only to talk pleasantly to him and smile, and his anger melted away. She liked looking after him, washing his clothes. Half in jest. the old man often would plead, "Yu-ching, wait till I die, then get married. What do you say?"

Now, hearing his voice, the girl went skipping into his room. But then, as she entered the door, she stopped short. The old man was sitting on the edge of the brick bed, glowering darkly. Without a word, he got up and shut the door, then slowly returned and again sat down on the bed. His wolf-like eyes examined her from head to foot.

"What is it, Grandpa?"

Still silent, he continued to stare at her with cruel gaze, as if trying to read some secret within her. Finally he said in a voice that he held low with an effort:

"Tell me. People are saying that you're playing around with a young scamp from Ning Family Village. Is it true?"

Yu-ching's heart gave a leap. For the moment, she didn't know what to say. Should she admit it? If she did, she could guess what would happen. Should she deny it? But why should she lie? Her love was clean and honourable. Why not have the courage to confess it? She and Kuo-chiang had talked it over: Since they truly loved each other, they would fear nothing; they would fight for their love to the finish.

They hadn't expected the trouble would come so soon, though they knew it was inevitable. Well, here it was. She would meet it boldly. Yu-ching grew calm.

"Oh, so that's what you're angry about, Grandpa? We're not living in the old society any more, you know. Haven't you heard about the Marriage Law?"

"Never mind about that," the old man roared. "Just tell me one thing: Is that story true or not?"

"It's true," retorted Yu-ching proudly.

The beard of Old Red Copper trembled. He rose, seized the club from behind the door and swung it at Yu-ching's head. Yu-

ching dodged, and the blow landed on her shoulder, which immediately began to burn with such pain that her whole body shook. Before she could even rub the shoulder, a second blow landed on her head. Her eyes went black, and she fell behind the door. A third, and then a fourth, blow rained down upon her. The old man was trying to beat her to death.

She leapt up, blazing with rage. Forgetting her pain, she grabbed the old man's club with one hand; the other she put against his chest and pushed. He fell backwards heavily upon the brick bed. Yu-ching wrenched the door open and ran. . . .

* * *

Yu-ching ran west along the main road. The sky was already dark, and the air was cold and clear. Not a soul was in sight. The shadows of houses along the road flashed across her path; locust trees, their dry leaves rustling, fled backwards in fright. She ran so quickly she startled the village dogs; they pursued her, barking madly.

The sound of river water splashing against the dike brought Yu-ching to her senses. Looking around, she saw that she had reached the embankment. Before her was the broad river, its dark blue waters reflecting the twinkling stars. Behind deep purple clouds, hanging in a western sky still streaked with the pale gold of the sun which had already set, summer lightning flickered, illuminating the dark trees and the high embankment along the river.

Yu-ching halted, and sat on the grassy slope of the dike. Only then did she realize that her body ached all over. Stroking her swollen inflamed shoulder, she thought of what had just happened, and she trembled with fury. "He wanted to kill me," she thought. "He hasn't the least feeling for his own flesh and blood!"

She had run wildly, with no idea of where she was going. Now she was in a quandary. Who could she turn to? Of course, the first person she thought of was Ning Kuo-chiang, but she knew he had left yesterday to attend a conference at the county seat. What about Han Kuang-hsing, the village Communist Party secretary? An ex-army man, somewhat hasty and hot-tempered, Kuang-hsing was nevertheless a warm-hearted fellow who was always trying to help others, a man who insisted on truth and justice. But he wasn't home either! Yesterday, he too had gone off to a meeting in the county.

The village head? No, he was a very old-fashioned type. At home, he was a feudal tyrant. When his daughter divorced her indolent husband, he cursed and beat her, forbidding her to ever cross his threshold again. Yu-ching could hope for no support from

a man like that. She remembered his ugly sneering laugh when she mentioned to him, a few days before, that she intended to break the match her mother had made for her with a boy in Hao Family Village without her knowledge.

Analysing the situation in the village, Yu-ching could see it wasn't going to be easy. Although the new Marriage Law had been proclaimed, many of the old folks, and even some of the village officials, were opposed to it, at least in their thinking. They ignored it or made sarcastic remarks about its provisions. A few actively attacked it, using every method they could devise to prevent people from exercising freedom of choice in marriage.

What could she do in a situation like that? Yu-ching was worried.

A strong wind swirled along the top of the dike, flinging dust against her head and face. Trees, groaning loudly, bent and swayed in the gale. Heavy black clouds rolled in from the west, turning the waters of the Wei River darker still and blotting out the reflected stars. Water fowl rose quickly in apprehensive flight. Behind the sombre forest on the western shore, thunder rumbled. The storm was about to break.

Yu-ching seemed unaware of the sudden change in the atmosphere. Her eyes continued staring at the murky water, and she thought of many things — the beating she had received, the fate of other boys and girls in her village. Gloomy Han Kuang-chung, pitiful Han Yu-jung.... The more she thought, the angrier and more determined she became. Yu-ching knew the struggle was not for herself alone. She was fighting to open a road in Han Family Village for all the young people tied down by old feudal marriage customs.

She set her jaw and determined to see the thing through; for herself and for others too. After considering various possible tactics, she decided first to seek the help of the district chief.

In the distance she could see the gleam of lanterns burning in the village. Faintly audible, too, were the voices of the people rushing to get the hay in before the rain came. Yu-ching looked up at the sky. Nothing but black ominous clouds. Not a star in sight. There was a sudden violent clap of thunder.

"Oh, it's going to rain," she said to herself. Getting up, she hurried along the dike toward the north.

It was very dark and she couldn't see the path. She stumbled and fell frequently. The thunder was much louder now and lightning kept cutting jabbed streaks in the inky sky. Soon she was enveloped in blinding sheets of white misty rain that instantly drenched her from head to toe. Combining with her perspiration, it ran from her hair to her eyes and into her mouth, blinding her, and tasting

very salty. Thunder crashed on all sides of her. She skidded and fell, got up, slipped again. The soupy mire sucked off her cloth slipper shoes, brambles lacerated her bare feet. She hobbled on painfully, leaving behind a trail of blood-stained footprints. With clenched teeth she forced herself on through the storm, on and on. Angry fires stoked her heart. Nothing, however frightening, could stop her from pushing forward!

* * *

It was nearly midnight when Yu-ching reached the district government office.

Everyone was already asleep.

She went directly to the quarters of Comrade Wang, chief of district. After she had been knocking for a long time, the door slowly opened. Comrade Wang stood looking at her with sleep-dimmed eyes.

"District Chief, I . . . " Yu-ching was overwhelmed, like a lost child upon finding her parents again. Trembling all over, she couldn't go on.

"What's the matter?" Startled, the district chief stared at this mud-spattered girl, almost beside herself with anxiety.

"District Chief, I've got to tell you. . . ." And Yu-ching poured out the whole story, speaking so quickly that she finished in a minute.

The district chief stopped her with a wave of his hand. "I thought it was something important," he said in some annoyance. "Coming here in the rain in the middle of the night! Go on home."

"What?" The girl looked at him, shocked. "How can I go home? He'll kill me."

"Nonsense. Who'd dare to do a thing like that these days? Especially your own grandfather. You've nothing to worry about. Just go home."

Yu-ching wanted to say something more, but before she could speak the district chief ended the conversation in a tone that brooked no argument.

"You can sleep in the left wing tonight if you like. Tomorrow, you go home."

With that, he shut the door. Yu-ching stood dazed. Finally, on aching legs, she dragged herself to the room in the left wing.

But how could she sleep? As she lay on the bed thoughts surged through her mind like turgid water. Only towards dawn did she fall into a troubled doze. She dreamed that her grandfather and some other man she didn't recognize tied her up and carried her like a trussed pig to the Wei River. She wanted to cry out, but she couldn't

utter a sound. She struggled, but her hands and feet couldn't move. She seemed to have no control over her body. Yu-ching saw them carry her to the dike, and she stared in horror at the dark rushing waters. "Can this really be the end?" she wondered. Slowly, interminably, she could feel herself falling, falling. . . .

Yu-ching woke with a start, drenched in perspiration, her heart pounding madly. She was alone in the empty room. . . .

"Can this really be the end?" she repeated dully, thinking of her nightmare. She got up and again went and knocked at the district chief's door.

The sun was already quite high in the heavens by then, its rays gilding the slick green leaves of the pomegranate trees growing in the courtyard. A rooster stretched its neck and crowed.

But the district chief was still in bed. His sweet dreams had been broken once during the night. Now that silly girl was calling him again.

"What's wrong with you?" he snapped angrily, without getting up. "Why are you always making such a racket?"

"Excuse me, District Chief," Yu-ching replied through the door. "But you must help me, please. I really can't go home."

"You're making a mountain out of a molehill. I told you you've nothing to worry about. Why can't you believe me?"

"It's not that I don't believe you, District Chief. But you don't quite understand our situation down there."

"What do you mean — I don't understand!"

Yu-ching awkwardly stood outside the door in silence. After several minutes it sounded to her as if the district chief was going off to sleep again.

"All right, I'll go back," she called. "But please send someone to our village right away, to help us solve this problem. Will you? Please!"

"Sure, sure. You go on home. I'll send a man down immediately," the district chief replied generously.

* * *

The news of what had happened at Old Red Copper's house quickly spread throughout the village. It was the talk of every street and lane.

From the stone platform outside the temple, the village head harangued a group of people gathered in the courtyard.

"Freedom of choice in marriage is all very well, but that doesn't mean a girl can run wild. Already engaged to one and she goes after another — what do you call that? An official of the women's

association too. Carrying on like that, how can she expect to lead others?"

"Some leader!" snorted an old woman with shrivelled gums. "If she keeps on leading like that another few days, I don't know where our women will end up. A grown girl running after a man herself — absolutely shameless!"

"It hasn't been so long since her grandfather got out of that jail he sat in for five years after losing his case against Ning Family Village," said another bystander. "But she has to get herself mixed up with one of those young dogs of the Ning clan. A slut like that— beating her to death would be too good for her. That would teach her not to break our clan rules!"

Han Kuang-chung, squatting morosely off to one side, could bear this kind of talk no longer. Leaping to his feet, he shouted:

"Clan rules, my eye! They're just a lot of feudal garbage. There's nothing about them in the new Marriage Law. Yu-ching is a decent, upright girl. Why are you all so down on her? If you ask me, it's the old mossbacks who ought to get a good beating!"

"Who are you calling an old mossback, eh?" yelled the village head, hopping with rage.

"Anyone who opposes the Marriage Law! What about it?" Kuang-chung clamped his hands on his hips. "You want me to make it any clearer than that?"

"I want you to tell me what you call a man who goes around cursing people. Tell me that, eh?" The village head pushed forward, his fists clenched. A few old men held him back:

"Forget it. Why get yourself all worked up? That kind of lunatic isn't worth it."

Two or three young people pulled Kuang-chung away. "Come on," they urged. "You can't make those old mossbacks understand. It's like playing a lute to an ox!"

* * *

Fuming, Kuang-chung walked home. The house was icy still. He lived alone. Although he was thirty this year, he had never married.

Seven years ago, he and a girl in Ning Family Village had a secret love affair. Both swore they would never marry any other. Then the girl's brother and a few of his loafer friends caught them at one of their rendezvous and beat Kuang-chung half to death.

When he was carried back to his village not only did no one take his side, but he was dragged to the clan temple and forced to kneel before the ancestral shrine until he fainted. He had to stay in bed for over a month.

After he recovered he learned that the girl had hanged herself because her brother had tried to compel her to marry someone else. Kuang-chung's heart was broken. He swore he would never marry. When his father arranged a marriage for him, he ran away the day before the wedding and did not return until a year later, when the match was called off.

He became gloomy and very irascible. Working the fields, he often had violent fits of temper. People said he was a "madman." But there was nothing wrong with his brain. He deliberately assumed the mask of an eccentric as an excuse for the wild outbursts that gave some outlet to the misery in his heart.

His quarrel with the village head infuriated him so he could not eat. He lay on his bed seething with a despondent rage. When he could bear it no longer, he got up and left the house. He wondered whether he could learn any news of Yu-ching. Going out the gate, he ran into Yu-hua, a leading member of the village Youth League.

Yu-hua was in love with a boy from another village, but her family was moving heaven and earth to prevent the match. She was much concerned about Yu-ching's affair hoping Yu-ching would open a path for them all. When Yu-ching ran away, Yu-hua was pleased, for she knew that meant the battle had been started.

Now she had just learned that Yu-ching had returned but had been nabbed by her grandfather and one of her uncles before she even entered the village, and that they had locked her up at home. Worried, Yu-hua transmitted this news to Kuang-chung, who turned and ran full speed to the courtyard of Old Red Copper. The courtyard was empty, but on the door of the west wing, where Old Red Copper himself lived, was a big iron lock.

Kuang-chung peered in through the high window and saw Yu-ching, her hair tousled, sitting on the bed. He was immediately reminded of his own tragedy, and he felt very badly. He called to her, softly. Yu-ching looked up and saw him. In a low voice she asked him:

"Has Kuang-hsing come back yet?"

"No. Where have you been?"

"District office."

"Well?"

Yu-ching shook her head.

"Don't worry," Kuang-chung consoled her. "We'll all help you. Don't be afraid."

"They can't scare me! I'm going to fight them to the finish, I've made up my mind."

"That's the spirit. Don't slacken. The minute you slacken, that's bad. If you fight hard, you're sure to win. If there's any way I can help, just let me know. I promise to do my best."

Hearing their voices, Old Red Copper came out. He was furious when he saw Kuang-chung.

"Get out of here!" he shouted.

"You're an old man," said Kuang-chung with a conciliatory smile. "Why get yourself so worked up?"

"Get out, I say! Get out of here!" Old Red Copper began to push him.

Kuang-chung lost his temper. "How can you be so unreasonable! Let Yu-ching out at once! Locking people up is not allowed!"

"Not allowed? What are you going to do about it?"

"I'll complain about you to the district office!"

"Hah, district office, eh? I wouldn't care if you went to the county! I think you've lived long enough!" Old Red Copper took his club and raised it to strike.

Kuang-chung swiftly grabbed the old man's hand. "Drop it," he snapped. "Don't take on more than you can handle!"

The old man's eyes bulged. "What? You dare to fight me? All right then!"

From the room Yu-ching shouted, "Kuang-chung, you go!"

Hearing the noise, the village head came rushing in from the street. The sight of the two men locked in struggle again roused the ire he had only just managed to cool after his argument with Kuang-chung that morning. He seized Kuang-chung's arm.

"You really want to die, you son of a bitch!" The village head flung Kuang-chung to the ground, then punched him hard.

Her face pale with anger, Yu-ching screamed from the window, "What right have you got to hit people?"

The village head glared at her.

"Animals like you! Even killing your kind wouldn't be overdoing it!"

* * *

Yu-ching waited hopefully for the arrival of the official the district chief promised to send. But one day passed, then two, and there was still no sign of him. The district chief was a busy man. He sat all day in his little office with its snow-white walls, presiding over meetings, issuing orders. He frequently instructed his subordinates: "Do the main things first. Don't bother about anything else." Naturally Yu-ching's matter had long since been lost in the recesses of his fuzzy mind. With promises he was extremely generous. He could make dozens, when necessary, in the course of a day, so many, in fact, that he himself couldn't remember them all.

Because Yu-ching had some knowledge of this trait of the district chief, she didn't place too much faith in his word.

Lying on the bed, hearing the banter and laughter of young people working in the fields and the clear singing of children on their way to school, she was ready to burst with impatience. Like a bird in a cage, she clutched the high window-sill and stared out for a long time. The sky was so high, so blue. The sun was so red, so bright. And how the birds flew and sang. Yu-ching found her imprisonment very irksome. She wanted to batter the door down with her head, to push the walls over.

The daylight hours seemed terribly long. A day was like a year. She longed for darkness. But when it came, she could hardly wait for daylight again.

The afternoon of the third day, Han Kuang-hsing, secretary of the village's Party branch, returned from his conference at the county. As soon as he heard about Yu-ching, he came hurrying over to Old Red Copper's, without even pausing for a drink of water.

Old Red Copper was sitting in the courtyard, smoking his pipe beneath the elm tree. He knew that Kuang-hsing had come back, and he was sure that the Party secretary would intervene. But the old man was determined not to give way. Old Red Copper had always been stubborn. Once he made up his mind about anything, he'd stick to it if it killed him. Now, as Kuang-hsing entered the courtyard, the old man ignored him, and concentrated on puffing his pipe.

Controlling his annoyance with an effort, Kuang-hsing forced a smile.

"I hear you've been kind of angry the past few days, Grandpa."

Without raising his eyes, the old man retorted, "Nothing of the sort. Just get back? Have a seat."

Kuang-hsing sat down beside him and scanned his dark expression.

"They say you've locked Yu-ching up. Is that true?"

Old Red Copper grunted an affirmation.

"You're an intelligent old gentleman. What did you want to do a thing like that for?"

"Well, I've done it. What about it?" the old man cut in provocatively.

"It's not right. If we've got any problems, we can all talk them over together. . . ."

"I don't have to bother you village officials with a little thing like this."

Kuang-hsing wanted to say, "It's not a little thing. It's a violation of the Marriage Law." But again he held himself in check.

"Let Yu-ching out, Grandpa," he suggested pleasantly. "Then we can talk this thing over."

Old Red Copper sneered. "Is that all you've come here for?" He stood up and started to walk away.

That was too much for Kuang-hsing. "Open that door!" he commanded.

The old man halted and stared at him challengingly. Then he laughed coldly.

"I refuse. What are you going to do about it?"

"Don't you know you're breaking the law?"

"Families have family rules, clans have clan rules; the Communist Party respects people's customs. You can't turn things upside down and have me call you Grandpa. Who says I've broken the law?"

That ended the diplomatic negotiations. Kuang-hsing realized that nothing he could say would make the old man see reason. He strode over to the west wing and raised his foot to kick the door in. Old Red Copper grabbed him from behind and with one wrench threw him several paces away. By the time Kuang-hsing again stood firm, the old man had picked up a chaff chopper and planted himself before the door.

"Stay away from this door!" he shouted. "If you dare to touch it only one of us will leave here alive! I'm warning you!"

Kuang-hsing knew this was no idle threat. When the peppery old man said something, he meant it. Under the circumstances, all Kuang-hsing could do was give ground. No, not give ground — he would just have to think of another way to take this "feudal stronghold."

When Yu-ching heard the voice of Kuang-hsing, she had rushed to the high window. At the sight of the Party secretary's face, tears gushed from her eyes. Since this thing had begun, she hadn't cried or breathed a single sigh. She had clenched her teeth and fought stubbornly, with never a weak or pessimistic thought. But somehow, seeing the Party secretary, she felt like a child who had been tormented coming within the protective view of a dear one again, and she wept heartfelt tears.

"Don't cry, Yu-ching. You must be strong," Kuang-hsing said soothingly. "Have they been feeding you?"

"They give me food," the girl replied in low voice. She rubbed her eyes.

"Do you want anything?"

"I want to come out," said Yu-ching tearfully.

"Don't worry. I definitely will help you. Keep a good grip on yourself. Don't compromise." Kuang-hsing cast an angry glance at Old Red Copper. Then he turned and strode away.

The old man snorted. His baleful eyes followed Kuang-hsing through the compound gate.

* * *

At dusk, the lock on the door scraped, and Yu-ching's mother came in. She embraced her daughter and wept. A weak but good-hearted woman, she received nothing but abuses after marrying into the Han family. In the presence of her husband or her father-in-law she was as quiet and timid as a mouse, not even daring to breathe too loud.

When her husband was alive, he beat her frequently, even though their daughter was quite grown up. He died several years ago, but she still was not emancipated. The home belonged to her father-in-law, he carried the keys. If she was the least careless, he would curse and storm; he stopped only short of actually striking her.

To sum it up, she never had a moment's happiness in all her life. Her sole function seemed to be to bear children and be ill-treated.

She pitied Yu-ching for the scrape she was in, and she suffered for her. But she didn't dare to show her feelings before Old Red Copper. The last few days, the old man had been sending her on trips to Hao Family Village to make the arrangements for Yu-ching's match. He wanted Yu-ching to get married, the sooner the better. The family of the prospective groom had no objections; they needed an extra hand on the farm.

The only question remaining was registering the marriage at the district office. Afraid that Yu-ching would reveal that she was being forced into a match she didn't want, Old Red Copper was sending her mother to persuade her to accede quietly. He figured Yu-ching had suffered quite a lot already, and she was only a young girl. Surely she didn't want to stay locked up for ever. Her mother needed only to say a few words and Yu-ching would certainly consent.

Yu-ching loved her mother. Ordinarily, seeing her mother's tears would have made her very unhappy, and she would have wept too. But these last few days had been very much out of the ordinary. Her heart had hardened. When her mother asked tearfully, "How could you have done such a foolish thing, child?" she merely replied coolly:

"I haven't been a bit foolish, Ma. I think Grandpa's the one who's been foolish!"

"Don't be impertinent, child. A wise man knows when he's beaten. Don't think you can brazen this thing out. The Hao Family Village people are waiting for their bride. You'd better get it over

with and stop making a spectacle of yourself. Haven't you lost enough face already?"

Forcing back the hot reply that was on the tip of her tongue, Yu-ching said as calmly as she could, "Everything I've done has been open and above-board. I've nothing to be ashamed of. How have I lost face? Let's not talk about Hao Family Village, Ma. I'd die rather than go there."

"How can you be so stupid, child," the older woman said rather angrily. "You know what a temper the old man has. You can't outlast him. How many more days do you want to spend in this dark room before you come to your senses?"

"I'll stay here all my life, but I won't marry into the Hao family. You can tell him that!"

"You're an obstinate child. What difference does it make who you marry? Don't you get along all right wherever you go?"

"No, you don't. And you're the last one who should say that, Ma. Do you call the kind of life you've led here getting along all right? Haven't you taken enough abuses? Why do you want to force your own daughter to have that kind of life too?"

The mother sat speechless. Yu-ching's words had struck home. Large tears rolled down her pale white face. Wiping them away, she asked mournfully:

"What are you planning to do, child?"

Yu-ching tightly clasped her mother's hand. "Don't worry, Ma. I've got an idea—"

Just then, Old Red Copper shouted roughly from the courtyard, "Come out, woman. That little bitch really wants to die."

The mother shrank out through the door. A couple of objects thrown in landed noisily on the floor. Again Old Red Copper was heard to growl:

"Here you are: a rope and a knife. You can hang yourself or cut your throat. Anyhow, you're never coming out of that room alive!" The door slammed and the lock slid into place.

Yu-ching smiled icily. "You've thought it all out, haven't you?" she muttered.

She picked up the knife and angrily slashed the rope to bits. . . .

* * *

In the middle of the night, Yu-ching awoke. She heard the steady pacing of footsteps in the courtyard. Looking out through the window, she saw her grandfather, head down, hands clasped behind him, walking back and forth, back and forth. . . .

For five days now, the old man hadn't had a good night's sleep. His mind was filled with the daughter who had been tormented into suicide, with the five years he spent in a dungeon, with his enemies, with the village he hated. That narrow, stubborn hatred had turned his heart to stone. He had no conception of how young people might feel. Rather than give up a taste of vengeance, he would even see the blood of his own beloved granddaughter shed.

In the past, if Yu-ching had found her grandfather pacing so distraught in the night, she would have spoken to him, comforted him, urged him to rest. But now, her heart too had hardened. The sound of his footsteps only intensified her annoyance and hatred. Old Red Copper had wounded her deeply.

It was an exceptionally quiet night. In the old willows on the edge of the village, cuckoos called incessantly. Their liquid notes only irritated Yu-ching. Unable to fall asleep again, she got up and stood by the small window that faced a grove of trees. Stars filled the dark sky. The handle of the Big Dipper hung low and slanting over the roof tops; to the south-east was the Milky Way. The night was more than half over.

In the courtyard the footsteps ceased. Yu-ching looked out. Her grandfather was squatting on his haunches like a wolf beneath the elm tree, his savage eyes fixed on the dark room that was Yu-ching's prison. A wave of anger rose within her. How much longer do I have to stay in this black hole, she fumed. Must I wait for others to rescue me? Why can't I think of something myself? If I can only get out of here, the rest won't be too hard.

Thinking along these lines, she felt much better. I've got to use my head, plan things out. Suddenly, she remembered the knife, and her confidence increased. Stooping, she groped along the floor until she found the chopper the old man had thrown in. Yu-ching smiled grimly. You wanted me to use this to kill myself; you never dreamed it would save me.

Yu-ching listened at the window. Those hateful footsteps had begun again. And the cuckoos were still calling. She groped her way to the small high window that faced the orchard. Squatting down, she began digging into the wall. Since the wall was made of broken brick and mud filler and the room was damp, with each scrape of the knife Yu-ching brought masonry raining down.

She dug feverishly for a while, then stopped and listened. The footsteps still paced in the courtyard; the cuckoos continued their calls. Relieved, Yu-ching went back to her digging. She gouged and scraped, and then, all of a sudden, she could see light shining in the hole. She had dug through!

Just then, there were two taps on the window above her. Yu-ching broke into a cold sweat. She quickly stood up and listened. Again two taps. Recalling that this window faced the orchard, and that Old Red Copper was in the courtyard on the opposite side of the house, Yu-ching relaxed. Peering out, she saw a young man in a white shirt. He softly called her name. Kuo-chiang! Yu-ching's heart leapt with joy.

"Keep your voice down," she urged in a whisper. "There's someone in the courtyard. When did you get back?"

"This afternoon. Your cousin Han Yu-hua came running over and told me about you. She brought me here too. What are you going to do?"

"I'm trying to get out. I've already dug a hole through the wall."

"Fine. Let me help you."

Yu-ching passed him the knife through the hole. With a few strong scoops, Kuo-chiang made the opening much larger.

"Come on out," he said.

Yu-ching crept in head first and strained towards the outside. A pair of strong arms embraced her shoulders. Then, one pull, and she was standing in the green leafy orchard. A night breeze wafted the fragrance of grass and flowers. How clean and fresh! She had returned to the world of freedom.

Excitedly she grasped Kuo-chiang's hand and pulled him along. "Come on, run! Run quickly!"

* * *

Ten minutes later, the young couple had reached a grove of fruit trees beside the river bank. The loudly soughing trees welcomed them; with gurgling laughter the river water congratulated them.

"What shall we do?" asked Kuo-chiang, when they had halted beneath a pear tree. "Where do you intend to go?"

"I was thinking of going to the county office," said Yu-ching, still panting from their run. "Do you have any other ideas?"

"To the county? I don't think that's necessary. Why don't you come to my house first, then, in the morning, we'll go and register at the district office. Once we're married, that will end it."

Yu-ching lowered her head.

"Are you afraid my mother won't agree?" he asked. "You don't have to worry. I talked it over with her today, and she's very happy. Your family's different, but never mind about them. The most they can do is break off with you, and refuse to let you go home any more. What's the difference? We don't need them to get along. Right?"

Yu-ching reached up and plucked a pear leaf, her eyes staring into the murky depths of the grove. She pondered a while, then shook her head.

"No, I thought of that too, but it doesn't seem right somehow. That way we don't solve anything."

"What do you mean?"

"Just think—Is that any way to get married? Something that's clean and righteous we act as if it were sneaky and secret, like a couple of thieves."

"What do we care? Once we're married everything will be all right."

"That's true, for us. But aren't you forgetting something even more important?"

"I don't understand." Kuo-chiang was confused.

"We'll be solving our own problem, but the trouble between our two villages will still remain!"

"Oh, that! You're still thinking of settling that question? That isn't so easy."

"We're both Youth Leaguers; we can't think only of ourselves. What kind of Youth Leaguers are we if we only care about ourselves and don't bother about others? That unreasonable old feudal rule should have been changed long ago. Look how many people it's injured. This is our chance to finish it off once and for all. If our marriage can bring peace between the two villages, won't that be wonderful?"

Kuo-chiang nodded. "You're right, Yu-ching. But what's the point of going to the county?"

"This isn't a matter that concerns only us two. There's my stubborn old mule of a grandfather, our district chief—who's such a bureaucrat, our village head and lots of old timers. They're all against it. It involves the whole question of enforcing the Marriage Law. That's why I want to tell the county head about it, and ask him to send someone down here to help us."

Kuo-chiang thought a moment.

"Right. We'll go together."

The two youngsters hurried along the path through the trees. In the depths of the orchard, from the peony-encircled hut of the old watchman, came the strident cry of a rooster.

The eastern sky was reddening.

* * *

By the time Old Red Copper discovered that the room was empty, except for a big hole in the wall, and was hopping and thundering

with rage, Yu-ching and Kuo-chiang were entering the office of County Head Wang.

The county head and Kuang-hsing, Party secretary of Han Family Village, were just talking about them. When Yu-ching saw Kuang-hsing her eyes went big with delighted surprise.

"Why, Cousin Kuang-hsing! When did you get here?"

"I came last night. How did you get out?" The Party secretary was surprised too.

Yu-ching gave a brief recital of what had transpired.

The county head laughed heartily and patted Yu-ching on the shoulder.

"Good, good, you young people have plenty of courage. You're doing the right thing! Fight. Fight against feudal thinking. Fight against bureaucracy that doesn't care anything about young folk's happiness! . . . Well now, we've talked this matter over. We're sending Comrade Chou, chief of the Civil Affairs Section, to go back with you and help the district and village officials settle this problem. Oh yes, and when you two get married, don't forget to invite me to the celebration!"

Yu-ching blushed. Kuo-chiang said:

"I'll call for you in an ox cart myself, Comrade Wang. We won't take no for an answer!"

They all laughed. . . .

* * *

Old Red Copper was lying on the bed in his small room, still smouldering over Yu-ching's escape, when he heard people on the street shouting that she had returned. He didn't quite believe it, but then, sure enough, he heard the voice of Yu-ching herself. Following which, the gate of his compound creaked open. Old Red Copper leapt from his bed, seized a big knife and rushed outside.

The courtyard was crowded with people. One of them wore the high-buttoned jacket of a government functionary. Startled, Old Red Copper placed his knife on the window-sill. Kuang-hsing, the village Party secretary, hailed him.

"Grandpa, this is Section Chief Chou, from the county. He's come to straighten out Yu-ching's problem. Let's go inside and talk it over."

"There's no need to bother Section Chief Chou and all you others with a little thing like that," retorted the old man coldly. "Please don't trouble yourselves."

Chou smiled. "I heard you haven't been feeling too well lately, Grandpa. I've come down specially to see you."

"There's nothing wrong with me." Old Red Copper's face was still hard and unyielding. "I'm fine! All of you please go. There's no problem at all. Yu-ching, you come into the house."

"If there's no problem, why have you brought that knife?" asked Kuang-hsing.

For a moment, the old man couldn't answer. Then, his face darkening, he replied, "Because I wanted to. This is none of your business."

"Don't get mad, old Grandpa," said Section Chief Chou pleasantly. "If you've got anything on your mind, we can talk it over together."

"There's nothing to talk about, comrade," the old man retorted shortly. "The Communist Party and the People's Government respect the people's customs and habits. I can look after my own children's affairs. There's no need for the rest of you to concern yourselves." He turned and barked at Yu-ching, "Get into the house!"

Yu-ching laughed scornfully. "Handing down imperial edicts again!"

Furious, Old Red Copper snatched the knife off the window-sill and charged. Kuang-hsing grabbed him from behind, while Chou ran towards him, shouting:

"Drop that knife!"

Finding himself surrounded, the old man stamped with rage. "All right! All right! I'll die if I must, but I won't lose face! It's either her or me. If she lives, I've got to die!" He raised the knife and swung it at his throat.

Chou, quick as a flash, seized his wrist and twisted. The big knife clattered to the ground, slashing a rent in Old Red Copper's trousers at the thigh as it fell. Everyone surged around the old man, propelling him into the house, urging him to calm down. But he would not be quieted.

"I don't want to live!" he roared. "Come and kill me, Yu-ching! I want to die! . . . "

He ranted on and on, deaf to the attempts of the others to pacify him. But finally, he gradually subsided.

In the evening, at meal time, he refused to eat. When Yu-ching brought him a bowl of noodles, with one sweep of the hand he sent it crashing to the floor.

That night, Section Chief Chou slept in the same room with him. Yu-ching, unable to sleep, got up and walked into the courtyard. Pausing outside her grandfather's window, she heard the old man say:

". . . It's all very well for you to put it that way, but a man has his self-respect. You don't know what I suffered that year; I made

a solemn vow. Even if I didn't hate them, I can't just hand my granddaughter over to them on a silver platter. The Han family has its pride. It's out of the question!"

Then another person said:

"Old Grandpa, you really are the limit. . . ." The voice was Kuang-hsing's. "Have you ever considered whether that vow of yours and that clan rule you made were reasonable or not? It was Ning Kou-erh and his immediate family who forced your daughter to suicide, nobody else! Why cut yourself off from all the others?"

"Have you forgotten?" the old man countered. "When I took the case to court, the whole Ning Family Village lined up against me. Otherwise, how could we have lost?"

Calmly and evenly, Section Chief Chou spoke up. "Suppose you brought the case to court today. Do you think you'd lose?"

Old Red Copper slapped his hand down smartly on the bed. "Today? Today we'd win even if ten villages lined up against us!"

"Why?"

"Why? Because we have a people's government!"

"Exactly!" Kuang-hsing interposed happily. "You see the point at last. You got a dirty deal before, but that was the fault of the rotten Kuomintang government, and the rotten feudal society. Never mind about anything else, just take your daughter. Wasn't it the old society that killed her? If it were today, with young people free to choose their own marriage partners and live in peace and bliss, today could such a thing ever happen? I ask you."

Old Red Copper took a couple of drags on his pipe. "You can't lump it all together," he said slowly. "Suppose they're a pack of brutes like Ning Kou-erh and his family. You're still sending a girl to her death if you give her to a family like that."

"Who says you had to give her to such a family?" Chou and Kuang-hsing asked in chorus. "Why did you expose her to mistreatment and misery?"

"Who wanted to do that? But how could you tell in advance?"

Kuang-hsing smacked his thigh. "We've come back to where we started. It's the arranged marriages that do it. Whenever the marriages are fixed by the parents, there's bound to be trouble. It was an arranged marriage that killed your daughter; now you're trying to arrange one for Yu-ching. Haven't you had enough worry and anger in your lifetime?"

Old Red Copper said nothing. He coughed, then resumed thoughtfully puffing his pipe. . . .

The next morning, Section Chief Chou worked together with the old man in the melon field. On the way back, Old Red Copper purposely took the long road home, by the path that led past his

daughter's grave. He stood there for a long time, puffing his pipe without a word, as if he were in a trance. . . .

As they neared a wheat field on the outskirts of the village, the old man halted again. Gazing at the green rippling grain, he sighed.

"This two *mou* used to be mine, Comrade Chou. It's a fine piece of land. Just look at that wheat. When I lost the case against the Nings, I lost this too. Ah! My wife nearly cried her eyes out over this bit of land. And me? I've avoided passing this way for exactly twenty years, afraid that just seeing it would hurt — and because I was so mad, too. Ah, what fools people can be!"

At dinner that evening, Yu-ching again brought her grandfather a bowl of noodles. Although his expression remained wooden, he accepted the bowl without protest.

Old Red Copper didn't sleep well that night either. Yu-ching heard him pacing the courtyard right up until dawn. . . .

* * *

For several days the young people and the old folks in Han and Ning Family Villages had been discussing what was going on in Old Red Copper's family, discussing the clan rule that had been laid down twenty years before. For several days Section Chief Chou and Comrade Kuang-hsing remained with Old Red Copper, sticking close by his side, offering innumerable arguments to help him see reason. With a stubborn old man like that it was an extremely difficult job, but in the end truth conquered obstinacy. The discussions were a great education to the people of the two villages, and Old Red Copper tacitly accepted Section Chief Chou and Comrade Kuang-hsing's advice.

And so, a splendid marriage celebration was prepared.

As the rising sun poked its head up from behind the deep blue mountains and spread its golden rays over the verdant plain, Han Family Village began to resound with drums and cymbals.

At the huge kettle-drum was Han Kuang-chung, flailing both arms with all his might. The big drum's thunderous volleys flew up the street, making hearts beat faster, shaking the waters of the Wei River into rippling laughter.

Young women, all in their holiday best, flew about the village like so many butterflies. Swarms of children ran and tumbled. . . .

After a while, the bride came out. She wore a pink checked blouse and light blue trousers. Her raven's wing hair was adorned with a bow of pink ribbon. The sunlight heightened the blush on her lovely cheeks. She smiled at everyone she met, and every boy and girl who saw her were happy from the bottom of their hearts.

Then the beat of the drums and cymbals grew faster, and the *yangko* dance began. And, at the head of the gaily dressed dancers, the one who stepped and twisted with the greatest vigour was Han Yu-hua. Her lissom body fairly sailed through the air; her face was as radiant and pretty as the bride's.

Behind the dance troupe came the village officials, members of the village council and a long line of boisterous young people — all seeing the bride to her new home. The merry throng surged forward like a tide. As they left their own village gate, they were met by a welcoming crowd from Ning Family Village. The smiling groom headed the procession, a big red flower pinned on his snowy-white shirt. Behind him stretched a long line of well-wishers and *yangko* dancers.

With the drums and cymbals of the two villages joined together, the sound was even more tremendous. Beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead, Kuang-chung pounded the big drum without cease. No matter that people's ears were already ringing, he couldn't seem to beat hard enough to express the joy that was in his heart. The two *yangko* troupes also blended into one, and they danced with greater abandon than ever. The faces of the girls became fiery red as they twisted and leapt, twisted and leapt. . . .

Soon the wedding ceremony began.

It was conducted in the ancestral temple of Ning Family Village, a long, spacious, tiled-roof building. But today the hall was so jammed, it seemed small and cramped. Even the doorways and windows were packed with well-wishers. For besides being a wedding ceremony, this actually was also a celebration of the reunion of the two villages.

The new style wedding proceeded stage by stage until it was time for the speeches. Kuang-hsing the Party secretary rose among the group seated upon the platform. In his spotless military uniform, the army veteran looked very smart. A row of medals dangled on his chest. Pushing his cap to the back of his head, he ran his eyes around the room, then said loudly:

"Old friends and young! For exactly twenty years, there have been no marriages between our two villages. Many of our young people have suffered misery and grief. For this we can thank the dark old society and government. Today we have overthrown that old society and government, but we haven't yet wiped out old feudal thinking. Our two villages still don't have much to do with each other. Some old folks — even some officials — still oppose freedom of choice in marriage. Strange, isn't it? Well now, these two youngsters, Han Yu-ching and Ning Kuo-chiang, have taken the lead and blasted that feudal stronghold to powder. They charged it like

an assault squad. Of course," Kuang-hsing grinned, "to make a successful assault, you have to pay a price."

A couple of girls in front of the platform giggled.

The Party secretary waved his hand. "Don't laugh, girls. Try going out and picking your own young man, and just see the fuss your family will raise!"

The hall rocked with laughter.

"But don't let them scare you," Kuang-hsing went on. "If only you fight hard, you're sure to win. Yu-ching won. She paid a price for it — a beating with a big stick and a few days locked up in a dark room — but she won through to victory. A victory for the Marriage Law! A victory for new ideas! A victory for our new society! Let the victory of these two young people serve as your model. From now on, there's no wall between our two villages. Am I right?"

The reply made the rafters tremble. "Right!" Then much enthusiastic applause.

"Right!" cried Kuang-hsing happily. "Right! On behalf of Han Family Village, I formally announce that our clan's 'embargo' has received its death sentence. We'll throw it into the Wei River; we don't want any part of it! It will never hamper us again."

To the youngsters at the foot of the platform, he said, "The head of Han Family Village has been relieved of his post for interfering with free choice in marriage. Such a man is not worthy of being a village head. District Chief Wang is also being reprimanded for neglect of his responsibility to the people." The Party secretary smiled broadly. "So go ahead and find the boy or girl of your heart. The Marriage Law will protect you. No one has any right to interfere!"

The hall resounded with wild hand-clapping and cheers.

Yu-ching, her cheeks burning, her big eyes intoxicated with happiness, gazed smilingly at the joyous assembly.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

POEMS

by Emi Siao

Lullaby; Behind the Enemy Lines

Quiet, so quiet old woman!
Do not cough or make a noise!
Old man, do not smoke! The spark
of your light will be seen
by the enemy; be still my precious,
the night is so deep; quiet
my darling! I will make your bandage
more comfortable, and take you
to my breast, to keep you warm
tying your bandage well so that
you will not feel the pain; my darling,
do not be afraid; you have
both mother and father still
when the enemy goes, father will return
just now we must stay in this hole
waiting for him; listen, the gunfire
retreats further and further
soon, soon he will come back to us
my precious darling, do not cry out
do not weep, it will soon be dawn.
Listen! Now there are footsteps
nearer, ever nearer they come. . . .

Now, now you have come back!
child, it is your father! Take
to your heart the little one you love so dear
take him, and hug him well; through these nights

not easy to pass, he
has been brave, never crying. . . .
and the enemy has never found us. . . .
the father picked up his child,
opening the quilt, and before his eyes
lay his son, already lifeless.
Hot tears ran down his cheeks
on to the small dead body; difficult
for him to lift his eyes. . . .
Mother of our child! Do not weep!
he said. He has not been sacrificed
in vain; he has died
for our people and now
I know well whom I should hate.

*Passing Changsha**

Twisting on my bed unable to sleep
turning over this, then that in my mind
and all the things that affect my homeland
midnight and the dogs are barking
in the moonlight, and so half consciously
only I pass through Changsha.

1934

Farewell

I would have you stay along with me
yet another minute, so that I may speak
of the things that make my heart ache;
but again I would hold this very minute

*Changsha: Capital of Hunan Province.

to go with you into a sweet dream
of spring; actually, neither of us spoke
all that we could hear was our quickening
pulse; and then the minute passed
never to return again; yet I would not
forget it all my days.

I Remember

I remember when I was a boy at home
we went together to climb the city wall
and seeing below us a river of beautiful
water stretching out to the horizon and
in the distance just one sail floating
through the countryside, my father
standing there and pointing said,
"A man's life is like water flowing on
its course; you see on the banks the poplars
and willows grown so big; these trees
have I planted and cared for with my own
hands; next year the spring colours will be even
more beautiful; and so may our songs
go higher, ascending"; and the sound
of the voice that taught me
lingers; the words so fresh in my memory
it is as though the old man
still lived and stood there!
so beautiful a country have we inherited,
how may we leave it to suffer under
the iron heel of the enemy?

1938

Hope

And you, the poets
what are your hopes?
are they that, five hundred years from now
there will still be those
who sing your songs?

Yet surely you should be still happier
if the people of your own day and age
welcome your creativeness;

if hearing the message of your songs
they gain courage.
and strengthen their will for victory. . . .

If people find you have expressed
what they themselves would like to express
but cannot, and so are moved
to smiles, or tears. . . .

Then, poets,
we should think of
how to be grateful
for the lessons of history
and of culture, and for all
man has done to help us
understand.

Lament of the Ancient Capital

Spring.

In March the days are clear,
from the East Gate come lasses
like a cloud; golden orioles sing and

swallows chatter as if in welcome for
the early spring; willow catkins
fly here and there; as the girls
laugh and talk so warmly;

Summer.

A single pagoda stands straight and tall,
pointing to heaven,
sun sets and birds fly back
to their nests; standing beside
the railings, I look out to
the distant horizon where the river seems
joined up to the sky, and a lone sail
stands on the waters;

Autumn.

At noon teahouses and wineshops
are filled with good, generous folk,
singing loudly and with spirit;
when the autumn wind blows in gusts
one thinks of the best fish to eat;
frontier soldiers who have returned
to their homes again, go
to visit quiet temples;

Winter.

The moon is that of the days of Chin,*
the pass as it was in Han,**
the flowers and grass are as they were
in Wu,*** and clothing still as it was in Tsin,****
walking on the snow in search of plum blossom
as if I were an ancient come to life again —
but how can I stand aside and watch
our enemy riding through the hills again?

1936

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* Chin dynasty: B.C. 221-207.
** Han dynasty: B.C. 206-A.D. 220.
*** Wu dynasty: A.D. 222-280.
****Tsin dynasty: A.D. 265-316.

North China

Dawn and cockcrow, so did I arise
going out to exercise with my sword
no moon but just some cold stars
shining in the sky; on the top
of the city wall, birds still sleeping
awoke and flew off in surprise;
who now can stand aside idly
while the storm gathers in North China.

1935

Two Songs

I. The Farmer Sings

evening and sunset behind the hills
drought-stricken crops breathing in
the hot north-west wind; the village
is deathly quiet, and the moon rises
shining on the fisherman's boat out
on the waters, ever working, while
in the villages so much has been
destroyed by the Japanese invaders;
homes burnt, people slaughtered
ruthlessly; everywhere suffering
day and night yet ever the hope
for a way to drive out
the enemy, gain peace.

II. The Soldier Sings

now from the haze at dawn
the stars begin to withdraw
back home comes the fisherman's
boat; a gentle breeze brings
in quietness; there are green
waters and hills in blue; and then
do my eyes see them along
the river banks trudging
my little sisters!
— and how this hurts —
going to work in Japanese mills,
more bitterness, still more bitterness
but, brothers, listen!
the lion has awakened
his roar startles the heavens
now shall I fly
to rescue you.

1938

Plum Blossom

Came New Year festival and did we
go off to look at the plum blossom,
pulling off a branch to carry home,
then in a vase protecting it
against ice and snow;
    hot wine we drank around the table
    writing poems to the beauty of
    this blossom, so that it stood
    well satisfied with itself, giving
    a cold little laugh at the thought
    of its sisters outside, the less fortunate;
but when after spring, snows melted
and the blossom outside had changed
to the beginnings of fruit, we turned
and looked at the vase inside the house
finding its glory all withered away.

Translated by Rewi Alley

Writings of the Last Generation

CHU TSE-CHING

PROSE WRITINGS

FLEETING TIME

Swallows fly away, yet return; willows wither, yet burgeon again; peach-blossom fades, yet blooms afresh. But tell me, you who are wise, why do our days depart never to return? Does someone steal them — if so, who? And where are they being hidden? Or have they fled of their own accord — and if so, where are they now?

I do not know how many days have been granted me, but my hand is growing emptier all the time. In silence I compute that more than eight thousand days have already slipped through my fingers. Like a drop of water on the point of a needle which drips into the ocean, my days have dripped noiselessly into the stream of time, leaving not a trace behind.

The past has gone whither it listed, and the future is coming as it wills; but why is this junction of past and future so fleeting? When I get up in the morning, two or three rays of sunlight slant into my chamber. The sun has feet which pad lightly, stealthily on; and I follow, revolving bemusedly in its wake. And so — when I wash my hands, my time slips out of the basin; when I eat, it slips away through my bowl; when I am silent, it slips past my abstracted eyes. Conscious that it is fleeting away, I stretch out my hands to catch it, but it streams through my outstretched fingers; and at night when I lie in bed, it glides nimbly over my body or flies from beside my feet. When I open my eyes to see the sun again, another day has slipped past. I sigh and cover my face. But the shadow of the new-come day begins to flutter off in my sigh.

About the author see *Chu Tse-ching, Poet and Prose Writer* on p. 148 in this issue.

What can I do in these days which escape so fast in this world with its teeming millions? I can only wander, only hasten away. What have I achieved, apart from wandering, in the eight thousand days which have flitted by? My past has been scattered like smoke by the light breeze, or dispersed like mist by the morning sun. And what traces are left me? What vestiges? Naked I came into the world, and naked no doubt I shall go from it very soon. What makes me indignant, though, is the question: Why should I have to make this aimless trip?

Answer me, you who are wise: Why do our days depart never to return?

March 28, 1922

* * *

MY LANDLADY

Mrs. Hibbs has never been to China and is not particularly fond of China either, yet she struck us as having many old Chinese ways. People laughed at her and her daughter for being so Victorian and old-fashioned, she said. She admitted they were, but it did not worry her.

It was true. That Christmas afternoon in her sombre dining-room, furniture, people and conversation alike seemed out of date, belonging to some earlier age. She was still living in Finchley Road in north London at the time. That was a superior residential district, but the mortgage on her house had been foreclosed, and the agent had already posted up a wooden sales placard beside her gate, though for over six months no one had made any inquiries. The placard was about the size of a basketball stand, but rather lower, so that you could not miss it when you passed the gate. At dinner we heard a scream from the kitchen and she hurried out to investigate, coming back to announce that the turkey had been burned — such a pity with that twenty-two-pound bird which she had sold some furniture to buy. She was sorry about the bird, not about the furniture, but none of us ate any of the overdone parts.

She loved to talk and had such a ready tongue that she could go on for hours once she started. The mortgage on the house, the sale of furniture — she told you everything. But she spoke quite cheerfully, or at least matter-of-factly, never in a complaining or dispirited way. She enjoyed speaking and we enjoyed listening, for her dead husband and son lived in her talk, as well as all her old lodgers; so though I listened to her for over four months, I never found her

boring. At breakfast once she quoted a poem, she could not remember by whom, which she declared would make a good epitaph for her.

Here lies a poor, dead woman,
Who talked her whole life long;
The Lord says she will live again,
We only hope He's wrong!

As a matter of fact we hoped she would.

A genuinely virtuous wife and devoted mother she was — the traditional Chinese qualities again. She had been a well-to-do girl, sent to Belgium to learn French and the piano. She could probably still play the piano, but she had forgotten her French. If a Frenchman stopped her in the street to ask her a question, she said, he would probably be round the corner before she thought of the answer. At the time of her marriage she inherited a considerable legacy from an aunt, and on that she maintained the family for over twenty years. Mr. Hibbs was a Cambridge graduate whose one ambition was to become a poet, and who lived with his head in the clouds. He stayed at home for twenty years, occasionally tutoring a few private students. When he sent his poems to a Cambridge magazine, the manuscripts were returned with a polite note. Then he printed a small volume at his own expense, stating on the cover that he hoped some publishers would make use of them, but no response was ever received. His wife often urged him to cut certain lines, sometimes as many as three out of four; but he could not bring himself to do it, and so he had to keep his treasures to himself.

Mr. Hibbs was quite a linguist. After the Great War Mrs. Hibbs took him, their daughter and a friend for a tour of Italy, and his was the entire responsibility for booking rooms in hotels, hiring boats and so on, as he could speak Italian. And luckily all went well. But as they were on the platform waiting for the train back, he disappeared. Since the train was due to start at any moment, Mrs. Hibbs was quite frantic; but unable to communicate with anyone, all she could do was tell her daughter to go and look for him, but not to go far. At last he popped up, cool as a cucumber — he had been in the cloakroom all the time!

She grieved most for her son. He was a university graduate too, and a fine, handsome young fellow. When war broke out he joined up, and during his training he came home occasionally, very careful of his impressive uniform and unwilling to allow a single crease in it. The war was nearly over when the bad news came that he had fallen in action. What upset her most was such news coming at such a time, and as the whole world celebrated the armistice she went about in a daze. The tour of Italy was to cheer them all up. She

had not even the heart to collect her allowance from the War Office, leaving it until it was too late.

Now Miss Hibbs was the only one of the family left her, and Mrs. Hibbs lived for her daughter. In the mornings they tidied the rooms together, went out for a walk together after breakfast, and sat in the dining-room when they came back, chatting or reading popular novels — and so the day went on. At night they shared one bedroom, and each week they went to one or two films together. Miss Hibbs must have been twenty-four or five. She was tall — a good five foot ten — with a face like a crab and prominent teeth, but an amiable expression. She often laughed, and talked as naively as a girl of twelve. After Mr. Hibbs died, his student Ellis took a great fancy to Mrs. Hibbs and asked her several times to marry him, but she always refused. Ellis was a biographer with some slight reputation. When Walter de la Mare gave a talk on literature at London University and mentioned his works he was delighted, and this fact was aired at Mrs. Hibbs' dinner table. But she found his books dry and uninteresting: each time he gave her one she laid it aside after turning a few pages. She was so terrified of dogs and cats that even a picture of a dog could scare her, but Ellis kept a whole menagerie. And whereas her daughter was a regular film-fan, Ellis looked down on the cinema. She would not marry, no matter how poor she was, largely because of her daughter.

They had started taking lodgers in Mr. Hibbs' time, beginning with one. Their charges were high — five pounds a week for lodging, breakfast and dinner. The first to show up after their advertisement appeared was a Japanese, whom they accepted. The next day a Spaniard arrived, but they had to turn him away. After that the majority of lodgers were Japanese, and following Mr. Hibbs' death she took in more, till they became known as "the Japanese house." One or two of these Japanese had mistresses, in fact one was swindled by his mistress, and all this they reported at the dinner table while Mrs. Hibbs listened sympathetically. But when once at table someone talked of free love, apparently aiming his remarks at Miss Hibbs, Mrs. Hibbs was angry. After the meal the offender was asked to look for other lodgings. He left, but the Japanese had a club and he must have said something there, for gradually fewer and fewer Japanese came. As her rooms were usually empty and all her money was gone, the only thing she could do was mortgage the house. Of course she hoped at the time to pay it off later, but day after day slipped by, and things did not improve. Finally the notice for sale went up, and not long after Christmas it was sold to a Jew. She had imagined that since times were hard no one would want the house, but apparently the Jew had money, and as soon as he bought

it the agent told her she must be out by a certain date. When the time was nearly up she refused to move. The agent sued her and she received a summons. Supported by her daughter she went to court — her first experience of such a place — and the judge pointed out that her failure to vacate the house was a prison matter. Between indignation and terror she nearly fainted; but she had to promise to look harder for new lodgings. All this was for her daughter too, yet she never once complained.

At different times she also had an Italian and a Spaniard as lodgers, both of whom made love to her daughter; in fact the Spaniard promised to marry her, though later he broke his word. Miss Hibbs kept a soft place in her heart for him though — "He was such a handsome man!" But her mother said: "He was a ne'er-do-weel." Later, it seems, another ne'er-do-weel made his appearance, after they had moved to Laburnum Terrace. This was an Englishman in his forties named Cayte, a travelling salesman who sold vacuum cleaners. One day he made his way into Mrs. Hibbs' old house and tried to demonstrate his cleaner to her, but she stopped him by explaining that she had no money: she was trying to sell some furniture, and was worried because she could find no customer. Cayte promised to introduce her to a firm, and that evening Mrs. Hibbs was very pleased, sure that he must be a university graduate. In a day or two, sure enough, he introduced her to a firm which bought her furniture. He had been living with his sister, but now he moved into Mrs. Hibbs' house. He had no salary but lived on commissions; however, vacuum cleaners were so expensive that it was hard to sell them, so he stopped making the rounds. He was only a salesman, not a university graduate, and evidently he had been hard up for some time, for he had a wife who was working as a governess in France yet he could not afford to fetch her home. Indeed because he was so poor his sister asked him to leave. After moving to Laburnum Terrace he paid in full the first week for his board and lodging; after that he paid a little off and on, and then stopped paying at all. Not only that, he sometimes cadged lunch from them; and when this had gone on for more than two months Mrs. Hibbs had to ask him to leave. After my return to China I had a letter from her which reported that Miss Hibbs had taken rather a fancy to this "ne'er-do-weel" and was probably still seeing him. This was what Mrs. Hibbs dreaded most, for her daughter was everything to her, and how could she hand her over to such a man?

While at Finchley Road, Miss Hibbs gave English lessons to a Japanese lady who apparently showed great concern for all the Japanese gentlemen living there, for she kept asking questions about them and was very intimate with them. Mrs. Hibbs thought poorly of her

because of this, considering her a woman of light character. Once they had a visit from Cayte's niece, a modern miss who kept her handkerchief tucked in her garter as was then the custom, and allowed Mrs. Hibbs to see her taking it out. Later this was criticized as "most unladylike." My landlady was fastidious about trifles. One evening when the Irish maid did not put on her cap to bring in the dinner, Mrs. Hibbs was very put out and told us this was an insult to her as mistress and to us as guests. But the maid was a silly girl who may simply have forgotten her cap, or considered it quite unimportant. Another time, I remember, this maid brought her young man, then unemployed, to Laburnum Terrace. They had just finished moving and many odd jobs needed doing, so Mrs. Hibbs asked him to help and gave him a little money every day. This was killing two birds with one stone, and suited both sides. But the maid accused her of taking advantage of the poor — Mrs. Hibbs was quite dumbfounded.

No churchgoer, Mrs. Hibbs was still superstitious. Although she was a Protestant, once when she lost something she followed a friend's advice and lit a candle, knelt on one knee before it and invoked Saint Anthony's name, believing that this would bring her property back. Kneeling to saints is a Catholic practice, but that made no difference to her. And after any dream she would go through her books on dreams at the breakfast table. She had three of these books, and sometimes she laughed at herself because they gave different or contradictory interpretations. She liked to study the tea-leaves in her cup as well, to see what letter they made, for that showed what visitors to expect. Actually she was not hoping for visitors, but only for new lodgers. When she went to Laburnum Terrace, the former landlady introduced her to an English paying guest. But she had too few lodgers, especially too few women lodgers, to suit this middle-aged man, who liked laughter and jokes at table. All you could hear was Mrs. Hibbs' monologue, for she chattered away like an old matriarch, always on the same themes. So he made some excuse to leave, and found different lodgings. Not long after that we left England too, and her rooms fell vacant. In the letter I had from her last year, Mrs. Hibbs told me that she and her daughter had taken posts as housekeepers. This world is no longer a place for Victorian ladies like these.

* * *

THE LOTUS POOL BY MOONLIGHT

The last few days have found me very restless. This evening as I sat in the yard to enjoy the cool, it struck me how different the lotus

pool I pass every day must look under a full moon. The moon was sailing higher and higher up the heavens, the sound of childish laughter had died away from the lane beyond our wall, and my wife was in the house patting Jun-erh and humming a lullaby to him. I quietly slipped on a long gown, and walked out leaving the door on the latch.

A cinder-path winds along by the side of the pool. It is off the beaten track and few pass this way even by day, so at night it is still more quiet. Trees grow thick and bosky all around the pool, with willows and other trees I cannot name by the path. On nights when there is no moon the track is almost terrifyingly dark, but tonight it was quite clear, though the moonlight was pale.

Strolling alone down the path, hands behind my back, I felt as if the whole earth and sky were mine and I had stepped outside my usual self into another world. I like both excitement and stillness, enjoy both a crowd and solitude. Take tonight, for instance. Alone under the full moon, I could think of whatever I pleased or of nothing at all, and that gave me a sense of freedom. All daytime duties could be disregarded. That was the advantage of solitude: I could savour to the full that expanse of fragrant lotus and the moonlight.

As far as eye could see, the pool with its winding margin was covered with trim leaves, which rose high out of the water like the flared skirts of dancing girls. And starring these tiers of leaves were white lotus flowers, alluringly open or bashfully in bud, like glimmering pearls, stars in an azure sky, or beauties fresh from the bath. The breeze carried past gusts of fragrance, like the strains of a song faintly heard from a far-off tower. And leaves and blossoms trembled slightly, while in a flash the scent was carried away. As the closely serried leaves bent, a tide of opaque emerald could be glimpsed. That was the softly running water beneath, hidden from sight, its colour invisible, though the leaves looked more graceful than ever.

Moonlight cascaded like water over the lotus leaves and flowers, and a light blue mist floating up from the pool made them seem washed in milk or caught in a gauzy dream. Though the moon was full, a film of pale clouds in the sky would not allow its rays to shine through brightly; but I felt this was all to the good — though refreshing sleep is indispensable, short naps have a charm all their own. As the moon shone from behind them, the dense trees on the hills threw checkered shadows, dark forms loomed like devils, and the sparse, graceful shadows of willows seemed painted on the lotus leaves. The moonlight on the pool was not uniform, but light and shadow made up a harmonious rhythm like a beautiful tune played on a violin.

Far and near, high and low around the pool were trees, most of them willows. These trees had the pool entirely hemmed in, the only small clearings left being those by the path, apparently intended for the moon. All the trees were sombre as dense smoke, but among them you could make out the luxuriant willows, while faintly above the tree-tops loomed distant hills — their general outline only. And between the trees appeared one or two street lamps, listless as the eyes of someone drowsy. The liveliest sounds at this hour were the cicadas chirruping on the trees and the frogs croaking in the pool; but this animation was theirs alone, I had no part in it.

Then lotus-gathering flashed into my mind. This was an old custom south of the Yangtse, which apparently originated very early and was most popular in the period of the Six Kingdoms,* as we see from the songs of the time. The lotus were picked by girls in small boats, who sang haunting songs as they paddled. They turned out in force, we may be sure, and there were spectators too, for that was a cheerful festival and a romantic one. We have a good account of it in a poem by Emperor Yuan of the Liang dynasty called *Lotus Gatherers*:

Deft boys and pretty girls
Reach an understanding while boating;
Their prows veer slowly,
But the winecups pass quickly;
Their oars are entangled,
As they cut through the duckweed,
And girls with slender waists
Turn to gaze behind them.
Now spring and summer meet,
Leaves are tender, flowers fresh;
With smiles they protect their silks,
Drawing in their skirts, afraid lest the boat upset.

There we have a picture of these merry excursions. This must have been a delightful event, and it is a great pity we cannot enjoy it today.

I also remember some lines from the poem *West Islet*:

When they gather lotus at Nantang in autumn
The lotus blooms are higher than their heads;
They stoop to pick lotus seeds,
Seeds as translucent as water.

*222-587 A.D.

If any girls were here now to pick the lotus, the flowers would reach above their heads too — ah, rippling shadows alone are not enough! I was feeling quite homesick for the south, when I suddenly looked up to discover I had reached my own door. Pushing it softly open and tiptoeing in, I found all quiet inside, and my wife fast asleep.

July 1927
Tsinghua University, Peking

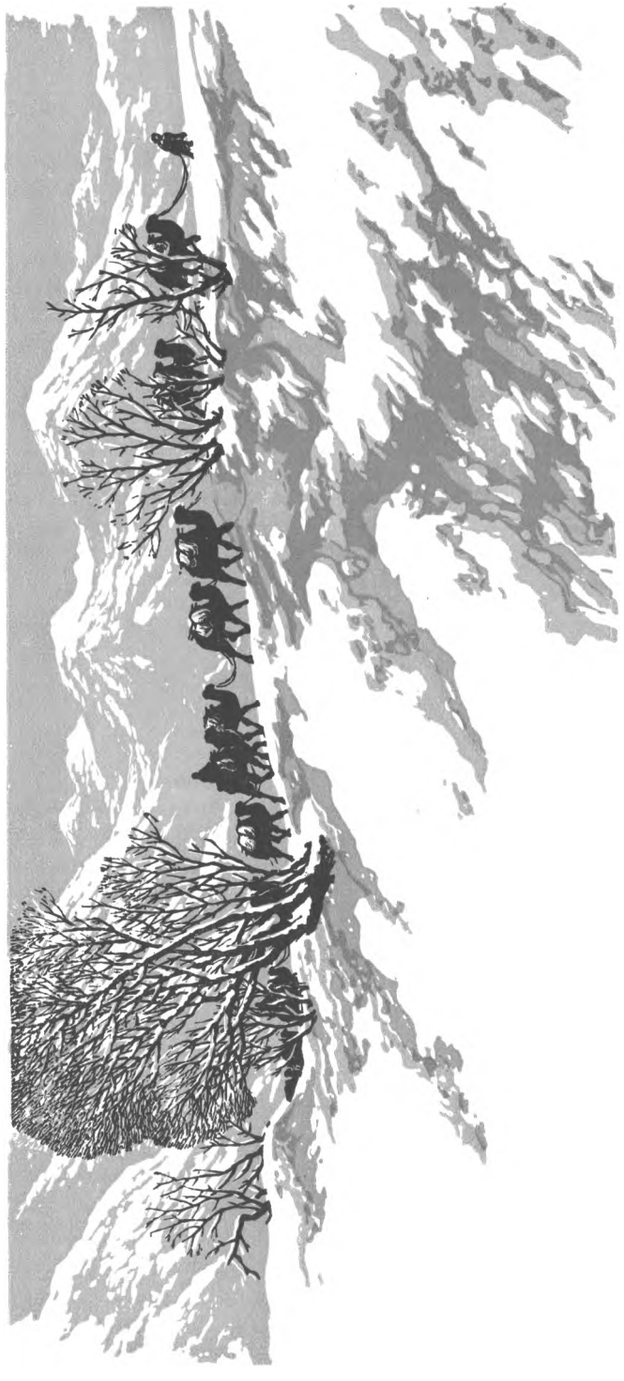
* * *

MEMORIES OF WENCHOW

I
"A MISTY MOON, A DROWSY BIRD, A ROLLED-UP CURTAIN AND RED CRAB-APPLE BLOSSOM."

This is the legend on a tiny horizontal scroll, just over a foot wide, by Ma Meng-jung. Slanting across the top left-hand corner is a long, flimsy green curtain, one-third of the length and two-thirds of the width of the paper, caught in the middle by a yellow hook shaped like a teapot spout. Hanging from the curve of the hook are two slate-grey tassels, their strands ruffled as if by a breeze. To the right is a full moon, whose pale blue light diffuses the whole scroll, as pure, tender and tranquil as the face of a sleeping beauty. Stretching down to the right from the top of the curtain is a branch of crab-apple. It is studded above and below with flowers and leaves — five clusters altogether — some scattered, some close, but all quite exquisite. The tender green of the leaves appears moist and dewy, and under the soft moonlight slight differences in shade are visible. The blossoms in full bloom blush with loveliness, their yellow stamens flashing in vivid detail, shown off to great advantage by the greenery. The pliant, out-thrust branch is like a girl's arm. On it perch two black birds with their back to the moon, facing the curtain. The slightly higher one has half closed its tiny eyes as if about to start dreaming, and there is something wistful in its air. The lower one has turned towards its mate, but has tucked in its head already and is asleep. Below the curtain is a blank — there is nothing there.

On such a night as this, with a misty full moon and such soft, pretty crab-apple blossoms, why should these good birds on the bough



Winter in the Taihang Mountains by Lu Tsun-pei

lean together dreaming different dreams? And why, so late at night when all is still, is the higher of the two straining to keep its eyes open, unwilling to fall asleep? What is it waiting for? Is it reluctant to lose sight of the pale moonlight? Or of the flimsy curtain? No, decidedly no! You must look under the curtain, you must look inside the curtain — you must look for the one who has rolled up the curtain! So this is the bird's secret. It is not the moon alone which is enchanted, nor yet the bird alone. But how can I bear to see the person behind the curtain so near and yet so far? If I shout at the top of my voice, will you come out?

This picture is constructed with such economy of line and its colours are so tender that its loveliness is enough to move any spectator. And though it is such a small scroll, the depth of feeling conveyed is more than enough to penetrate to your marrows. This painting made me catch my breath in amazement, and stirred a longing I could not overcome. That is why I have recorded my impressions in detail here. However, as I know nothing of either Chinese or Western painting, connoisseurs are bound to laugh at my remarks. Well, let them!

February 1, 1924
Wenchow

II
GREEN

The second time I visited the Hsienyen Mountain I was staggered by the green of Plum Rain Pool.

Plum Rain Pool is at the foot of a waterfall, the lowest of the three waterfalls on Hsienyen. If you come near to the mountain, you hear the gurgle and plash, and looking up see a belt of sparkling white water edged by two moist black borders. First we reached Plum Rain Pavilion. This stands opposite the waterfall, and seated beside it you need not raise your head to see the whole cascade. At the foot of the pavilion is the deep Plum Rain Pool. The pavilion stands on a projecting rock with nothing above or below it, like an eagle poised in the sky with outstretched wings. Mountains on three sides form a semi-circle round it, making you feel as if at the bottom of a well. It was a hazy autumn day when we went there. Fleecy clouds floated overhead, and rich green oozed from the moisture on the face of the rock and on the clumps of grass. The waterfall seemed unusually clamorous too. It plunged down like a smooth length of whole material; then it was irrevocably torn into silken tatters large and small. And as it charged past the sharp-edged rock, foam like

chips of jade spattered wildly. This spatter of brilliant, scintillating foam looked from a distance like a shower of minute white plum petals fluttering slowly down. They say this is the origin of the name Plum Rain Pool. But I think it would be more accurate to compare it to willow seeds. For when a breeze springs up and the specks scatter with the wind, they look even more like willow-down. — Suddenly a few drops sprayed against our warm breasts, piercing our clothes at once and disappearing for ever.

The flashing green of Plum Rain Pool was beckoning to us, and we set out to seize its elusive splendour. Clutching the grass and grasping jagged rocks, we cautiously made our way down, till dipping our heads to pass through a low stone gate we came to the edge of the broad, deep, emerald pool. The waterfall was so close I could have touched it, but already I was oblivious to it. My heart was dancing with the green of the pool. That intoxicating hue was spread out like a huge lotus leaf, the whole of it a quite fantastic green. I wanted to throw out my arms and embrace it — but this was a wild impulse. When I stood at the water's edge and looked over the pool, it still seemed a fair expanse. This smooth-spread, compact green is utterly charming. It undulates and ripples like the folds of a young wife's skirt; it palpitates like a maiden's heart when first she falls in love; it glimmers as if coated with oil, soft and light as the white of an egg, reminding you of the silkiest skin you ever touched. It is unmixed, too, with any dust or dregs, remaining one whole sheet of enchanting turquoise, a single, translucent colour — yet one you cannot see through! I have noticed how the green willows sweeping the ground at Shihchahai Park in Peking seem too pale and gosling-yellow, and how the high, dense "green wall" near Hupao Temple at Hangchow seems too solid with its endless green grass and foliage. For the rest, the waves of the West Lake are too bright, while those of the Chinhuai River are too dark. Then what can I compare you to, my darling? What comparison can there be? This pool must be very deep to produce this remarkable green, as if a fragment of the deep blue sky had melted here to make this exquisite colour. You intoxicating green! If I could make a girdle out of you, I would give it to that graceful dancing girl so that she could whirl and flutter with the wind. If I could make a pair of eyes out of you, I would give them to that blind girl who loves to sing, so that she could have bright eyes and perfect eyesight. I cannot bear to leave you — how can I leave you? I stroke and caress you as if you were a girl of twelve or thirteen. I carry you to my lips, as if I were kissing her. Would you like me to give you a name? What about Girl Green?

The second time I visited Hsienyen I was staggered by the green of Plum Rain Pool.

February 8, 1924
Wenchow

III
THE WHITE CASCADE

A few friends took me to see the White Cascade.

This is another waterfall, but how thin and tenuous! Sometimes it sheds a white radiance, yet when you look closely this disappears — only drifting mist remains. I imagine the "misty garment" of old legend was like this. The reason for this phenomenon is a sudden chasm in the rock; when the water reaches this point it finds no support and takes a leap into the void, attenuating in this thin, tenuous manner. It is at its most miraculous as it falls. The white light is transformed into drifting smoke, and that into a shadow, while at moments even the shadow vanishes. At times a light breeze rises and bears up the shadow in its slender fingers, bending it into a soft arc; but the moment its grip relaxes the arc contracts again like an elastic. So I wonder if a pair of secret and skilful hands are not weaving these shadows into a magic web — and not allowing the breeze to snatch them away.

In that magic web may be woven enchantment — my captivation is firm proof of this.

March 16, 1924
Ningpo

* * *

MY FATHER'S BACK

Though it is over two years since I saw my father, I can never forget my last view of his back. That winter my grandmother died, and my father's official appointment was terminated, for troubles never come singly. I went from Peking to Hsuchow, to go back with him for the funeral. When I joined him in Hsuchow I found the courtyard strewn with things and could not help shedding tears at the thought of granny.

"What's past is gone," said my father. "It's no use grieving. Heaven always leaves us some way out."

Once home he sold property and mortgaged the house to clear our debts, besides borrowing money for the funeral. Those were dismal days for our family, thanks to the funeral and father's unemployment. After the burial he decided to go to Nanking to look for a situation, while I was going back to Peking to study, so we travelled together. A friend kept me in Nanking for a day to see the sights, and the next morning I was to cross the Yangtse to Pukow to take the afternoon train to the north. As father was busy he had decided not to see me off, and he asked a waiter we knew at our hotel to take me to the station, giving him repeated and most detailed instructions. Even so, afraid the fellow might let me down, he worried for quite a time. As a matter of fact I was already twenty and had travelled to and from Peking on several occasions, so there was no need for all this fuss. But after much hesitation he finally decided to see me off himself, though I told him again and again there was no need.

"Never mind," he said. "I don't want them to go."

We crossed the Yangtse and arrived at the station, where I bought a ticket while he saw to my luggage. This was so bulky that we had to hire a porter, and father started bargaining over the price. I was such a bright young man that I thought some of his remarks undignified, and butted in myself. But eventually he got them to agree to a price, and saw me on to the train, choosing me a seat by the door, on which I spread the black sheepskin coat he had made me. He warned me to be on my guard during the journey, and to take care at night not to catch cold. Then he urged the attendant to keep an eye on me, while I laughed up my sleeve at him — all such men understood was money! And wasn't I old enough to look after myself? Ah, thinking back, what a bright young man I was!

"Don't wait, father," I said.

He looked out of the window.

"I'll just buy you a few tangerines," he said. "Wait here, and don't wander off."

Just outside the station were some vendors. To reach them he had to cross the lines, which involved jumping down from the platform and clambering up again. As my father is a stout man this was naturally not easy for him. But when I volunteered to go instead he would not hear of it. So I watched him in his black cloth cap and jacket and dark blue cotton-padded gown, as he waddled to the tracks and climbed slowly down — not so difficult after all. But when he had crossed the lines he had trouble clambering up the other side. He clutched the platform with both hands and tried to heave his legs up, straining to the left. At the sight of his burly back tears started to my eyes, but I wiped them hastily so that neither he nor anyone else might see them. When next I looked out he was on his way

back with some ruddy tangerines. He put these on the platform before climbing slowly down to cross the lines, which he did after picking the fruit up. When he reached my side I was there to help him up. We boarded the train together and he plumped the tangerines down on my coat. Then he brushed the dust from his clothes, as if that was a weight off his mind.

"I'll be going now, son," he said presently. "Write once you get there."

I watched him walk away. After a few steps he turned back to look at me.

"Go on in!" he called. "There's no one in the compartment."

When his back disappeared among the bustling crowd I went in and sat down, and my eyes were wet again.

The last few years father and I have been moving from place to place, while things have been going from bad to worse at home. When he left his family as a young man to look for a living, he succeeded in supporting himself and did extremely well. No one could have foreseen such a come-down in his old age! The thought of this naturally depressed him, and as he had to vent his irritation somehow, he often lost his temper over trifles. That was why his manner towards me had gradually changed. But during these last two years of separation he has forgotten my faults and simply wants to see me and my son. After I came north he wrote to me:

"My health is all right, only my arm aches so badly I find it hard to hold the pen. Probably the end is not far away."

When I read this, through a mist of tears I saw his blue cotton-padded gown and black jacket once more as his burly figure walked away from me. Shall we ever meet again?

October 1925
Peking

Translated by Gladys Yang

Selections from the Classics

A JOURNEY INTO STRANGE LANDS

Li Ju-chen (c. 1763-1830)

The excerpts of the novel Flowers in the Mirror *published here are taken from chapters 7 to 40. As no chapters are translated in full, we have dispensed with chapter headings and numbers. For more information on this novel and its author see* Some Notes on Flowers in the Mirror *on p. 144 of this issue.*

. . . Now there was a licentiate* named Tang Ao of the county of Hoyuan in Lingnan, who had lost his first wife and married another from the Lin family. Though he was eager to pass the higher examinations and become an official, Tang liked nothing better than roaming the country. And since he spent the better part of each year in travel, giving only half his mind to his studies, often as he took the provincial examination he never succeeded in passing.

One year he tried again, though, and this time passed the provincial examinations and came second in the palace test. But one of the censors slandered him to the empress, saying that Tang Ao had been in league with traitors and was not a loyal subject, that if he was given an appointment he would certainly form a faction, and that it would be better to degrade him to the status of a common citizen as a warning to all those in league with evil men. As a result of this report, Tang was demoted to his old rank of licentiate.

This threw him into such a frenzy that he could think of nothing else, and he determined to leave the dusty world. Sending his man home and travelling light, he roamed the country trying to forget his sorrows. He climbed all the mountains in his way and boated on all the lakes and rivers, until six months had passed and spring was at hand.

* A scholar who had passed the prefectural examination, one of the lowest examinations taken by those who wanted to enter the civil service.

At last he reached that part of Lingnan where his wife's brother Lin Chih-yang lived. This was less than thirty *li* from his own home, yet close as it was he did not want to go back to face his brother and wife. He decided to make another trip instead, but could not think where to go. In low spirits, he ordered his boat to be moored and went ashore. He had not taken many steps when he saw an old building in the distance, and upon going nearer discovered that it was a temple to the God of Dreams.

"I have turned fifty," reflected Tang with a sigh. "If I think back, the past is just like a dream. Good dreams and bad — I've had both. Now that I have seen through worldly vanities, I had better find some immortal to teach me the Truth. I have not consulted any oracle yet — why not ask this god for guidance?"

Going into the shrine he offered a silent prayer, bowed before the image and sat down beside it. Then he saw a boy with cropped hair approach.

"My master invites you in, sir," said this lad. "He has something to say to you."

Tang followed the boy into the inner hall, where an old man came out to greet him. He promptly stepped forward and bowed, and they sat down in the places of host and guest.

"May I know your illustrious name?" inquired Tang. "What may I have the honour of doing for you?"

"My name is Meng, and I have been living in Jushih Temple," replied the old man. "I took the liberty of asking you here because you were thinking of finding an immortal and seeking for the Truth. May I ask you, sir, what grounds you have for making such a request? What arts can you command? How do you mean to go about this business?"

"I have no special grounds," answered Tang. "I am looking for an immortal because I want to leave the dusty world, renouncing the seven passions and six desires. As my whole mind is set on a life of contemplation, I shall surely be able to gain immortality."

"You make it sound easy, sir!" The old man laughed. "But when you speak of purifying your heart and doing away with desire, this is simply an attempt to prolong your life and rid yourself of illness. Keh Hung the saint was right when he said: 'A man who would become an immortal must start with the virtues of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence and faithfulness. Unless he has led a virtuous life, it is no use his seeking the Truth. To become an earthly immortal he must do three hundred good deeds, to become a heavenly immortal one thousand three hundred.' Now you, sir, have no great achievements, no writings and no good deeds to your credit. You are

wasting your time seeking for immortality when you have nothing to build on. That is trying to catch fish up a tree."

"I am a poor simpleton," rejoined Tang. "Now that I have had the benefit of your instructions I shall do good deeds in the hope of finding the Truth. I used to long for advancement to restore the imperial house of Tang and deliver the people from their sorrows by good government. But as soon as I passed the examinations I met with unexpected misfortune, and did not know what I could do. What is your advice, father?"

"I am sorry you had this disappointment, sir. But it may prove a blessing in disguise. If you abandon all vanities and make a search elsewhere, you will win the Fairy Isles and the ranks of the immortals. You are destined for such a fate, sir. Go boldly ahead, and your desire may be granted when least you expect it. Since you condescended to consult me, I have told you what is needed — the rest is up to you."

Before Tang could ask further questions the old man disappeared. Hastily rubbing his eyes and staring around, he found himself still sitting beside the shrine, and realized he had been dreaming. When he stood up and looked at the image, he recognized the old man of his dream. He kowtowed again before returning to his boat and embarking.

Soon his junk moored before the house of his brother-in-law, Lin Chih-yang. Loads of merchandise were being carried out and, judging by the commotion, they were about to set out on a long journey. Lin came from the province of Hopei, but had spent most of his life in Lingnan and was a sea-trader. He had lost his parents many years before this, and his wife, a daughter of the Lu family, generally accompanied him on his voyages. He had now prepared for another trip, entrusting his household to his mother-in-law, and was just on the point of leaving when Tang arrived. After greeting him, Lin took his brother-in-law in to see his wife.

"We have not met for many years, brother," said Tang. "I was hoping to have a good talk with you, but I find your household in a rare commotion. Am I right in thinking you are just off on a voyage?"

"I have not been abroad for several years on account of illness," replied Lin. "Now I am glad to say my health is better, and I mean to venture abroad taking a few trifles overseas. That is better than sitting at home eating up my estate. It is my old trade, and I must resign myself to its hardships again."

Here was the very chance Tang was looking for.

"I have travelled every year till now I have seen nearly all there is to be seen," he said. "And since last leaving the capital I have felt out of sorts and depressed. I was just wishing I could

make an ocean voyage to forget my troubles by exploring the islands. And here you are setting out — what a happy coincidence! Will you take me with you? I have several hundred taels of silver with me as travelling expenses, so I can promise not to be a burden to you. And I shall fall in with any wishes you may have regarding payment for my board and passage."

"Why, brother, we are close kinsmen," protested Lin. "How can you speak of paying for your board and passage? Wife!" He turned to her. "Did you hear what your brother-in-law said?"

"Ours is a large, sea-worthy junk," she told him. "One extra passenger will make no difference, and your board is not worth mentioning. But the ocean is not like our inland rivers and lakes. We are used to it and think nothing of it, but a faint-hearted traveller is terrified by his first taste of the wind and waves at sea. You scholars like to sip tea from morning till night, and must wash and bathe every day. Once on board, though, a bath is out of the question — everything is rough and ready. There's barely enough fresh water to wet your gullet, let alone drink your fill. You're used to comfort, brother. You could never put up with such hardships."

"Out at sea we are at the mercy of the wind," continued Lin. "I'd think twice about it, brother, if I were you. If you ruin your career because of a passing whim, won't you hold it against us later?"

"Your sister has often told me that because sea water is too salty you take a supply of fresh water and have to eke it out," said Tang. "But luckily I don't care for tea at all. I can do without baths too. As for the danger of storms at sea, I have travelled enough on the Yangtse and the great lakes not to worry about them. You say there is no knowing when we may be back, and you are afraid of holding up my advancement by making me miss the next examination. But I've given up all thought of an official career. The longer we are away, the better I shall like it. What could I hold against you?"

"If you are sure, I won't try to stop you," said Lin. "But when you left home, did you tell my sister your plans?"

"More or less. But to set your mind at rest I will write another letter home and tell her the date on which we shall be leaving. How about that?"

When Lin saw that Tang's mind was made up and that there was no gainsaying him, he had to agree.

Soon all was ready, and they went by skiffs to the harbour. When the sailors had loaded the cargo they took sampans to the junk, and set sail at once as the wind lay in the right quarter.

It was now the middle of the first month, and the weather was fine and clear. After sailing for several days they reached the open sea, and Tang gazed about him with exhilaration. Well does the proverb say: One who has seen the ocean thinks nothing of inland waters. He was in raptures. After sailing for many days they rounded Mount Portal and scudded before a following wind, uncertain how far they had gone.

Very soon a mountain range came into sight.

"That is the most imposing island we have seen," remarked Tang. "May I ask you its name, brother?"

"It is called East Gate Mountain, and is the first great range of the eastern sea," Lin told him. "The scenery is said to be magnificent, but though I have passed this way several times I have never been ashore. If you care to, we can anchor here awhile and explore the place together."

The name East Gate sounded familiar to Tang.

"If this is East Gate Mountain," he observed, "aren't we near the Land of Courtesy and the Kingdom of the Great?"

"We are," replied Lin. "East of this mountain lies the Land of Courtesy, the north border of which adjoins the Kingdom of the Great. How did you know that, brother?"

"I heard that beyond the sea lay East Gate Mountain and the Land of Courtesy, where all men dress most decorously and defer to one another. To its north, I was told, lay the Kingdom of the Great, where men cannot walk but travel about on clouds. Is that a fact?"

"I have been to the Kingdom of the Great," answered Lin. "All the people there have clouds attached to their feet and float comfortably along. Every soul without exception in the Land of Courtesy is a paragon of politeness. Beyond these two countries lies Black Tooth Kingdom, whose inhabitants are black from head to foot. There are weird-shaped creatures too in the lands of the Restless and the Childless, as you shall see for yourself when we get there, brother."

By now the junk had moored at the foot of the mountain, and the two of them landed and began to climb, Lin armed with a musket, Tang with a sword. They made their way up by a zigzag path across the foremost crag, and found a magnificent view stretching to the far horizon.

On a distant peak appeared a strange beast something like a boar. It was six feet long and four feet high, dark grey in colour, with two great ears and four long tusks like an elephant's.

"You seldom see a beast with such long tusks," marvelled Tang. "Do you know what it is, brother?"

"I'm afraid I don't. I should have asked our helmsman to come with us. He has sailed the high seas for years, and knows these parts like the back of his hand. He knows every single strange plant, wild beast or bird. Next time we come out on a jaunt I shall ask him too."

"If you have such a useful man aboard, we must certainly take him along. What is his name? Is he a scholar?"

"His name is Tuo and he is the ninth of his generation. Because he is old, we call him Ninth Uncle Tuo, and he considers that his name. As he is by way of being a Mr. Know-All, the seamen call him Mr. Know-Nothing to tease him. He studied when he was young, but never passed the examinations, so he gave up book learning for overseas trading. Later on he lost his money, and took to being a helmsman. He hasn't worn a scholar's cap for years. He's an honest, thoroughly knowledgeable fellow. Though he's over eighty this year he's still very spry, and walks like the wind. He and I get on well together, and as he happens to be a kinsman of my wife, I asked him specially to come on this trip."

Just then who should come down the hillside but Tuo himself. Lin made haste to greet him, and Tang stepped forward with clasped hands to bow.

"We have met before, uncle, but never had a good talk," said Tang. "My brother has just informed me that you are my kinsman and my senior in learning. I should have paid my respects long before this — please excuse my remissness."

Tuo made a modest rejoinder.

"I expect you have come here to stretch your legs after being confined on the boat, uncle," said Lin. "We were just talking about you. You're the very man we want." He pointed to the distance. "Can you tell us the name of that strange beast with the tusks?"

"That's a *tang-kang*," Tuo told them. "It is called after its cry. As it only shows itself when times are good, this sudden appearance must mean the world is at peace."

Before he had finished, the creature brayed: "Tang-kang!" After a few cries it left the hillside, dancing.

* * *

"Do you see that forest in front, uncle?" asked Lin. "What are those tall, stout trees? Let us go and have a look. They may have some fruit we can pick."

They made their way at once to the noble forest, and soon came to a great tree fifty feet high, and so huge that five men would be needed to encircle it. Instead of branches it bore countless tufts like the beards of an ear of corn, each over ten feet long.

"The ancients spoke of Corn Trees," commented Tang. "That is what this looks like."

"What a pity the corn isn't ripe yet," said Tuo, nodding. "If you took a few grains back, they would be real curiosities."

"All the grain from last year must have been eaten by the beasts," said Tang. "There isn't one on the ground."

"However greedy the wild creatures are, they could hardly eat every grain," protested Lin. "Let's search the undergrowth. If we can find one that will be something new."

Each made a search, and before long Lin held up a huge grain.

"I've found one!" he shouted.

The two others came up, and saw that the grain was three inches wide and five long.

"If this were cooked, it would measure at least a foot!" remarked Tang.

"This is nothing special," Tuo assured him. "Once when I was abroad I ate a huge grain of rice which kept me satisfied for a whole year."

"It must have been twenty feet long!" exclaimed Lin. "How did you cook it? That sounds like a tall story."

"It was five inches by a foot, and less than twenty feet when cooked," replied Tuo. "But after eating it your mouth felt fresh and your spirits suddenly lifted; you had no desire for food for another year. You're not the only one to doubt that story, Brother Lin — I didn't believe it myself at first. But then I heard that during the reign of Emperor Hsuan a part of the tribute sent by the Land of Peiyin was Refreshing Rice — one grain of which could satisfy a man for a year — and I realized that was probably what I had eaten."

"No wonder archers who miss a pigeon by a couple of feet complain that they just missed by one grain," interjected Lin. "I used to be very sceptical, and couldn't believe there were such big grains in the world. Now, uncle, I know that by one grain they meant a grain of this Refreshing Rice — cooked."

"It's too bad of you to say cooked." Tang laughed. "If poor marksmen heard you, brother, they might smash your jaw."

Suddenly a dwarf appeared in the distance on a tiny horse no more than eight inches long. Tuo immediately darted after it. Lin was too busy looking for grain to have eyes for anything else, but there was no holding back Tang, who rushed in pursuit of the dwarf as it hurried forward. Spry as Tuo was, he was not quite quick enough, and having tripped over a stone on the rugged path as he was overtaking the dwarf, he could only hobble along. This gave Tang a chance to pass him, and after half a *li*'s chase he finally seized the dwarf and swallowed it.

Presently Tuo came up, panting, on Lin's arm. He looked at Tang and sighed enviously.

" 'Each bite and sup is predestined,' " he quoted. "How much more so in an important matter like this! You were born lucky, Brother Tang, to get such a thing without any effort on your part."

"Uncle Tuo tells me you caught a dwarf riding a small horse," said Lin. "From a distance you seemed to be putting it in your mouth. Did you eat horse, rider and all? And what is this talk of luck?"

"This dwarf horse and rider are Live Fungus," Tang told him. "I did not know about it until I left the capital this time, disappointed of becoming an official, and took to reading about the diets the ancients followed to attain long life. Then among other things I read that if you meet a dwarf riding a cart or horse five or six inches long in the mountains, that is Live Fungus, which gives long life to whoever eats it and enables him to find the Truth and become an immortal. I do not know how much there is in this; but on the assumption that it could hardly hurt me, I caught it and ate it without offering you any."

"If that's true, you are now an immortal, brother!" Lin chuckled. "After eating Live Fungus you will never be hungry again, but can wander about as the fancy takes you. I am hungry though. You didn't by any chance leave a leg of that dwarf horse and rider to take the edge off my appetite, did you?"

"If you're hungry, Brother Lin, there's something here you can eat," suggested Tuo. He plucked a dark plant that was growing in the green grass. "This will not only stop your hunger but clear your head."

Lin took the plant which tapered like a leek, with green flowers on a tender stem. He put it in his mouth and nodded his approval.

"Very fragrant and tasty, uncle. What is its name? If ever I am hungry when climbing in future, I shall eat some."

"I once read that in Magpie Mountain across the ocean grows a dark green flower like a leek, which serves as a food. This must be it," said Tang.

Tuo nodded his head several times, and they went on.

"Amazing!" cried Lin. "I don't feel hungry any more. This is a wonderful plant — I must take two loads of it to the boat so that I shall have something to eat if we run out of food. Isn't this simpler, brother, than the old method of concocting elixirs?"

"This plant is quite rare overseas," Tuo warned him. "You will never find so much. In any case, once plucked it starts to wither, while to stay your hunger you have to eat it fresh — dried, it is no use at all."

At that moment Tang plucked a green plant from the roadside. It had a leaf like a pine-needle but was emerald green, and on it was a seed the size of a grain of mustard. Removing this seed and pointing at the leaf, he said:

"As you have just eaten one plant, brother, let me eat this to keep you company."

With that he swallowed the leaf, laid the seed in his palm and blew on it. At once there sprouted another green leaf like a pine-needle, about a foot in length. He blew again, and it grew another foot. He blew three times till it was three feet long, whereupon he ate it.

"If you go on munching at this rate, brother, you'll soon have eaten all the plants here!" laughed Lin. "How does this seed change into a plant like that?"

"This is the herb called Soaring, otherwise known as Mustard-in-the-palm," was Tuo's answer. "When you hold the seed in your palm and blow on it, it grows a foot each time until it is three feet long. Anyone who eats it can soar aloft, hence its name."

"If it can do that, let me eat some too!" cried Lin. "Then when I go home and thieves climb the roof of my house, I can soar through the air to catch them. Very useful, to be sure!"

But though they searched high and low, they could find no more.

"It's no use your looking, Brother Lin," rejoined old Tuo. "This plant grows only when blown on, and who is there on this bare mountainside to do that? What Brother Tang ate just now was probably some stray seed blown on by a bird in search of food, which fell to earth and took root. It is not a common herb — you can't possibly hope to find it. In all my years of travel overseas this is the first time I've seen it, and if our friend here hadn't blown on it I shouldn't have known that this was Soaring."

"So after eating this you can stand in mid-air," marvelled Lin. "Amazing! Do have a try, brother. I shan't believe it till I've seen it."

"I have barely finished eating the plant," protested Tang. "It can hardly take effect so quickly — never mind, I'll have a try."

He leapt up and soared aloft, dancing, to a height of nearly sixty feet, and then stood in mid-air as firmly as if he had both feet planted on the ground. There he stayed without moving.

Lin clapped his hands.

"So you can walk on clouds now, brother!" He laughed. "This plant really makes you soar through the air — what a joke! Why not go a little further? If you find this way of travelling easy, you can sail through the sky in future without touching the ground at all. What a saving of shoes and socks!"

Then Tang made an attempt to walk through the air, but no sooner raised one foot than down he toppled.

"There's a date tree there with some big dates right at the top." Lin pointed it out. "Why not pick a few, brother, as you can soar like this? They'll help to quench our thirst."

But when they reached the tree and looked at it carefully, it was not a date at all.

"This is called Knife-flavour-nut because its flavour changes when cut," Tuo informed them. "Those who eat it become earthly immortals. If we can lay hands on this, even if we don't become immortals we shall prolong our lives. Unfortunately these nuts only grow at the top of the tree, over a hundred feet high. Not even Brother Tang can reach them."

"Keep jumping, brother," urged Lin. "You may be able to make it."

"I can only rise fifty to sixty feet," replied Tang. "This tree is so high, how can I reach its top? You're like the frog who wanted to eat a swan."

But Lin would not take *no* for an answer, and lowered his head in thought.

"I have it!" His face cleared. "After leaping into the air, brother, rest for a while and then take another leap. That way you'll mount step by step as if you were on a ladder, and you're bound to get the nuts."

Still Tang was reluctant to try, and Lin had to urge him repeatedly before he took off again. After stopping in the air to take a firm stand, he leapt up vigorously once more; but this time he flapped wildly like a cicada's wings, and very soon — like a kite with a snapped string — he fluttered down to the earth.

"Why didn't you jump *up*, brother?" Lin stamped impatiently. "What was the point of jumping down like that?"

"I did try to go up," retorted Tang. "But I couldn't help myself. Don't think I came down on purpose."

"To go up, you must thrust hard with both feet," explained Tuo. "As you weren't on firm land, of course you came down. If you could soar up step by step the way Brother Lin says, several thousand leaps would take you to Heaven, wouldn't they? It's not as simple as that."

"I smell something very sweet," interjected Tang. "Are these nuts fragrant too?"

"If you sniff carefully, the fragrance seems to be carried here by the breeze," said Tuo. "Suppose we look around and try to track it down?"

They set out in different directions.

When Tang had crossed a wood and a precipice and hunted high and low, he saw growing from a crevice in a roadside boulder a red grass about two feet high, bright as vermilion and very pretty indeed. After examining it carefully, he realized what it was.

"The books on the diet for immortals speak of Vermilion Grass shaped like a small mulberry, with a coral stem and blood-red juice," he thought. "If you dip gold or jade in it they turn to mud, so mixed with gold it is called Gold Sauce and mixed with jade Jade Sauce. All who eat it become saints or supermen. I am glad Tuo and Lin are not with me, for this shows I was fated to find fairy herbs today. I have no gold with me, though — what can I do?"

Then he remembered a jade emblem on his cap, and decided to use that. He unfastened the emblem and plucked the grass at its root, crushed it in his hand and rubbed it on the jade, which sure enough changed into bright red mud. When he put this in his mouth, he was struck by its penetrating aroma. And as soon as he swallowed it, his energy increased a hundredfold.

"This Vermilion Grass refreshes at once!" he gloated. "It shows the miraculous power of these fairy herbs. Once I can do without mortal food, the rest should be easy. I wonder if all these fairy plants I have eaten today have increased my strength or not."

By the roadside he caught sight of a fallen tombstone, which must have weighed at least six hundred pounds. Walking over, he bent down and lifted it without the slightest effort. Then, thanks to Soaring, he launched himself up and hovered in the air for an instant before descending slowly. After one or two steps he set the stone down again.

"Since eating Vermilion Grass my senses seem strangely acute," he marvelled. "I can remember all the classics I read as a boy, and see in my mind's eye all the essays and poems I ever wrote. What a wonderful plant!"

At this point up came old Tuo leading Lin.

"Why is your mouth so red, Brother Tang?" he asked.

"I'll tell you frankly, uncle," answered Tang. "Just now I found some Vermilion Grass, and took the liberty of eating it without waiting for you."

"What has it done for you, brother?" asked Lin.

"This plant grows from the congealed essence of heaven and earth," replied Tuo. "Those who are inclined that way become earthly immortals after eating it. In all my travels, search as I might, I never found it; but today Brother Tang has been the one to discover it again — he is destined to be a saint. We can be sure that he will wander beyond the confines of this world and rank as an immortal

in future. Well, well — who could have guessed that this scent would help him to attain immortality?"

"Why are you frowning, brother, if you're soon to become an immortal?" demanded Lin. "Are you homesick, or afraid of being a fairy?"

"I'm puzzled by the pain in my stomach since I ate that Vermilion Grass," responded Tang.

Just then they heard a rumble in his belly, and there was a bad smell. Lin put his hand to his nose.

"Good!" he cried. "You must feel better now that this grass has driven out that bad odour, brother. Do you feel empty, or have you still a bellyful of all the poems and essays you ever wrote?"

Tang looked down thoughtfully, and exclaimed in surprise.

"Just after eating that grass," he told old Tuo, "I remembered all my youthful compositions word for word, from beginning to end. But since this belly-ache I can only remember about one-tenth — somehow or other I have forgotten the rest."

"That is strange," agreed old Tuo.

"What's strange about it?" asked Lin. "My guess is that the nine-tenths he can't remember came out with that bad smell just now. The Vermilion Grass found them unsavoury and got rid of them, showing them up, incidentally, in their true colours — I got a good whiff of them. It's no use trying to recall them. The tenth that's left is all right, so the Vermilion Grass lets you keep that safe in your belly, where of course you can remember it any time. What worries me, though, is whether the grass took pity on that paper with which you came second in the palace test. If you want to publish your essays, brother, take my advice and don't ask anyone to make a selection — just cut out the nine-tenths you've forgotten today and print the remaining tenth, which is bound to be good. If you print good and bad alike, the Vermilion Grass may take exception to something you think highly of. What a pity this grass is so rare! If we could take some back, think of all the work it would save the printers! As it's so efficacious, why don't you eat a couple of blades too, uncle? Don't you intend to publish anything?"

"I've written a few things in my time," replied the old man with a chuckle. "But after eating this grass I'm afraid I wouldn't remember a single piece. Why don't you eat some, Brother Lin, to get rid of your bad gas?"

"What use would it be to me? I'm not printing a collection of drinks or cookery recipes."

"What do you mean?" asked Tang.

"My belly is just a hold for food and drinks: I can't compare with you two. If I were to print a book, it would be on gastronomy.

But I don't wonder now at your love of travel, brother, for all these strange birds and beasts and these rare plants and fairy herbs we've seen today are most diverting!"

* * *

They were not far from the boat when a huge bird flew out from a copse beside the road. It had boar's tusks and long feathers, but was shaped like a man with human limbs and face. It had two fleshy wings which sprouted from under its ribs, as well as two human heads, one male and one female. And if you looked carefully, their foreheads were branded with the word "unfilial."

"So this is an Unfilial Bird," observed Tuo.

At the word "unfilial," Lin raised his musket and fired, bringing the bird to the ground. And as it tried to take flight again, he hurried over and felled it with a few blows. A closer examination revealed that in addition to the brand "unfilial" on its foreheads, it had "heartless" on its mouths, "immoral" on its shoulders, "philanderer" on the right of its breast and "uxorious" on the left.

"I read of this in an old tale but never believed it," said Tang. "Now I have seen with my own eyes. There are more things in heaven and earth than we imagine. Because the unfilial are so close to beasts, I suppose in their next existence their spirits cannot inhabit human bodies, but their evil humours take the form of this bird."

"Brother Tang has given an apt explanation." Tuo nodded his approval. "I saw such a bird once before, but it had two male heads and was not branded 'philanderer.' There is no such thing as an unfilial woman, so both heads are usually men's; but as these heads keep changing, sometimes both are female. I am told this bird has divine intelligence, and can do good deeds to expiate its crimes. After each good deed one of its brands disappears until finally all have gone, and after a few more years of a virtuous life its feathers drop out and it becomes an immortal."

"This is like the case of the butcher who became an immortal as soon as he put down his knife," observed Tang. "Heaven gives all living creatures a second chance."

Now the sailors who had been to the spring for water came to have a look and asked what had happened.

"If it was unfilial, we need not stand on ceremony!" they shouted. "This fine plumage will make good feather dusters when we get home."

They grabbed a handful each, till feathers were whirling in all directions.

"Though it has that brand on its forehead it was begotten of someone else's evil humours," said Tang. "The bird is not to blame."

"We're plucking out its evil for it," retorted the seamen. "Then it will have to keep to the path of virtue. See how thick its plumage is! It must have been too miserly to part with one feather in its lifetime, but now we shall pluck it properly!"

They had plucked the bird and were starting back to the boat when a stream of foul-smelling glue gushed out of the copse. As they took to their heels a strange, rat-shaped fowl flew out. It was five feet long, with one crimson claw and two great wings. Swooping down on the Unfilial Bird, it bore it off into the air. Lin hastily loaded his musket and took aim, but his fuse was wet and the bird was gone in a flash.

"In all our travels abroad we have never seen a bird like that," remarked the seamen. "Even Ninth Uncle with his great stock of ocean lore, old and new, must be at a loss today."

"That was Flying Saliva," Tuo told them. "That fowl's saliva is like glue. When it is hungry it spits on a tree so that other birds flying past are caught and held there. It probably had not eaten today, that was why the saliva streamed from its beak; but now it should make a good meal of the Unfilial Bird. See how universal the hatred of evil is — men pluck out the Unfilial Bird's feathers and wild creatures devour its flesh!"

This said, they went back together to the junk, and hoisted sail without further delay.

* * *

In a few days they moored at the Land of Courtesy, where Lin disembarked to do business. Tang, who knew this land's reputation for politeness and guessed that it must be a place of great refinement, asked Tuo to go ashore with him to see the sights. A walk of several *li* brought them to the city wall, over the gate of which were inscribed the words: "Goodness Alone Is a Treasure."

Having read this they entered the city, where they found many buildings and many folk buying and selling. The citizens' dress and speech were like those of the Middle Kingdom,* and when Tang knew he could communicate with them he asked an old man the reason for their courtesy. But the old man could not understand him, nor tell him how their land came by its name. Not one of Tang's questions could he answer.

"My guess is that they received this name from their neighbours, as well as their reputation for politeness," said Tuo. "That must be why this old man does not know. We saw examples of their courtesy just now when those farmers let passers-by through their fields

* A conventional name for China.

and travellers ceded right of way. And look how polite they all are, gentry and common folk, rich and poor alike. They deserve their reputation."

"True," replied Tang. "But we must look round carefully to get a better picture of the country."

By now they had come to the busy market-place, where they saw a serving-man fingering some wares.

"Brother," he said to the vendor, "how can I buy such excellent goods for so little? You must raise the price before I can agree. If not, I shall know you don't really want to sell."

"It's the shopman who usually asks a stiff price while the customer haggles," whispered Tang to Tuo. "Now this shopman has stated his price, but instead of bargaining the customer wants to raise it. Whoever heard of such a thing? No wonder they are known for their deference to each other!"

Then they heard the shopman reply:

"I appreciate your concern, but though I am blushing already to have asked so much, you want to shame me further by calling it too little. It is not as if my goods have a fixed price that leaves no margin for profit. As the proverb says: 'The price asked is as high as Heaven, that offered as low as the earth.' Yet instead of lowering it you want to raise it. If you refuse to show any consideration, I shall have to ask you to carry your custom elsewhere — I really cannot agree."

"With us it is always the customer who says 'The price is as high as Heaven,'" Tang pointed out. "That applies to the other saying too. But here the shopman quotes them — how amusing!"

Then the serving-man went on: "It's hardly honest, is it, brother, to ask a low price for such good wares yet accuse me of being inconsiderate? Honesty is the best policy, and everyone has a sense of values. You can't make a fool of me."

Though they bargained for some time, the shopman refused to raise his price. Then the other sulkily paid what was asked, but took only half of the goods. As he turned to go, however, the shopman barred his way, saying he had paid too much and taken too little. Two old men who came by acted as arbiters, and made the customer take four-fifths of the goods at the price agreed on. So a compromise was reached, and the serving-man left.

Meanwhile Tang and Tuo were nodding quietly. After walking a little further, they came upon a soldier who was also making a purchase.

"When I asked the price of your honourable wares, you told me to give what I thought fit," said the soldier. "But when I did,

you complained it was too much, though I'd already come down a good deal. To insist shows not only prejudice but unfairness."

"I dared not fix a price, sir," replied the stall-holder. "I wanted you to decide because my poor goods are neither fresh nor anything special — much inferior to what you'd find elsewhere. As they are not worth half the sum you've offered, I can't possibly take so much!"

"It's usually the customer who claims that the goods are nothing special," commented Tang, "while it's the shopman who says he has come down drastically. Here it's the other way round, though. They have different customs."

"How can you say such a thing?" protested the soldier meanwhile. "I may not be an expert trader, but I know good wares from bad. I'm not such a fool as to take one for the other. When you charge only half what first-class goods are worth, you are cheating people and going in for sharp practice."

"If you really want to help me," retorted the other, "the fairest thing would be to halve your first price. If you think that's too little, I won't presume to argue but will ask you to go and find out the prices elsewhere. Then you'll know I'm not cheating you."

Long as the soldier argued, the other refused to sell till he took a few goods at half the price first offered. Then the customer picked some out and was making off when the stall-holder stopped him, protesting:

"Why just choose the worst and leave the best for me, brother? A man who drives such a hard bargain must seldom succeed in buying anything."

"I let you take an advantage because you insisted." The soldier was indignant. "I took some goods which are not quite your best, for my own peace of mind, not expecting you to start finding fault again. Besides, it's your second-best goods that I want — the best are no use to me, much as I appreciate your kind intentions."

"If you want a cheap line, that's up to you. But seconds are seconds. How can you pay a top price for inferior quality?"

The soldier made no answer, but took his purchases and prepared to go. When the bystanders accused him of underhand treatment, however, he was unable to gainsay them and had to take as much good merchandise as bad.

Having watched this, Tang and Tuo went on till they came upon a farmer buying from a pedlar. The price had been settled, the money paid, and the customer was going off when the pedlar examined the silver carefully and weighed it in his balance.

"Come back, brother!" He hurried after the farmer. "You've given me too much silver and the quality is too good. We always

use the second-grade silver here, so as you have paid in the best quality you ought to make a reduction in the amount, yet instead I find you have given me overweight too. A substantial citizen like you shouldn't haggle over such trifles, but there's no reason why I should suffer either. Please make the usual reduction."

"Don't be so niggardly," retorted the farmer. "If there is too much, just deduct it next time I buy your excellent goods."

He tried to make off, but the pedlar barred the way.

"Now, none of that!" he cried. "Another of my worthy customers left some silver with me last year, saying he would settle next time; but I've not set eyes on him since. As I can find no trace of him anywhere, I shall be in his debt during my next existence. Now that you want to do the same, sir, what will happen if you disappear? In my next life I shall have to toil as a donkey or horse to repay the first gentleman, which will keep me too busy to repay you. That means I shall have to be a donkey or horse in the existence *after* that to settle with you. In my humble opinion, rather than wait till next time you honour me with your custom, you had better settle today. It is simpler that way, because as time goes on you may forget the exact sum."

After much deferring to each other, the farmer took two additional knick-knacks in lieu of his extra silver. Still the pedlar complained that this was too hard a bargain, but as the farmer was now well away there was nothing he could do. Just then a beggar passed by, and the pedlar muttered to himself:

"In his last life this fellow must have cheated someone — that is why he is a beggar now."

Saying this, he weighed the silver again, handed the surplus to the beggar, and moved on.

"The transactions we have seen certainly give a picture of gentlemanly conduct," observed Tang. "No further inquiries are needed. But let us stroll on a little. This is such beautiful country, we may as well see more of its fine scenery."

After rambling for a while they returned to the boat and found Lin already there, having sold all his goods. They set sail without delay.

* * *

They voyaged for several days till they came to the Kingdom of the Great. As this country lay next to the Land of Courtesy, its customs, language and products were much the same; and there was so much commerce between both kingdoms each year on account of their proximity that Lin did not think he could make a profit here,

and decided not to trade. But because Tang wished to look round, they went ashore with old Tuo.

"I have always wanted to come here," confided Tang, "ever since I heard of the Kingdom of the Great where instead of walking men ride about on clouds. Today Heaven has granted my wish."

"We are still over twenty *li* from where they live," Tuo told him. "We must put our best foot forward, for this is a bad road to travel at night. A steep mountain lies ahead, intersected by paths which lead in all directions, and the people here have made this their capital. The mountain is surrounded by paddy fields, but everyone lives up above."

After some hours they approached the mountain, and began to see people in the open country. Two or three feet taller than the men elsewhere, they sailed about on clouds half a foot or so from the ground, and when they wished to stop the clouds would halt. Our three travellers climbed the mountain and threaded their way over two peaks, till a maze of paths lay before them intersecting the summit but not extending outside.

"We seem to have lost our way," said Tuo. "But I see a thatched temple in front. We can ask the way from the monk there."

They walked up to the temple, and were about to knock when an old man arrived carrying a pot of wine and a pig's head. He opened the gate and started in.

"Excuse me, sir," Tang accosted him, "can you tell us the name of this temple? And is there a monk here?"

With a word of apology, the old man hurried in to put down the wine and pork. He returned at once to greet them formally.

"This is a temple to Kuanyin, the Goddess of Mercy," he told them. "I am the monk here, gentlemen."

"If you are a monk, why is your head unshaved?" asked Lin curiously. "As you drink wine and eat pork, no doubt you keep a nun too?"

"The only nun here is my wife. There are just the two of us, and we have looked after this temple since we were young. In our country we never used to speak of monks; but when we heard that in the Celestial Empire all temple attendants since the Han dynasty have shaved their heads and called themselves monks or nuns we decided to follow suit, though we do not fast or shave our heads. So I am a monk and my wife is a nun. May I ask where you three gentlemen are from?"

When Tuo had told him, the old fellow bowed.

"So you are three worthy citizens of the Celestial Empire!" he exclaimed. "Excuse me for not recognizing you. Please come in and have some tea."

"We have yet to cross the mountain, so we must not delay," said Tang.

"What do you call the offspring of monks and nuns?" inquired Lin. "They can hardly be the same as other children."

"My wife and I are the caretakers here," replied the old man with a smile. "As I like other good citizens break no laws and neither steal nor whore, why should my children have a special name? Just tell me what the children of caretakers of Confucian halls are called in your honourable country, and we will call ours the same."

"We have noticed that all your worthy countrymen have clouds under their feet," put in Tang. "Are you born with these?"

"They spring from the feet," replied the old man. "You cannot force them to grow. The most honourable are the many-coloured, and after that the yellow. No distinction is made between the rest, except that the black are the lowest."

"We are a long way from our boat," said Tuo. "May we trouble you, father, to set us on the right road? We must be on our way."

Then the monk pointed out their path.

They threaded their way through the hills to the populous centre of the city, where everything reminded them of the Land of Courtesy, except that the people had clouds of different shapes and colours under their feet. As a beggar passed on clouds of many colours, Tang turned to Tuo.

"How is it, uncle, if many coloured clouds are noble while black are despised, that this beggar has coloured clouds?"

"That monk we met eats meat, drinks wine, and has a wife," pointed out Lin. "He is obviously a time-serving glutton, yet he had multi-coloured clouds too. There can hardly be anything good about this beggar or that monk."

"When I was here before, I asked the same question," said Tuo. "Though some colours are better than others, they depend entirely on a man's character and behaviour, not on his wealth and position. If a man is true and honest, coloured clouds will appear at his feet. If he is evil and vicious, his clouds will be black. These clouds spring from his feet, and their colour is determined by his heart — he has no choice in the matter. That is why the rich and great often have black clouds, while the poor have coloured ones. Still, the general morality here is good, and you find only one or two black clouds out of a hundred. Perhaps because they would be ashamed of the black, they shrink from evil and do as much good as they can. And as there is nothing petty-minded about them, neighbouring peoples call this the Land of the Great. Men far away who do not know the facts assume that all the inhabitants are giants, but this is the real meaning of the name."

"That was puzzling me," agreed Tang. "I had heard that the people here were several dozen feet high, yet they are no taller than we are. So that was simply a rumour."

"It is in the Land of Giants that they are so tall," Tuo informed him. "You will see what real giants are like there."

Just then the passers-by scattered to make way for an official. With a black gauze hat and round collar, a red sunshade carried above him, and a retinue of runners and attendants, he was an imposing sight. But the colour of the clouds at his feet was hidden by a red silk veil.

"No doubt it is so easy for the officials here to move about on clouds that they dispense with carriages," commented Tang. "But why do they wear these foot-veils?"

"Ugly clouds, of a grey-black colour, often spring from their feet, and they are considered unlucky," Tuo explained. "All men with such clouds must have done evil in secret. But though they can deceive their fellows, these clouds are quite pitiless — they turn this unlucky colour and make their owners ashamed to face the world. So they veil their feet from the public eye, like the robber who stopped his own ears to steal a bell. Fortunately these clouds change as a man's heart changes. If he sincerely repents and seeks to do good, his clouds' colour will change accordingly. If he sports an ugly cloud for a long time, the king will look into his case and punish him; and his countrymen will shun him because he refuses to mend his ways but takes delight in evil."

"Heaven is most unfair," was Lin's comment.

"Why do you say that?" asked Tang.

"Isn't it unfair to provide these clouds only for the Land of the Great? If everyone in the world had a label like this, and a black cloud grew from the feet of all skulking rascals to shame them publicly, then every man seeing them would be on his guard, and a very good thing too."

"Not all bad men have black clouds under their feet," said Tuo. "But the black vapour over their heads reaches to Heaven, and that is much worse for them!"

"Why don't I see that black vapour?" demanded Lin.

"You don't see it, but Heaven does, and so it distinguishes between good and bad. It appoints a good end for the good, and an evil end for the evil — all are judged according to fixed principles."

"In that case I won't accuse Heaven of unfairness," conceded Lin.

After wandering for a while they started back to the junk, afraid of being late.

* * *

Some time later they reached the Land of the Restless, where they put in to port and went ashore. All the people on the streets had coal-black faces, and walked with a jerky gait. The travellers' first impression was that this agitation was due to haste, but a closer look revealed that even those sitting or standing kept rocking and rolling without a second's rest.

"The name 'restless' is an apt one," remarked Tang. "No wonder the ancient described them as unable to keep still. They fidget too much to sit or stand quietly."

"They look as if they all had convulsions," declared Lin. "How can they sleep at night with this wiggling and waggling? Thank Heaven I was born in the Middle Kingdom. If I were a native here and had to carry on like this, in less than two days I'd have shaken myself to pieces."

"How long do you suppose they live?" asked Tang. "In view of their busy life and the way they keep on the go every second of the day."

"Men abroad have a saying about this land," Tuo told them. "'The Restless live long.' Though they are always on the go here, their limbs are exercised but not their minds. And as no grain is produced here and they eat only berries and fruit — no cooked food — this helps them all to live to a ripe old age. But I am subject to spells of giddiness, and it makes me dizzy to see all this rocking and wriggling, so if you'll excuse me, I'll go back first. Take your time about looking round."

"This town is a small one with nothing worth seeing," rejoined Tang. "If Ninth Uncle is giddy, let us all go back together."

With that they returned to the boat.

* * *

Aboard they went on talking, and Tang said to Lin:

"At East Gate Mountain, brother, you told me that after the Land of Courtesy and the Kingdom of the Great we would find the Black Teeth — why haven't we seen them yet?"

"Brother Lin was right in saying the Black Teeth are close to the Land of Courtesy," said Tuo. "But they are close by land, not by water. We shan't get there till we have passed the Land of the Childless."

"I assume that is the country otherwise known as Barren," rejoined Tang. "They say the people there never give birth and therefore have no descendants. Is this true?"

"As far as I know," replied Tuo. "I was puzzled to hear that there is no difference between the sexes there. And when I visited the place, the men and women did look pretty much alike."

"Without sex they can hardly have children," said Tang. "But in that case, after one generation dies they should become extinct. How has their race continued since ancient times?"

"Though they cannot give birth, their bodies do not decompose after death," explained Tuo. "After one hundred and twenty years they come to life again. This is what the ancients meant by resurrection after a century. As they live, die and live again in an endless cycle, their number never grows less. Knowing that they will come to life again, they are not very greedy for fame or profit. The fact of man's mortality makes them realize that all fame and profit — even the greatest honour and magnificence — will come to nothing after death, but fade away like a dream. And by their next life the world will have changed, and they will have to struggle all over again if they are ambitious; while before they know where they are, old age will overtake them and the envoy from the underworld will come to fetch them. Seen like this, life is nothing but a dream. So when one of their countrymen dies they say he is asleep, and the living are said to be dreaming. Having seen through life and death, they have little desire for rank and riches, while our blind pursuit of these things is quite unknown."

"If this is true, what fools we are!" exclaimed Lin. "They live again, yet see through riches and rank; while we who have no chance of another life struggle tooth and nail for such things. If the men there knew this, how they would laugh at us!"

"If you are afraid of their laughter, brother, why not overcome your ambitions?" asked Tang.

"Life is only a dream, fame and riches are vanity — if you tell me that, I agree," admitted Lin. "But show me a chance to seize some fame or profit, and like a fool I imagine I am immortal and risk my neck for it. I wish next time that happens someone would punch my head to point out my stupidity, or give me a warning."

"Once you are carried away, I'm afraid you wouldn't listen if I put in a word," said Tuo. "Or, more likely, you would call me a fool."

"Ninth Uncle is right," agreed Tang. "Ambition is a snare and a delusion. While you are preening yourself on your achievements, how can anyone disillusion you? You will persist until it is time to sleep. And only when your eyes close will you realize you have been wasting your time, for life is simply a dream. If men would only see this, even if they could not overcome their ambition once for all, a better understanding of the matter would make them think twice and show more tolerance, in which case they could save themselves a great deal of trouble. This is not only a good philosophy of

life, but a splendid recipe for happiness. The men of the Land of the Childless could do no more than this."

* * *

One day they reached the Kingdom of Black Teeth, where the people were jet-black from head to foot, and had black teeth as well. Their red lips, red eyebrows and red clothes only emphasized their general murkiness. Tang assumed that being black they must be ugly, but unable to see them clearly from the boat he asked old Tuo to go ashore with him.

When Lin knew that they meant to take a stroll, he went ashore first to sell cosmetics, and the other two presently followed.

"Do you think their behaviour matches their appearance?" asked Tang.

"They're a long way by sea from the Land of Courtesy, but its neighbour by land," replied Tuo. "I doubt if they can be too barbarous. I have passed this way many times but never come ashore, for they look so repulsive they can hardly be worth talking to. Thanks to you, brother, this is my first chance to observe them. We shall probably just find this an opportunity to stretch our legs, and must not expect very much. One look at them and you can imagine the rest."

Tang nodded several times, and they entered the city. Brisk business was being done, and the language was fairly easy to understand. The women in the streets did not mix with the men, for in the large main highway the men kept to the right and the women to the left — a fair distance from each other. Unaware of this, Tang headed towards the left until someone called out:

"Will the honourable visitors kindly keep to this side!"

They hurriedly crossed the road, and found that they had been on the women's side.

"I never noticed!" Tang smiled. "Black as they are, they observe the due distinctions between the sexes. See, uncle, the men and women in the street don't talk to each other but walk by with lowered heads and no lewd glances. I never expected them to be so correct. They are obviously influenced by the Land of Courtesy."

"When we were there, they told us that all their customs and civilization came from the Middle Kingdom. Now the Black Teeth have learned from the Land of Courtesy; so as a centre of influence our country is a mother to all the others."

As they were talking they heard a cry:

"Who'll buy my rouge and powder?"

And there was Lin with a bundle in his hand.

"Why have you been so long, brother?" asked Tuo.

"When I heard you were coming ashore to see the sights I decided to do some trading," answered Lin. "But not having dealt here before, I didn't know what would sell best and brought cosmetics, because these people are blacker than charcoal. Who could have guessed that the women here think it vulgar to paint and powder, and not one of them would buy — they all wanted books instead. I couldn't understand why till I made inquiries and learned that their social standing is based entirely on book learning."

"How is that?" inquired Tang.

"The custom here is to honour men for their learning, no matter whether they are rich or poor. The same thing goes for women. When girls grow up, if they are good scholars their hands are asked in marriage; but if they are dunces, even daughters of great houses have no suitors. So all the boys and girls in this country study. Next year, apparently, the queen has arranged for another general examination for women, and since word of this spread they all want to become licentiates and are more eager than ever to buy books. When I found this out, I knew I couldn't get rid of my goods but went on trying till I met you."

They had now reached a crowded part of the town.

"These people are so dark that at first I rather averted my eyes from them," confessed Tang. "But now I see everybody on the road is extraordinarily handsome, while men and women alike have a most scholarly air. An elegant refinement seems to radiate from their blackness. Indeed, if you look closely, you realize that dark glossiness is just the thing, and the very thought of powder and paint disgusts you. They make me blush for my own ugliness. Here, among all this scholarly refinement, I realize how disgustingly vulgar we must look. Rather than stay to be laughed at, let us leave as fast as we can!"

The three of them slunk furtively back, comparing the Black Teeth's dignity and distinction with the very sorry figures they cut themselves. The result was that they found it equally hard to keep moving or to stand still, to walk briskly, slowly or at a moderate speed. Thoroughly out of countenance, they braced themselves to proceed at a steady pace, with arched backs, expanded chests and stiff necks, their eyes fixed straight ahead as they plodded on step by step — the traditional scholar's gait. So at last they got out of the city, pleased to find the district outside almost deserted. Then they stretched themselves, shook their heads once or twice, and relaxed with deep sighs of relief.

"You hit the nail on the head just now, brother," said Lin. "Close to, they certainly are magnificent. I don't wonder you want to walk properly after seeing them. You made even me, for all my easy-

going ways, try to put on scholarly airs and pass myself off as one of the literati. In fact, I threw myself into the part so thoroughly that now I have a back-ache, stiff legs, a sore neck, and pins and needles in my feet. My head is reeling, everything is dancing in front of my eyes, my tongue is parched and my throat is dry — I couldn't have kept it up one moment longer. Another second and I should have collapsed. Let's get out of here quick!"

During this speech they had reached the boat, where Lin ordered his men to weigh anchor and set sail.

* * *

A few days later they came to the Land of Dwarfs.

"I take it this is the Kingdom of Pygmies mentioned by the ancients, where the people are eight or nine inches tall," said Tang. "What are the customs here, uncle?"

"They are a mean, completely heartless lot. And all they say runs counter to common sense. If a thing is sweet, for instance, they say it is bitter; if it is salty, they swear that it is tasteless. You simply don't know where you are with them. But this is nothing to marvel at — this has always been their way."

The two of them landed and walked to the city wall, stooping to pass through the low gate. The streets were so mean and narrow that they could not walk abreast. Once inside the city they saw that the dwarfs were less than one foot high, and the children a mere four inches. They went about in small groups, armed, for fear lest large birds carry them away. They were always making contradictory statements, and showed themselves cunning and crafty.

"I never thought there were such petty creatures in the world," said Tang.

After roving for a while they met Lin returning from selling his goods, and went back to the junk together.

* * *

One day they reached a far-stretching territory and saw a great city towering like a mountain in the distance. This was the Land of Giants. While Lin set off alone to trade, Tang went ashore with Tuo. But his first sight of the giants made him turn tail and run.

"This is simply terrifying, uncle!" he cried. "I never believed old accounts I read of giants between a hundred and two hundred feet tall; but these must be pretty well eighty feet, they stride so high above us. Why, one of their feet reaches above my chest! The sight is enough to terrify anyone. Well, we were wise to leave while

the going was good. If they had seen us and picked us up for a better look, we'd have dangled tens of feet above the ground!"

"These giants are not the largest," responded Tuo. "They reach only to the ankles of really big ones. I talked once with some old fellows abroad who described the ogres they had seen. One said: 'I remember seeing a giant in foreign parts who was over a thousand *li* tall and more than a hundred *li* across. He had a liking for wine, and used to drink five hundred gallons at a time. Though he gave me quite a turn, I read later in some old book that this was a Wulu.'

"Another said: 'North of Tingling I once saw a sleeping giant who was as tall as a mountain. His footprints made valleys, and by lying crosswise he could dam a river — he was over ten thousand *li* long.'

"Yet another said: 'I've seen a still bigger one. The Wulu would only measure up to his ankles. Think how much material he needed for his gown — all the cloth on earth was bought up for it, and making it kept all the tailors busy for years. It sent up both the price of cloth and the cost of tailoring — everyone in either business made his fortune. In fact all the drapers and tailors today are praying for that giant to make another gown so that business will boom again. One tailor at the time stole some material from the lapel on which he was working, and opened a big cloth shop with it, changing his trade. Do you know the size of this giant? 193,500 *li* from head to foot!'

" 'How do you know so exactly?' the others asked.

"He told them: 'We read in the classics that this is the distance between heaven and earth, and this giant's head just reaches heaven when he stands on the earth. Not only is he huge, he likes to talk big too — his tongue matches his size.'

"The others objected: 'We hear there is such a strong wind in heaven that birds flying too high are torn into shreds. If this giant's head reaches the sky, how is it his face isn't blown to bits by the wind?'

" 'Because he's so thick-skinned.'

" 'How do you know?'

" 'If he weren't, he wouldn't talk big all the time, not caring what a fool he makes of himself.' "

* * *

Next they came to White Land, and Lin took silks, brocades and sea-food to sell there while Tang asked Tuo to go ashore with him.

"This is a populous country and a wealthy one," said Tuo. "Their language is intelligible too, but the place doesn't seem to suit me. Whenever I come here, some trouble happens or I fall ill. I'm glad you've given me another chance today to have a look round."

Having disembarked and walked for several *li,* they saw white ridges on every side, with limestone hills in the distance. The fields were planted with millet and the ground was covered with white flowers. Being some distance from the farmers, Tang and Tuo could not see their faces clearly, but observed that they wore white.

Soon they entered a jade city and crossed a silver bridge. Shops and houses stretched in all directions, each with high, white-washed walls. All was noise and bustle, with much traffic and trading. Old and young alike in that country were strikingly handsome, with faces white as jade, vermilion lips, arched eyebrows and sparkling eyes. Moreover they wore white clothes and caps of spotless silk, had gold bracelets on their wrists, fragrant beads in their hands, a great crimson tassel three feet long on their caps, handkerchiefs printed with two flying swallows pinned to their gowns, and ornaments of emerald and agate. Their garments must have been scented with some rare perfume, for its fragrance was wafted to you from a distance.

Tang devoured these people with his eyes, exclaiming repeatedly in admiration.

"Such beauty set off by such a dress — how exquisite!" he cried. "This must be the finest of all foreign lands!"

Lining both sides of the streets were taverns, eating-houses, perfumers and silversmiths. They also saw great heaps of silks and brocades, and countless clothiers, hatters, shoe-makers and hosiers, to say nothing of stalls selling beef, mutton, pork, chicken, duck, fish, shrimps and sea-food, as well as every kind of confectionary. All was there in abundance and all was of the best — food, drinks, apparel and jewellery. The aroma of wine and good victuals rising from each street and lane must surely have reached up to heaven!

Soon Lin and one of his seamen emerged from a silk shop, and Tuo stepped up to him.

"Have you done good business, brother?" he inquired.

"You two have brought me luck," replied Lin, beaming. "I've sold a great deal, and all at a handsome profit. When I go back I mean to buy plenty of wine and meat to feast you. But I still have some handkerchiefs, purses and other knick-knacks which I want to sell to well-to-do families in that lane in front. Would you care to come with me?"

"Certainly," answered Tang.

Lin sent the sailor back first with the money he had made, telling him what meat and wine to buy on the way. Then, carrying his wares himself, he went with Tang and Tuo into the lane.

"This will do," he told them presently. "That impressive gate-house in front must belong to some substantial citizen."

As they reached the gate out walked an exquisite youth, to whom Lin explained his errand.

"Please come in if you have rare goods," said the young man. "Our master will be glad to buy them."

While stepping over the threshold, they saw a white paper notice pasted by the gate. On it was the word "Academy."

Tang started at the sight, and said to Tuo:

"This is a school we've come to, uncle!"

Tuo also was taken aback, but it was too late to retreat, for now they were in and the young man had gone to announce them.

"These people have such refined and handsome features that one can imagine how great their natural endowments and erudition must be," remarked Tang to Tuo. "We must be twice as careful as we were in the Land of Black Teeth."

"Why?" inquired Lin. "If they ask any questions, you can always say you don't know."

The three of them entered a reception room, where a man of about forty wearing tortoise-shell glasses was sitting. There were four or five students too in their late teens or early twenties, all handsome and smartly dressed. Their tutor also was a good-looking man. In this room were shelves lined with books, and stands filled with writing-brushes. A jade placard in the centre of one wall bore the gilded inscription "A Sea of Learning and a Forest of Literature," and this was flanked with a couplet on white paper:

> Study the Six Classics to instruct the world,
> Master the Myriad Arts to educate men.

Impressed by this display, Tang and Tuo walked on tiptoe and hardly dared to breathe.

"These are men of a superior state," whispered Tang. "Their whole bearing marks them off from the common herd. They show us up as somewhat vulgar again."

Not presuming to make any salutation, they stood respectfully at one side of the room. The tutor, seated opposite the door, had fragrant beads in his hands. After scanning the three of them, he beckoned to Tang:

"Come here! Let the scholar come here!"

Alarmed by this form of address, Tang made haste to step forward and bow.

"Your student is no scholar but a merchant," he disclaimed.

"May I ask where you are from?" inquired the tutor.

"From the Middle Kingdom." Tang bowed again. "I have come here to do business."

"Wearing the cap of the literati and coming from the Middle Kingdom, how can you deny being a scholar? Are you afraid I may test you?"

"I did study as a youth, sir," admitted Tang, now that his cap had given him away. "But all these years of trading have made me forget the few books I ever read."

"So you say, but surely you can still write poems?"

"I have never written a poem in my life." Tang felt more nervous than ever. "I never even read them."

"What! From the Middle Kingdom and you can't write poems? Impossible! Don't try to throw dust in my eyes. Admit the truth!"

"It is the truth," Tang protested desperately. "How dare your student lie to you?"

"Your cap is obviously the badge of a scholar, so of course you can write poems. If you have no pretensions to learning, why should you pose as one of the literati and hide your true profession? I am beginning to suspect you wear this cap to take people in, or in the hope of securing a teaching post. Ambition has corrupted you! Never mind, let me set you a subject and see what you make of it. If you do well, I shall find you a good position as a tutor."

This said, he picked up the rhyme book.

Tang was quite frantic by now.

"Your student did study a little at one time," he blurted out. "How fortunate I am today to have met a great scholar like yourself! If I could scribble at all, I should certainly seize this chance to profit by your instruction — I am not so blind to the favour you are doing me. In any case, I would do my best for the sake of advancement. The fact is I am too unversed in literature to carry out your respected orders. If you question my companions, they will confirm that this is no empty excuse."

"Is this scholar really unlettered?" the tutor asked Tuo and Lin.

"Not a bit of it," answered Lin. "He has studied since he was a boy, and came second in the palace test."

Tang quietly stamped and fumed to himself: "You will be the death of me, brother!"

"I'll tell you the truth, sir," Lin went on. "Though my friend here has plenty of learning, after passing the examinations he threw all his books away. If you like to test him now on trade regulations and the abacus, you'll find he answers all right. But please give that job you mentioned just now to me!"

"So it seems he has given up his studies," said the tutor. "Can you or your old friend write poems?"

"We are two plain merchants who have never studied," replied Tuo. "How can we write poems?"

"Evidently you are all boors," said the tutor to Lin. "But in that case, why ask for a post? It is a pity you have wasted your good looks by not acquiring any learning, though as a merchant you should know a few characters. You must be teachable, of course, but you are all travellers who will not be here long. If you would stay a couple of years, I could undertake to coach you. I do not want to boast, but a little of my instruction would give you enough of my learning to last you all your lives. Once home again, if you kept up your studies, you would win such a reputation for scholarship that not only would friends from nearby flock to you, but even those from far off. As you know nothing of literature and cannot write poems, however, we have no common topic of conversation, and standing there you look unendurably vulgar. Will you kindly wait outside till this class is over, when I will examine your goods. You would not understand our literary talk, and if you stand there much longer I am afraid you will infect us with your coarseness. Though I am not to be shaken, my students are young; and were they to be contaminated by you it would cost me great efforts to refine them again."

Assenting meekly, the three men walked slowly out to the corridor. Tang's heart was still thumping wildly for fear the tutor might speak of literature again, and he was just thinking of leaving first with Tuo when a student came out and beckoned to them.

"Our master will see your goods now," he said.

Lin hastily picked up his bundle and carried it in, and the other two waited for him for some time while the tutor, who wanted to buy his entire stock, was haggling over the price.

Tang seized this chance to tiptoe into the study to look at their books. After skimming through two essays, he hurried out.

"Why are you so red in the face, brother, after looking at their books?" asked Tuo.

Before Tang could answer, Lin came back, having completed his sale, and the three of them went out into the lane together.

"I've been made a proper fool of today!" swore Tang. "I took it for granted he was a first-rate scholar. That's why I treated him with such respect and called myself his student. The fact is the man is nothing but a fraud! I never saw anything like it!"

"How did you find their compositions?" asked Tuo. "Can you remember any of them, brother?"

"I saw the way they broached a theme,* and that was quite

* The prescribed form of essay for the civil service examinations in the Ching dynasty was divided into eight parts. The subjects were isolated quotations from the Confucian classics. The first part of the essay, "broaching the theme," had to present the subject briefly.

enough. The subject was: 'Having heard a beast cry, he cannot bear to eat it.' This was broached as 'A man who has heard a beast cry cannot bear to eat it.' "

"Well, that shows a good memory at least," said Lin.

"What do you mean?" asked Tuo.

"He repeated the whole title without forgetting one word — doesn't that show a good memory?"

Tang continued: "Another subject was: 'If you do not miss the right season to work on a hundred *mou,* it can keep a family of eight from hunger.' The student wrote 'If you work hard on a hundred *mou,* four couples will have enough to eat.' "

"So he gave us 'four couples' for the 'family of eight,' " commented Lin. "Well, four couples is an exact equivalent — no straying off to seven or nine for him."

"I can't remember all the rest," said Tang. "But to think I bowed and stood in the presence of such dolts, interlarding all I said with 'Your student!' I could die of shame!"

"Never mind!" said Lin. "We may have been fooled, but we didn't sweat for them or put ourselves out in any way. Forget it."

Just then they saw a boy lead past a strange beast something like a buffalo, which was wearing a hat and clothes.

"Tell me, uncle, is this the Medicine Beast they say the Plain Folk had in the days of Shen Nung?" asked Tang.

"The same," replied Tuo. "It has a gift for curing diseases. If a man is ill and tells this beast his symptoms, it will go to the country and bring back a herb; and when the patient extracts the juice and takes it, boiled, he invariably feels better. If his illness is so bad that one dose is not enough, the next day he must describe his symptoms again and the beast will go out once more and bring back the same herb or some others. When these are prepared in the same way, the patient is always cured. This has gone on right up to the present. In fact, I hear there are more of these beasts than before, as they are multiplying by degrees. You now find them elsewhere as well."

"No wonder it wears clothes if it can cure illness!" said Lin. "Can it take a pulse, uncle? Does it read medical books?"

"No, neither," was Tuo's reply. "It probably just knows the taste of a few herbs."

"You brazen-faced beast!" Lin wagged a finger at it. "You have studied no medical books and can't take pulses, yet you have the impudence to come and treat patients! You are playing with human lives!"

"If it hears you swearing at it, it may prepare a dose for you," warned Tuo.

I'm not ill, why should I take medicine?" demanded Lin.

"You are not ill now," retorted Tuo, "but after taking its medicine you will be."

Talking and laughing they had reached the boat, and going aboard they feasted merrily.

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As they sailed on at a good speed with the wind behind them, Tang and Lin were standing in the helm to watch Tuo direct the seamen working the rudder, when in front they saw long columns of green vapour rising straight up to heaven. This seemed something like mist or smoke, and dimly through it they could make out a city.

"That's a fair-sized place," said Lin. "What is it called?"

Old Tuo consulted his compass and looked out.

"I should say that's the Land of Virtuous Scholars in front," he answered.

"That green vapour seems to have a strange smell," remarked Tang. "What causes that, uncle?"

"I have passed this place only at some distance before. I don't know the reason for that smell."

"Surely it's written in books what odour goes with green," put in Lin.

"Judging by the Five Elements and Five Flavours, the east belongs to the element of wood," replied Tang. "Its colour is green and its flavour sour. But I don't know if that applies here."

Lin gazed ahead and sniffed hard.

"I think you're right, brother." He nodded twice.

They were now fairly near the shore, and could see thousands of plum trees, each over a hundred feet high, virtually surrounding the city.

Before long they put into harbour. Lin knew that no merchants ever came to this place and no trading was done here; but fearing Tang must be finding it dull on board, he ordered the crew to moor here and offered to accompany Tang and Tuo ashore.

"Why not take a few goods, Brother Lin?" suggested Tuo. "You may find some customers."

"I never heard of anyone trading here. What shall I take?"

"As this is the Land of Virtuous Scholars there should be many literati here; so lines like ink and brushes would be best. They're easy to carry too."

Lin nodded and made up a bundle of stationery. Then the three of them got into a sampan, and some seamen rowed them ashore. As

they landed and plunged into the plum orchard, a penetrating, sour odour made them hold their noses. Old Tuo remarked:

"I once heard that this land has leeks all the year round as well as evergreen plums. I don't know about the leeks, but it seems to be true about the plums."

As far as eye could see beyond the fruit trees, there were vegetable gardens tended by men dressed like scholars. After walking for some time they approached the city gate, and saw a couplet engraved on the stone wall in letters of gold as large as a man's head, which could be seen sparkling and glittering in the distance.

To raise your social standing, do virtuous deeds.
To have good descendants, make them study hard.

"This couplet throws light on the country's name," said Tuo. "What an apt motto for the Land of Virtuous Scholars! No wonder this is inscribed over the city gate."

"Tradition has it that their king is descended from Chuan Hsu,"* observed Tang. "This must be a place of genuine refinement, not like White Land."

As they reached the gate, guards stepped up to ask their business and search them before letting them proceed.

"Do they take us for thieves to search us like that?" asked Lin. "I'm sorry I didn't find any of that Soaring Grass. If I'd eaten that, I would have sailed over the wall, and none of them could have stopped me!"

In the main street they noticed that all the men were wearing scholars' caps and dark or blue gowns. The tradesmen, too, were dressed like literati, and had more of a cultured than a commercial air. Apart from daily necessities, they sold mostly plums and leeks, stationery, spectacles, toothpicks, books and wine.

"Rich and poor alike all dress like scholars here," commented Tang. "How strange! Let us try to find out something about their customs, as their language is fairly easy to understand."

Once out of the hubbub of the market-place, from house after house they heard the clear chanting of students reading aloud. And over almost every door were tablets bearing gilded inscriptions such as: "Worthy and Upright," "Filial, Brotherly and Industrious," "Intelligent and Just," "Virtuous and Wise," "Well Versed in the Classics," "Never Weary of Doing Good." There were shorter inscriptions too: "Benevolence," "Justice," "Propriety," "Faith," and many others. To all these were appended names and dates. On a nearby

*A legendary sage king of China.

gate they saw a piece of red paper bearing the words The Academy. A couplet over the gateway read:

Browse in the fields of morality.
Rest in the garden of literature.

Between this hung a tablet with dragon designs inscribed in letters of gold: "Trainer of Talent." A deafening chanting was going on inside.

Lin pointed at his bundle.

"I'm going in to try my luck," he said. "Would you two care to come with me?"

"You must excuse me this time, brother!" said Tang. "I don't want to use up all my stock of 'your student' today!"

"Well, have a stroll nearby. I'll join you presently."

So while Lin entered the academy the other two wandered on. Presently they saw two gateways with black inscriptions. One was "Repentance," the other "Restored to Virtue." These also bore names and dates.

"What do you make of these, uncle?" inquired Tang.

"It looks as if these men have committed crimes. See how many gilded inscriptions there are to only two of these black ones. Obviously most of the people here are good, with only a few bad men. They deserve the name Virtuous Scholars."

Sauntering back to the market, they enjoyed the sights for some time till Lin came up with an empty wrapper, grinning from ear to ear.

"So you've sold out," observed Tang.

"I've sold out — at a big loss."

"How was that?" asked Tuo.

"I found the academy full of students, all eager to buy my goods. But the sour-faced, tight-fisted fellows couldn't bear to part with their money, and wouldn't offer me a proper price. Still they couldn't bear it either when I refused to sell, and wouldn't let me go. After endless haggling, they piled various things together and added one copper to their offer! It was pathetic. As I'm a soft-hearted fool, I decided to learn from the Land of Courtesy, and sold at a loss."

"If you made no profit, why are you smiling so broadly, brother?" asked Tuo. "There must be a reason."

"I've never in my life talked of literature before," said Lin. "But I made a remark today that everyone applauded, and that has kept me chuckling all the way here. As I don't wear a scholar's cap, those students asked me if I had ever studied. I know Brother Tang says a man should always be modest, but I thought modesty on top of my ignorance would make them despise me too much. So I told

them: 'I come from the Celestial Empire. As a boy I studied all the classics, as well as poetry, history and philosophy. And I've lost count of all the poems of our own Tang dynasty I've read!'

"When they heard my boast, they tried to test me by asking me to write a poem. That made me break into a cold sweat, I tell you! I thought: 'Lin Chih-yang, you're no licentiate and you've never done a bad deed in your life — you don't deserve this torture of examination! Even if you have done some wrong, this punishment is too much!' Though I cudgelled my brains, all I could do was mumble some excuses and say I had no time to stay. But those niggardly devils refused to let me go until I had written something. While they were pestering me, I noticed two boys making couplets. Their tutor had given them as the first line: 'Wild geese in the clouds,' and one paired this off with 'Seagulls on the waves,' the other with 'Fish beneath the water.'

"I told them: 'Today I'm not in the mood for poetry, and I can't say when I'm likely to feel inspired, but I can make you a couplet. If you want a taste of my quality, I'll give you a couplet for "Wild geese in the clouds." '

" 'Fine!' said they. 'What is it?'

" 'Shot with a fowling-piece,' said I.

"They all gaped at me, not catching on, and asked for an explanation.

" 'You mean to say none of you understand a simple thing like that?' I said. 'All you can match with "Wild geese in the clouds" is "Seagulls on the waves" or "Fish beneath the water," which have nothing to do with the first line. My "Shot with a fowling-piece" follows from "Wild geese in the clouds." '

" 'What do you mean?' they asked. 'How does it follow?'

" 'When you look up and see wild geese in the clouds, you shoot at them with a fowling-piece,' said I. 'That's how it follows.'

"Then they caught on, and said: 'That certainly is an original approach.' "

"You were lucky in your students, brother!" Tang laughed. "Anyone else might have given you a punch on the jaw!"

"Though my jaw isn't punched, my throat is parched after all that literary talk. When I asked those students for some tea, they gave me a cup that had no tea-leaves in it, only two leaves from some tree. And drop by drop they poured me just half a cup. I swallowed it in one gulp, and am still thirsty. How about you?"

"I'm feeling dry too," said Tuo. "But now our luck is in, because I see a tavern in front. Why not drink a few cups there, and ask about local customs at the same time?"

Lin's mouth began to water.

"Good old Ninth Uncle!" he cried. "He hits the nail on the head every single time!"

They went into the tavern, and found a table downstairs. The waiter who came up to them was also dressed like a scholar in cap and gown. With his spectacles and fan, he looked most refined. He bowed and asked with a smile:

"We are honoured by the patronage of three such worthy gentlemen. Do you desire wine? Will you perchance partake of some dishes also? Pray signify your wishes."

"You are a waiter," said Lin. "You look silly enough wearing glasses. Why use all those high-faluting expressions too? The students I met just now didn't put on such airs, yet here is this waiter posing as a scholar! A half-empty bottle makes more splash than a full one. I'd have you know that I'm an impatient man, too thirsty right now to exchange compliments with you. Hurry up and bring wine and food!"

"Deign to inform me, sir, whether you desire one pot of wine or a pair? One side-dish, pray, or two?"

Lin banged the table and shouted:

"Cut out those 'deigns' and 'desires,' and bring what I ordered! Any more of your gibberish and I'll punch your nose!"

"Certainly, sir! No offence meant, sir!"

The frightened waiter scuttled off to fetch a pot of wine and two dishes — some green plums and some leeks — as well as three cups. Having respectfully filled their cups, he withdrew.

Lin had a passion for wine, and at the sight of the pot his spirits rose.

"Your health!" he cried to the others, and drained his cup.

But the next second he was frowning and frothing at the mouth. Nursing his jaw, he shouted:

"Waiter! You fool! You brought us vinegar!"

There was an old hunchback sitting at the next table, elegant in scholar's dress and spectacles, holding a toothpick. As he drank alone, he rocked to and fro chanting scraps of literary jargon. Interrupted at the height of his enjoyment by Lin's roar to the waiter, he stopped chanting and waved a deprecating hand.

"If you have quaffed contents of your cup, sir, how can you reveal what it was? If you speak, you will implicate me. In fear I implore you, brother, to keep silent!"

Dumbfounded by this nonsense, Tang and Tuo started laughing to themselves.

"Another literary character!" exclaimed Lin. "What business is it of yours if I take the waiter to task for bringing us vinegar? How can it implicate you, I'd like to know?"

The old man rubbed his nose with the first and middle fingers of his right hand.

"Lend me your ears, sir," he said. "As pertaining to wine and vinegar, wine is inexpensive, while vinegar is costly. The flavour determines the price. Wine, being weak, is inexpensive; while vinegar, being strong, is costly. All customers apprehend this. That fellow must have laboured under a misapprehension. What pleasure equalled yours on receiving the potion? And having drunk it, how can you reveal the fact? Yet you not only speak of it but accuse him of negligence. If he hears you, he will surely increase the price. For you to pay more is your affair, and on your own head be it. But as you and I are drinking the same wine, we should be charged the same. If he asks you for more, he will ask more from me too. Therefore I say you are implicating me. Thus strictly speaking you should pay my score; but should you refuse, he would not let me off. Should I protest, he would not listen. A brawl would ensue, and I should have to fly. So what do you mean to do, sir?"

He went on in this strain till Tang and Tuo were choking with suppressed laughter, and Lin could stand no more.

"Say what you like, I can't follow you," he said. "But this sour taste in my mouth is disgusting."

One look at the green plums and leeks — their only dishes — set his teeth even more on edge.

"Waiter!" he bawled. "Bring some different dishes, quick!"

"Coming, sir!" answered the waiter.

He brought four more dishes: salted beans, green beans, bean sprouts, and bean sauce.

"Not these! Something else!" said Lin.

The waiter brought another four dishes: dried beancurd, beancurd skin, beancurd with soya sauce, and pickled beancurd.

"We're not vegetarians!" protested Lin. "Why bring nothing but beans? What else have you got? Look sharp now!"

"Though these dainties find no favour in your eyes, sir, in our humble realm this is the food of princes. You should not spurn them, sir. This is all we have — nought beside."

"We have enough dishes here," said Tuo. "But is there no better wine?"

"Wine is of three varieties," explained the waiter. "The first grade is strong, the second weak, the third even weaker. May I take your question to signify that you prefer weak wine?"

"We are poor drinkers, and cannot take strong liquor," said Tang. "Bring us a pot of the weak wine instead."

This the waiter did at once.

They found this, although slightly sour, quite drinkable.

Soon in came another old man, dressed like a scholar with a most dignified air, who also sat at a table downstairs.

"Bring half a pot of weak wine, waiter, and a dish of salted beans," he ordered.

Struck by his distinguished appearance, Tang stepped forward and greeted him.

"Good day, reverend sir. May I ask your honourable name?"

"My humble name is Ju." The old man returned his greeting. "Whom have I the honour to address?"

At this point Tuo and Lin stepped forward too. They exchanged greetings, introduced themselves, and explained what brought them there.

"So you gentlemen are from the Celestial Empire," said the old man. "Excuse my lack of respect!"

"As you have come to drink, sir," suggested Tang, "won't you give us the pleasure of your company instead of drinking alone? We should count it a privilege."

"You are too good," responded the old man. "But how can I impose on you at our first meeting?"

"Don't stand on ceremony," urged Tuo. "Let us move our things over."

They ordered the waiter to carry over the wine and beans, and offered the old man the seat of honour. But as he was a native there he refused, and finally they sat down as host and guests. They toasted each other and sampled the food.

"May I ask you, sir," said Tang, "why peasants, artisans and merchants here all dress like scholars? Do officials wear the same costume? Is no distinction made between high and low?"

"It has been the custom here since time immemorial for all to dress alike, from the king down to the common citizens," replied the old man. "The only difference is in colour and material. Yellow is the most honourable colour, then red and purple, then blue, while black is rather common. And the reason why peasants and merchants dress like scholars is that we have a rule that all who do not take the examinations are vagrants. They perform menial tasks and do not rank among the four classes of citizens. Even the few who farm for a living are jeered at, for vagrants should not have any fixed profession, and respectable citizens keep them at a distance. That is why from childhood all my countrymen study. Though not all can wear the blue gown of a successful candidate, if once you qualify to wear a black gown and scholar's cap, you count as a student and not as a vagrant. Then you may continue with

your studies or, if that is impossible, work as a farmer or an artisan, as a member of some recognized profession."

"Judging by what you say, sir," rejoined Tang, "in your honourable country even the common citizens take the examinations. But in such a large kingdom, can everyone be literate?"

"The rules for the examinations vary. Some test your knowledge of the classics, others of history, poetry, statesmanship, letter-writing, music, phonology, law, mathematics, calligraphy and painting, medicine and fortune-telling. Proficiency in any of these subjects will win you a cap or a black gown. To advance in life you must be educated. And you cannot wear a blue gown without a good knowledge of literature. That is why the founder of our kingdom engraved that inscription above the city gate: 'To have good descendants, make them study hard.' That is an incentive to advancement."

"There is something I would like to know, sir," said Tuo. "I take it those placards with gold inscriptions over so many gates here are rewards from the king when he has heard something to the credit of the inmate, and serve as an example to others. But what is the meaning of certain inscriptions in black, like 'Repentance.'?"

"The student in such cases has behaved badly or broken the law, though he is not guilty of any great crime. The king orders him to put up such a placard to show his penitence. If he breaks the law again, his punishment is harsher. If he turns over a new leaf and starts to do good, his neighbours may report it or the authorities may learn of it and memorialize the throne, and then the placard will be taken down. If after this he leads a virtuous life and his good reputation spreads, it may be reported to the king, who will let him put up a gilt inscription. If a man with a gilded placard does wrong, he loses the placard and is severely punished too, because more is expected of a good man. This is how our ruler assists men to tread the path of virtue and discourages evil-doing. Fortunately most of us are educated, and learning can change a man's nature and enable him to observe the sages' precepts. So actually we have very few wrong-doers."

By now they had finished several pots. The old man questioned them about the Celestial Empire, and exclaimed in admiration at their replies. After much further talk, he told them he had drunk enough and must go home. And as it was growing late, Tang paid the bill and said they would leave too. The old man stood up, produced a large handkerchief and spread it on the table to wrap up all the salted beans left over, which he put in his pocket.

Poppies (25.2 cm. x 38.7 cm.) by Yun Shou-ping (1633-1690)

"You have paid for these, sir," he said. "I may as well take them home instead of leaving them to the waiter. I shall enjoy them tomorrow when I come back to drink."

Meanwhile he had picked up the winepot, lifted the lid, and looked inside. When he saw there were still two cups left, he handed it to the waiter, saying: "I shall leave this wine with you. If any is gone when I come back tomorrow, I shall fine you ten cups!"

He emptied all the beancurd into one dish, and handed this to the waiter too with instructions to keep it for him.

As the four men were walking out together, they saw a toothpick on a table at one side which someone had used. The old man picked this up, sniffed at it, wiped it and put it in his sleeve. So they left the tavern and he bid them goodbye. Tang, Tuo and Lin left the city, boarded their boat and set sail.

* * *

A few days later they came to the land called Double-faced, and Tang expressed a wish to go ashore.

"This country is so far from the sea that I have never visited it," said Tuo. "I would gladly go with you, brother, but I am so old and feeble that although the wound I made in my leg by falling over that stone while chasing the Live Fungus has healed, each time I exert myself it starts aching again. The last few days I have found it rather hard to keep up with you on your rambles. I will go ashore with you, but won't come the whole way if the journey proves too far."

"Let us start out anyway," urged Tang. "If you can make it, uncle, so much the better. If it is too tiring, you can turn back half-way."

So they went ashore with Lin, and walked for several *li* without seeing any sign of their destination.

"I can manage another twenty *li* or so," said Tuo. "But I'm afraid the return journey would be a strain and set my legs aching. Excuse me if I go back now."

"I thought you had a marvellous cure for bruises which you were always giving other people, uncle," said Lin. "Now that you're suffering yourself, why don't you take a good dose?"

"I was fool enough to take too little to clear up the trouble at the time," explained Tuo. "And now I've left it so long, I'm afraid those herbs would be useless."

"I came out in such a hurry today that I forgot to change," remarked Lin. "My old, ragged cotton gown wasn't so conspicuous when there were three of us, but now that you are going back,

uncle, Brother Tang and I will look like a rich man and a pauper — he in his scholar's cap and silk, I in this old cap and cotton. Any snobs we meet will look down their noses at me."

Tuo answered with a chuckle:

"In that case just tell them: 'I have a silk gown too, but I came out in too great a hurry to put it on.' Then they'll change their attitude."

"If they do, I shall put on airs and talk big."

"What will you say?"

"I'll tell them I not only have a silk gown, but my family once owned a pawnshop and one of my kinsmen was a high official. Then they ought to treat me to a feast."

So Lin went on with Tang.

When Tuo got back to the boat his leg was so painful that he had to take some medicine and lie down, and soon he was asleep. By the time he woke the pain had disappeared, his legs were better and he felt quite cheerful. He was chatting in the fo'c's'le when Tang and Lin came back.

"Well, how did you find the Double-faced Kingdom?" asked Tuo. "And why have you changed clothes?"

"After leaving you we covered another dozen *li* before we came to any inhabited district," Tang told him. "But we could not see what the people's double faces were like because they wear big caps which hide the back face and show only the front. I accosted one of them to ask about their customs, and when we entered into conversation I was absolutely charmed by his mildness and amiability, and his modest, respectful looks. I had never seen anything like it."

"While that fellow was talking and laughing with Brother Tang, I put in a word too," said Lin. "The Double-face turned and looked me up and down. Then his face changed and he gave me an icy glare. His smile disappeared and all his politeness too. In fact, he kept me waiting for quite a time before he threw me half a sentence."

"A man has to speak in whole sentences," said Tuo. "What do you mean by half a sentence?"

"He did make a whole sentence," retorted Lin, "but he growled it out in such a surly way that half of it was lost by the time it reached me. Because of this cold treatment, when we walked away we decided to change clothes to see whether they would still be so haughty to me then. No sooner said than done — I put on Brother Tang's silk gown and he my cloth one, and we went up to them again. This time they were all smiles and politeness to me, but they cold-shouldered him."

"So that is the meaning of Double-faced!" Tuo sighed.

"That's not all," went on Tang. "Later while Brother Lin was talking to one of them, I tiptoed up behind him and stealthily lifted his cap. Then I found a most vicious face — rat's eyes and a hawked nose with great fleshy jowls! The moment it saw me it twitched its shaggy eyebrows and opened its bloody mouth, shooting out a long tongue which puffed out poisonous fumes. Then a cold wind blew, a black mist swirled all around, and I could not help crying: 'Heaven help us!' And when I looked again, Brother Lin was on his knees."

"I can understand Brother Tang calling out in terror," said Tuo. "But why did Brother Lin drop to his knees?"

"I was chatting pleasantly with the fellow when Brother Tang suddenly lifted its cap and discovered its secret," explained Lin. "At once it showed its true colours. Its face grew ghastly, with long fangs, and it shot out a tongue like a flickering sword. I was so afraid it would murder us that my knees gave way and I kowtowed to it several times before making off. Don't you think this extraordinary, uncle?"

"Such things happen all the time. It is not in the least extraordinary. I'm only a few years older than you, but I've seen a good deal in my time. My guess is that neither of you choose your company carefully enough, and this is the result. Luckily your eyes were opened in good time before anything could happen. You must be more careful in future what strangers you talk to, if you want to keep out of trouble."

* * *

Their junk cast off again, and moored a few days later at the Winged Men's Kingdom, where the three friends went ashore and walked several *li* without meeting a soul. Afraid to go too far, Lin wanted to go back; but Tang was set on seeing the men of this country, having heard that wings grew from their heads so that they could fly — though not high — and that they were hatched from eggs, not conceived in a womb. Unable to dissuade him, Lin had to go with them. After several more *li* they came upon some winged men, with bodies five feet long and heads the same length. They had a beak like a bird, red eyes, white hair and wings on their backs; and they were bright green all over, as if clothed in leaves. Some of them were walking while others were flying about twenty feet from the ground, flitting to and fro in a delightful manner.

"Both bodies and heads are about five feet long," said Lin. "Why are their heads so elongated?"

"I've heard that they are great flatterers here," answered Tuo. "As the northerners say, 'They like to wear tall hats,' and wearing

tall hats day in and day out makes your head grow longer and longer. That is what comes of flattery."

"Just look at them soaring and skimming through the air!" exclaimed Tang. "It's a great deal faster than walking. We're a long way from the boat, and I've just seen a few old fellows pay flying porters to carry them. Why don't we get ourselves carried back to the junk?"

As Lin's legs were already stiff, he forthwith hired three porters; and climbing on their backs they flew straight off. In a twinkling they reached the boat, where the porters folded their wings and alighted, and our three friends got down and paid their fare. Then they weighed anchor and set sail again.

* * *

The three friends were talking in the stern one day when old Tuo suddenly turned to call to the crew:

"A storm-cloud is heading this way — that means a gale. Lower the sail to half mast and tighten the rigging, or we may not be able to make port. We shall have to run before the storm."

When Tang heard this, he stared about him. The sun was bright and there was no wind — he could see no sign of an impending storm. True, a dark cloud was sailing slowly up the sky, but it was barely ten feet long. He gave a laugh.

"I can't believe there'll be a storm on a fine, clear day like this. Do you mean to tell me that tiny black cloud hides a tempest? Never!"

"That's a storm-cloud all right," replied Lin. "But you couldn't be expected to know it, brother."

The words were still on his lips when a howling burst out all around, and the gale was on them. Waves were lashed up to the sky, and the boat was driven before the wind faster than horse could gallop. The blast grew stronger and stronger till it was a veritable hurricane, and Tang, taking refuge in the cabin, began to appreciate old Tuo's eagle eye. The tempest blew and blew. They swept past several ports because the wind was too fierce to let them put in. In fact their sail had billowed out so far in the gale that they could not lower it. This wind blew for three days before it abated a little. Then, by dint of tremendous efforts, they moored at the foot of a mountain.

Tang stood in the stern and watched them handle the rigging.

"I've sailed the high seas since I was a boy, and seen plenty of storms," Lin told him. "But this is the first that has blown without any let-up for three whole days and nights. I've lost my bearings

completely, and have no idea where we are. If this squall had headed in the direction we came from, in another two days we'd probably have been home."

"A hurricane like that must be rare," agreed Tang. "How far did it carry us? Where are we now?"

"As far as I can tell, this is Salvation Bay," replied Tuo. "There is a high mountain here which I have never climbed. As for the distance, in that wind we must have travelled between three and five thousand *li* a day. In three days we should have come over ten thousand *li*."

"You see now, brother, why I told you this spring that it's hard to tell how long a voyage will last," said Lin.

As the wind had dropped somewhat by now, Tang stood on the poop and looked around. The mountain here was much higher than East Gate Mountain. The distant sky seemed brilliant, and the mountain towered green to heaven. He gazed and gazed, and his mouth watered at the sight. As Lin could not go ashore on account of a cold, Tang landed with old Tuo. Fortunately they were sheltered by the hill as they climbed from the force of the wind.

"We are at the extreme south of the ocean now," said Tuo. "If not for the gale we would never have come so far. Though I touched here in my young days, I have never been up this mountain. But they say there is Fairy Islet here. I wonder if this is it? Let us go on anyway. If we meet someone, we can ask."

They walked on some way till they came to a stone tablet inscribed with the words Fairy Islet.

"So you were right, uncle," said Tang.

Skirting a cliff and crossing a forest, they gazed around them. As far as eye could see stretched a lovely prospect — clear water and peaceful hills. The further they went the lovelier the view. They felt they were in fairyland.

They had wandered about for some hours when Tang said:

"When we climbed East Gate Mountain I fancied that was the most impressive mountain on earth; but this is a paradise. And look at the way these white cranes and deer stand still to let us stroke them — would they do that if there were no fairies here? Besides, here is an abundance of pine and juniper seeds, which immortals love to eat. There must be immortals in a place of such beauty. That storm was arranged for my benefit!"

"Lovely as it is, we must be getting back," said Tuo. "It will soon be too late to follow these steep paths. Let us start down. If the wind is still too high to sail tomorrow, we can come back again. Brother Lin isn't well, so we ought to get back early."

Tang was so much under the spell of his surroundings that he could hardly tear himself away. Though he started back, he kept stopping to drink in the view.

"If you go at that pace, brother, we shall never get back to the boat," protested Tuo. "How can we find our way down after dark?"

"I won't hide from you, uncle, that since I came up here, all ambition has left me, and I feel life on earth is vanity. The reason I walk so slowly is that I am loath to return to the dusty world.

"They say long study makes scholars lose their wits. It's not reading, though, but travelling that is making you lose yours! Go on, Brother Tang! This is no time for poetic fancies!"

Tang was still gazing round when a white monkey bounded towards them holding a fungus. The creature was barely two feet long, with crimson eyes and vermilion spots on its coat.

"Look at the plant it's holding, Brother Tang!" cried Tuo. "That must be a fairy herb. Let's catch it and share the fungus!"

Tang nodded, and together they gave chase. He soon overtook the little beast and reached out to seize it, but the white monkey leapt aside and made off again. This happened several times. Luckily the path it took was the one they had come by. They pursued it till it ran into a cave by the pathway. Tang was hard upon it and, as the cave was a small one, he was easily able to catch it. He handed the herb to Tuo who ate it.

The old man was delighted and carried the monkey in his arms as they hurried on down the mountain. When they reached the junk Lin, still out of sorts, was asleep. After supper Tang sorted out his clothes and belongings.

The next day the wind veered to the right quarter for them, and the seamen made ready to weigh anchor. Tang had gone ashore, however, first thing in the morning, and by evening was still not back. Lin's wife began to be alarmed.

Though Lin was still in bed, this news worried him too; and the next day he asked Tuo and the sailors to make a search. But Tuo could not go because his stomach was upset after eating the fungus, and the crew searched all day in vain. Then Lin, who was slightly better, struggled ashore himself. They looked for several days, but found no trace of Tang.

Tuo had recovered now, and he said to Lin: "Though Brother Tang said he wanted to see strange countries, I don't believe that was his real reason for joining us — he was thinking all the time of becoming a hermit and leaving the world of men. That day when you were unwell and I spent so many hours on the mountain with him, he was very unwilling to come back. I had to speak to him several times and it was thanks to our chase of the white monkey that

he finally came down. But the next day he went ashore alone, without asking me to go with him. Don't you think he may have seen through the follies of this world and the vanity of wealth and fame? Remember he had eaten the herb of immortality as well as Vermilion Grass, so he had more than mortal perception. It wasn't an accident that when the three of us were out together he was the one to find Live Fungus and Vermilion Grass. In fact, back at East Gate Mountain he dropped a hint of what he was after. Putting two and two together, the man must have become an immortal. Otherwise why should he stay away all these days? I advise you to stop looking for him, Brother Lin. You may search for another two months but still not find him."

Though Lin was partly convinced, Tang was a close relative and he would not give up hope, so day after day the search parties went out. The seamen urged him dozens of times to leave, but Lin and his wife refused to set sail without Tang.

One day the seamen lost patience, and came in a body to the cabin.

"Not a soul lives on this great mountain," they said to Lin. "But the place is swarming with wild beasts. Though we carry arms in the evening and take it in turns to stand watch, we still feel unsafe. How could Mr. Tang live there alone? He has been gone so many days now that even if the beasts haven't killed him he must have died of hunger. If we wait any longer this favourable wind may change, and in that case we may run out of rice and water. By waiting for one man, you are risking the lives of us all."

As they complained and protested, Lin scratched his head and did not know what to do.

"There's truth in what you all say," called his wife from the inner cabin. "But we are Mr. Tang's close relatives — how can we leave without knowing what's become of him? If he comes back and the junk has gone, won't we be his murderers? Still, as you all want to leave, we won't wait too long — just another two weeks from today. If there is no news by then, we can set sail."

So there was nothing the seamen could do but wait, complaining bitterly. Lin turned a deaf ear to their protests, and went on searching the mountain every day till two weeks had slipped by and the sailors made ready to leave. But even then he would not give up hope, and asked old Tuo to make one last trip with him. Tuo had to agree, and together they climbed the mountain and wandered for hours till they were drenched in sweat and their legs ached. Only then did they start back. After several *li* they reached the stone tablet inscribed with the name Fairy Islet, and saw that a poem had

been appended to it. The calligraphy was vigorous, the ink fresh and glistening. The poem read:

For many autumns I followed the waves,
Fortunate to escape a watery grave;
Today I have reached the ocean's source —
Why should I take the boat and go on roaming?

Beside this the date was written, and the signature "Tang Ao, who renounces the world and returns to the Fairy Islet."

"See that, Brother Lin!" cried Tuo. "I told you he must have become an immortal, but you wouldn't believe me. Leaving his poem out of it, just the way he signs himself as one who renounces the world should tell you the rest. Let's go. It is no use worrying or searching any more."

Back on the junk, they copied out the poem for Lin's wife and the others. And Lin had no choice now, but with tears in his eyes had to allow the seamen to cast off. At once they set sail for Lingnan.

Translated by Gladys Yang

WRITERS' FORUM

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE TASK OF BUILDING A SOCIALIST CULTURE

Chou Yang

We are now joyfully celebrating the 40th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution, the revolution which ushered in a new age in human history, the age of the triumph of socialism and the decline of capitalism. After forty years of incomparably bitter struggles and construction, the Soviet Union has become a mighty bulwark of world peace and human progress. The speed of the Soviet Union's economic development has greatly surpassed that of capitalist countries, while its scientific and cultural achievements now take first place in the world. The superiority of the socialist system has become apparent in every field. Not long ago, the Soviet Union made the first inter-continental ballistic missile, and recently it has successfully launched the first and second artificial earth satellites, opening up the way for human flights to the planets and the conquest of outer space. This is an epoch-making event in the history of science, and joyful tidings for all mankind. This outstanding contribution of Soviet science has thrown into the shade the scientific achievements of the most advanced capitalist countries, and dismayed the imperialists who believed so implicitly in power politics. Today, when we celebrate the great festival of the October Revolution, we pay our most profound respects to the Soviet scientists, the entire Soviet people, and the Soviet Communist Party which is successfully leading the people towards a communist society.

The October Revolution lighted the path to liberation for all oppressed peoples in the world. After the October Revolution, the May the Fourth Movement was launched in our country in 1919. This mighty mass movement has gone down in history as the turning point between China's old democratic revolution and her new democratic revolution. As Chairman Mao has pointed out: "The May the Fourth Movement came into being at the call of the world rev-

olution of that time, at the call of the Russian Revolution, and at the call of Lenin." At that time, China's progressive intellectuals and the working class welcomed the October Revolution. After the May the Fourth Movement, Marxist ideas became widely current in China, creating a general trend which could not be resisted. A socialist culture began to take form and develop in our country. Progressive intellectuals and the revolutionary people seized avidly upon Marxist books as their most treasured spiritual sustenance, in order to derive revolutionary enlightenment from them, learn the communist outlook on life and the theory and experience of the proletarian revolution. We began to analyse and study China's social problems and problems of the revolution from the standpoint of historical materialism. Soviet literature, art and films were warmly welcomed in China, and gave us new courage to struggle for our national independence and freedom. The proletarian literary movement led by Lu Hsun became the only literary movement of that time. In fact it was this great writer who translated and introduced Fadeyev's *The Nineteen* and Serafimovitch's *Iron Stream.* He also introduced the works on aesthetics by Plekhanov and Lunacharsky, as well as the Soviet woodcut art.

The victory of the Chinese people's revolution and the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic have supplied us with all the prerequisites we need for building up a socialist culture on a large scale. The great task before us now is to build such a culture.

In the forty years since the October Revolution, the Soviet Union has accumulated rich and comprehensive experience in socialist construction. That is why China regards studying the Soviet experience of carrying out economic and cultural construction as a fundamental policy, and is doing her best to draw from the splendid fruits of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. That is why within a few years we have won such great victories on the economic front, and scored important successes on the cultural front.

The direction of Soviet culture is that which the culture of all progressive mankind will follow. After winning the fundamental victory in the October Revolution, the Soviet Communist Party and Lenin raised the question of developing a socialist culture. Lenin refuted the fallacy that socialism could not be achieved in a country which was economically and culturally backward, and rightly pointed out that the socialist revolution, which had overthrown landlord and capitalist rule, provided the necessary conditions for developing human culture. He also pointed out that, after political and social changes had been made, there must be cultural changes; socialism could not be fully realized without a complete cultural revolution.

On the question of how to build up a socialist culture, Lenin firmly opposed Bogdanov's anti-Marxist outlook, and the attempts of the "Proletarian Cultural Association" to make itself independent of the Party. Lenin stressed the fact that cultural work must serve the socialist revolution as a whole and the tasks of socialist construction, and accept the leadership of the Party and state. He pointed out that a proletarian, socialist culture could only be built up by making use of the whole cultural heritage of the past. Lenin said: "We must take over all the culture left by capitalism, and use it to build socialism. We must take over all science, technical knowledge and art. Without these, we cannot build a communist society. But science, technical knowledge and art are in the hands and brains of the experts." (Lenin: *The Achievements and Problems of the Soviet Political Power.*) This posed the task of winning over and reforming bourgeois intellectuals, the need for workers, peasants and their cadres to learn from bourgeois experts, and the need to train new experts from the ranks of the workers and peasants. The working class must wage a relentless struggle against bourgeois thought at the same time that it masters all the culture handed down by capitalism. To do this means a hard and protracted struggle. These were the fundamental principles for developing a socialist culture decided upon by the Soviet Communist Party and Lenin after the October Revolution. Our country has been working on similar principles since liberation. Of course, the specific historical conditions of the Chinese revolution are different from those of the Soviet Union; and as Chinese culture has its own ancient traditions and its own marked national characteristics, we must study intelligently, and be good at applying the advanced experience of the Soviet Union to specific conditions in China. This is what we have been trying to do during the last few years. And although we have not been able to avoid mistakes and shortcomings of one kind or another, in general we have achieved a great deal. The comradely, unreserved help of the Soviet experts has played a significant part here, and one which we shall never forget. Thanks to the example of socialist construction in the Soviet Union and the help of Soviet experts, our work of construction is infinitely easier than it was in the early days of the Soviet Union.

After the founding of the Chinese People's Republic, while rehabilitating and developing the national economy, we took planned and systematic steps to develop a socialist culture. Our first concern was to see that revolutionary culture should be spread among the whole people. We carried out a socialist reform of our educational system, from higher to general education. We reorganized the existing scientific institutions, gradually expanded scientific work, and

brought scientific research within the scope of our socialist plan. We reformed and developed our traditional arts, and called on all writers and artists to serve the labouring people. On the ideological front we criticized every kind of reactionary bourgeois idealism and individualism, and set afoot a movement for self-education and self-remoulding among intellectuals in general. All this was done to sweep away the old feudal and bourgeois culture and to build up a new revolutionary socialist culture.

For the further enrichment of our socialist culture, the Chinese Communist Party last year put out the principle: "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend." This principle was put forward under specific historic conditions: the people's democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the working class had by and large been consolidated, the economic basis of capitalism had virtually been abolished, and the ideological remoulding of intellectuals had begun to take effect. Although the socialist revolution in China has been basically accomplished as far as the ownership of the means of production is concerned, a great many bourgeois (and to some extent feudal) ideas and customs still exist in people's minds. Since these bourgeois ideas still exist, they inevitably struggle to find expression. However, all problems within the ranks of the people, especially ideological problems, cannot be solved by forcible means but must be solved by reasoning. To allow and encourage free discussion of different views in science, and free competition between different styles in literature and art is a good way to stimulate the growth of science and art. Through such free competition and discussion, the people will be convinced that Marxism and socialist culture alone are the most progressive and correct, while the bourgeois culture based on an individualist world outlook has long become backward and reactionary. The principle of "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend" has provided an excellent means of realizing the widest socialist democracy. The Chinese Communist Party has always laid stress on the need for a mass line in all work, and faith in the majority of the people. This applies to science, literature and art as well. As Chairman Mao has said: "A thoroughgoing materialist is afraid of nothing." The truth of Marxism-Leninism cannot be refuted. Free discussion on scientific problems can only benefit the proletariat and harm the bourgeoisie; it can only convince more and more people of the truth of Marxism-Leninism, and not the contrary. Similarly, free competition in the fields of literature and art can have only one result: works understood and appreciated by the people, which are of value to them, will survive and take on a new lease of life, while poisonous weeds which are harmful to the people will certainly be uprooted and de-

stroyed. This has been proved by incontrovertible facts during the last year and more. The slogan "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend," far from being, as some bourgeois writers and reporters imagine, a call for "liberalization," is a fighting slogan for the development of socialist culture.

Revisionists find it impossible to understand this, and attempt to distort the truth from their rightist standpoint. They regard this principle as a concession to the bourgeoisie, which means peaceful co-existence for proletarian and bourgeois thought; but the facts have proved them wrong. The dogmatists oppose this slogan from a leftist standpoint. They fear it may lead to a spread of bourgeois ideas. The fact is that they have no faith in the indomitable fighting strength of Marxism-Leninism; they propose, therefore, to crush all non-Marxist views by force. They fail to see that only when bourgeois views are freely expressed can the people recognize them easily, and criticize and refute them thoroughly. The facts have proved them wrong too.

The Chinese bourgeoisie and the rightists among bourgeois intellectuals tried to take advantage of the slogan: "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend." They seized the chance afforded by the Party's rectification campaign to launch a frenzied attack on socialism. Their first blows were directed at cultural and educational work, for they thought that line a comparatively weak one which they could easily break through. They spared no pains to praise and exalt bourgeois culture, and oppose socialist culture. In the field of philosophy, they considered reactionary bourgeois idealism superior to Marxism; they denied the absolute nature of the conflict between materialism and idealism, and attempted to reconcile the two — an attempt which in effect is to stage a come-back for bourgeois idealism. In social science, they dubbed Marxism-Leninism as obsolete, or unsuitable for China's special conditions. They considered that to believe the universal truth of Marxism was dogmatism, and proposed that the reactionary bourgeois sociology, economics, law and history be reinstated in China. In natural science and technology, they opposed the principle that in scientific research the scientist's individual field of specialization should be geared to the needs of national construction, and that those needs should come first. In literature and art, they opposed the policy that literature and art must serve socialism, must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. Taking "truthful description" as their catchword they proposed that literature and art should first and foremost expose the "dark side" of our new society, and advocated the hypocritical bourgeois "freedom for literature and art." They hoped to do away with or revise the principles of socialist realism. In journalism they denied that social-

ist newspapers are a tool of the proletariat in the class struggle, and proposed "free journalism," "complete reporting" and other bourgeois methods of pandering to low tastes. In education, they attacked our total reform of higher education which was based on what we had learned from the Soviet Union. And in all these fields they opposed the Party's leadership. They claimed that Communists are "outsiders" in cultural and educational matters, and "outsiders" cannot lead "experts." They called on the Party not only to give up its leadership of all cultural and educational work, but even its leadership of the state, to make way for bourgeois rightists. They also proposed that the reactionary social and political ideas of the bourgeoisie should usurp the leading role of Marxism-Leninism in state affairs. Naturally these dastardly plots could not succeed. In the last few months, the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party have waged a resolute and thoroughgoing struggle against the rightists by means of debates on big issues, and frustrated their political conspiracy. This campaign makes it fully evident that in a socialist revolution we must have complete victory not only in the economic sphere, that is in the ownership of the means of production, but also in the political and ideological spheres. For without a complete victory on the political and ideological fronts, the socialist system cannot be consolidated, neither can socialist culture grow from strength to strength.

The historic experience of the October Revolution tells us that the new socialist culture cannot be created out of a void, and working-class experts cannot be reared in special hothouses. A socialist culture can only be built up in the course of the struggle of the working class and all the labouring people to build a socialist society, and on the basis of each country's national culture. To develop a socialist culture, the working class must have its own army of technicians, its own professors and teachers, scientists and reporters, writers, artists and Marxist theoreticians. A huge force will be needed. To build such a force, and to fulfil our great historic task, revolutionary intellectuals must strive to master the whole cultural heritage of the past, as well as the new achievements of modern science. At the same time they must always live among the masses, and throw themselves unconditionally and whole-heartedly into the thick of the struggle, to share the feelings, the joys and the sorrows, of the workers and peasants. Only so can they steel themselves as socialist workers and builders of socialist culture. Only when writers and artists unite with the labouring masses of workers and peasants will they obtain never-failing inspiration for their work. Only so are they likely to overcome the pernicious individualism, pride, and hankering after fame and profit to which they are prone.

Comrade Khrushchov's recent speech to Soviet writers entitled "Literature and Art Should Keep Close to the Life of the People" forcefully refuted all manners of wrong and harmful views in the realm of literature and art, and pointed out the correct way forward for socialist literature and art. This is most useful not only for Soviet writers, but for progressive writers throughout the world.

We Chinese in our socialist construction have always considered our work as a continuation of the great October Revolution. We set great store by the experience of the Soviet Union since the October Revolution, and study it carefully. We shall always treasure this experience, for it will continue to light our forward path.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO TRENDS IN LITERATURE

Shao Chuan-lin

This speech was delivered by Shao Chuan-lin, Vice-Chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, at a meeting called by the Communist Party group of the Writers' Union during the summer of 1957, when a series of meetings were held to criticize the anti-Party clique of Ting Ling, Chen Chi-hsia and Feng Hsueh-feng. These three writers, all Party members, were at one time editors-in-chief or assistant editors-in-chief of the Wen Yi Pao *(The Literary Gazette) published under the auspices of the Union of Chinese Writers. In 1955 the anti-Party activities of their clique were criticized in the Party group of the Writers' Union. But instead of feeling genuine remorse and examining themselves to correct their mistakes, they took advantage of the attacks on the Party launched by bourgeois rightists in the spring of 1957 to strike back. This time twenty-seven meetings, attended by over a hundred and forty Party and non-Party writers and artists, were held to reason with them and criticize them. These proceedings were of great significance for Chinese cultural circles last year, and will have a profound effect on the future development of Chinese literature.*

The criticisms levelled by Chinese writers against Ting Ling and Chen Chi-hsia's anti-Party clique are part of a battle over questions of principle in the field of literature. This is a reflection within the Communist Party of the class struggle in society during the period of the socialist revolution.

Our main objectives in this campaign are to defend the socialist line in literature, strengthen the leadership of the Party, and put an end to those anti-Party activities which certain Party members in literary circles have carried on for so long. Inevitably this is also a battle between two trends in literature. According to Chen Chi-hsia, if their clique may be said to have an ideological programme, it is to disagree with the principle that literature should serve workers, peasants and soldiers. As for Ting Ling's view that one good book establishes you for life and that writing is a purely individual affair, that is typical of the decadent outlook of bourgeois writers. This is what Lenin called the careerism and individualism of bourgeois literature. Ideas like these, so incompatible with the Party's literary principles, are the ideological basis of their anti-Party activities. And precisely because their literary views and world outlook are incompatible with those of the Party, they feel that the Party is obstructing them in their work and tying their hands in an intolerable way. Such contradictions, when they go far enough, culminate in anti-Party activities. And when this happens, it is no longer simply a question of divergence or antagonism over ideological principles, but of divergence and antagonism on the organizational level. It is no longer simply a question of sectarianism in the Party, but of an anti-Party clique.

This battle between two trends in literature is a long one which has only just begun. In fact, the revisionist ideas which spread so rapidly in Chinese literary and art circles after the events in Hungary provided the historical background for the attack launched by Ting Chen and Co. Ideological and political problems are related, and disagreement on the former may develop into disagreement on the latter. A debate on questions of literary principles will be conducted all over China. It may continue for a number of years, and Marxist views on literature and art will be extended through such debates. Our immediate tasks are to smash the anti-Party cliques within the Party, strengthen the Party spirit of our writers through this struggle, oppose the bourgeois line in literature, and set the relationship between the Party and literature in a proper perspective. Until this is done, our socialist literature cannot march on triumphantly.

It is no accident that Ting Ling, Chen Chi-hsia and Feng Hsueh-feng have organized this anti-Party clique. There are historical reasons and common grounds for their anti-Party views. In 1933, in Nanking, Ting Ling betrayed the Party to the enemy when she was arrested by Kuomintang agents. Later in Yenan she wrote *Some Thoughts on Women's Day* and other articles in which she heaped abuse on the Party and on life in Yenan, while during this period Chen Chi-hsia was already her faithful collaborator. As early as the

thirties, when the League of Left Wing Writers was founded in Shanghai, Feng Hsueh-feng tried to split the Party, and later he left it of his own accord. Other members of the clique have long had grudges against the Party, or were political opportunists or renegades. For many years their resentment smouldered in secret, and when they could no longer reconcile their personal ambitions with Party interests, they inevitably joined forces to attack the Party.

This clique has attacked the Party several times since liberation. After the events in Hungary, their illusions about the political situation made them launch another frenzied attack. It is worth pointing out here that, although the Hungarian events did not cause any political upheavals among the Chinese people as a whole, they made a strong impression on certain intellectuals with anti-Party views. This is not to say that Ting Ling, Chen Chi-hsia, Feng Hsueh-feng and the others clearly voiced their approval of the rebels in Hungary, but their class instincts made them sympathize consciously or unconsciously with the renegade writers there. That is why, after the troubles in Hungary, Chen Chi-hsia said, "The atmosphere is in our favour now," and Feng Hsueh-feng expressed sympathy for Howard Fast when he turned renegade. The point is, that after these events, this clique, which had already been criticized, rallied its forces, and slanderous rumours were rife again. So when the rectification of the Party began and diverse opinions were voiced, this clique, misled by their wildly inaccurate appraisal of the situation, thought their chance had come, and launched an open attack. But, as in the case of so many other rightists, their wishful thinking betrayed them into exposing their whole plot.

It was a carefully laid plot, and had three main functions. First, to oppose Party leadership; secondly, to sow dissension in literary and art circles; thirdly, to establish a base for anti-Party ideas in literature.

Their attack was made on two fronts. On the one hand they rallied all possible forces within the Party, and extended the influence of their clique to hit out at Party meetings. On the other they conspired with the rightists in the *Wen Wei Pao* and *Wen Yi Pao* (The Literary Gazette) to exert pressure from outside. Out of consideration for them, after criticizing them in 1955 the Party did not publicize their anti-Party crimes. They now made use of this consideration to attack the Party from within and without, and tried to take advantage of the public's ignorance of the facts.

But as they also knew that it is no simple matter to oppose Party leadership, an important and more insidious part of their plot was their disrupting activities. They intended to cause a major split in the Congress of Writers and Artists originally planned for October 1957.

During this congress Ting Ling meant to resign publicly from the Writers' Union, when Chen Chi-hsia and other members of their group would follow suit, and leave the Party-led literary and art organizations. Thus Chiang Feng, Vice-Chairman of the Union of Chinese Artists, was to announce his resignation from the Artists' Union at the same time. Apparently they suffered from illusions of grandeur. They saw themselves as leaders in the world of culture, or "famous writers" who had a large following, so they were sure their resignations would be a great blow both to the Party and the literary and art circles. But would that have been the case? Howard Fast has a world reputation, yet what happened when he left the American Communist Party? Did that Party split? Was the literary camp of international socialism weakened? Individualists always overestimate their own importance, while underestimating that of the people and the Party. The truth is that any revolutionary writer, if he turns his back on the people and the Party, is left with nothing.

Naturally any member has the right to resign from the Writers' Union. But the question here is not such a simple one. While trying to disrupt the Writers' Union, this clique was preparing to set up its own anti-Party base in literature — the journal planned in secret by Feng Hsueh-feng and others.

To encourage flowers of many kinds to bloom, the Writers' Union is in favour of developing different styles and schools in writing, based on a common socialist outlook. The difference between schools and sects is that the members of the former share the same literary trend and a common ideological basis. The magazines *Thought Strands* edited by Lu Hsun, *Creation* by Kuo Mo-jo, and *Story Monthly* by Mao Tun were examples in our literary history of how such schools developed. All these publications served the people. Sects are combinations of men not activated by any principle but out to attain some political aim or some personal profit. Such were the contributors to Hu Feng's *July* and *Hope*. To which category does the magazine secretly planned by Ting, Chen and Feng belong? Feng Hsueh-feng and his co-worker Chen Yung admit that their literary views are anti-Marxist and opposed to those of Chairman Mao. The contributors to this magazine of theirs were to include Ting Ling, Liu Ping-yen, Wang Jo-wang and other rightists. But what have these writers in common apart from their anti-Party views?

So they had to conspire behind the backs of the Party and the presidium of the Writers' Union. It is very significant that they were secretly preparing this magazine at the same time as they were lashing out so fiercely at the *Wen Yi Pao*. Of the four editors busy planning the publication of their own magazine one was former editor-in-chief of the *Wen Yi Pao*, one a member of its present editorial board,

and two, responsible editors in charge of the editorial staff. This makes the magazine's aim sufficiently clear. It aimed at overthrowing the *Wen Yi Pao* which is led by the Party, and setting up in its stead a platform for anti-Marxist literature.

In the field of literature we hold fast to the policy of letting a hundred schools contend, and welcome open discussion of theoretical problems; but that is no reason why the Writers' Union should permit the publication of an anti-Marxist magazine of this sort. In a socialist society there must be unity and solidarity in the ranks of the writers. This is a fundamental principle. But now the Ting-Chen clique is trying to break the unity of the literary front and turn it from its socialist course. This is a dastardly plot which none of us can tolerate!

Ting Ling, Chen Chi-hsia and their confederates took advantage of the fact that the Party did not publicly expose their anti-Party behaviour to spread slanderous rumours about the Party and incite people against it. They succeeded in taking in some who were ignorant of the facts, while some who had no principles even echoed and supported them. One question involved in their campaign of lies is that of the relationship of Party members to the Party — one of the basic questions to be settled during this movement. We must therefore go into this thoroughly, to arrive at a clear knowledge of rights and wrongs.

In the first place this anti-Party clique, like others of its kind, dared not publicly admit its opposition. To hide their real aims, its members first accused leading Party organizations or individual leaders of "sectarianism," for then they could call the Party's criticism of them a "sectarian attack." "One group in the Party just bashes others, one group just gets bashed," they said, implying that there is a "sectarian regime." In fact, this was Hu Feng's line. One of Hu Feng's main attacks was on the Party's "sectarian regime." It is not surprising that Ting Ling and Hu Feng use a common language. When the bourgeoisie attacks the leadership of the Party, it always adopts the same formula — either "sectarianism" or "sectarian rule."

This talk of sectarianism is not confined to the Ting-Chen clique. We hear it too from some who are confused or lacking in Party spirit. So we must make quite clear exactly what is meant by "sectarianism within the Party."

Comrade Mao Tse-tung put this explicitly in *Rectify the Party's Style of Work*. Sectarianism is "first the assertion of independence." He also says:

> Those who assert their independence often adhere to the view that the individual comes first, and are often wrong on the relationship between the individual and the Party. Although they pay lip-service to the Party, they actually put themselves in the first place and the Party in the second. Comrade Liu Shao-chi once remarked of certain people that they have unusually long arms and are very clever in turning everything to their own advantage, paying little heed to the interest of others and the Party as a whole. "What is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine too." What are they after? They are after fame, after position, and they want to cut smart figures. Whenever they are in charge of any work, they assert their independence. Towards this end they will ingratiate themselves with some people, ostracize others, resort to boasting, flattery and touting; in a word, introducing into the Communist Party the philistine style in work characteristic of the bourgeois political parties.

This passage makes the case quite clear, and might have been written about the Ting-Chen anti-Party clique. It is they who asserted their independence of the Party, who put themselves in the first place and the Party in the second, who were after fame and position and wanted to cut smart figures, who resorted to boasting, flattery and touting. We find ample proof of this in the material revealed in this meeting on their anti-Party activities. In fact their assertion of independence of the Party has overstepped the bounds of sectarianism and turned into opposition to the Party. We are entitled to criticize all comrades, including those in leading positions, and shortcomings and mistakes should be criticized — failure to criticize shows a lack of principle. But criticism should be from the standpoint of the Party, according to Party principles. Between comrades there should be no personal attacks or back-biting. In our work we have many shortcomings and mistakes on which we welcome criticism; and we must continue to overcome these faults in the rectification campaign. But as regards our relationship to the Party, we do our best to carry out the Party line and obey Party decisions. Faults occur when we do not do this well enough. Those who oppose the Party often accuse us of "taking the leadership's line." Ting Ling once said of someone that he had eyes only for the Central Committee. But is that such a bad thing? What is wrong with working according to the Central Committee's line? How can this be called "sectarianism" or carrying out a "sectarian attack"? They are refuting their own arguments.

For the last thirty-odd years now, there have been many struggles over principle in the left literary camp as well as meaningless

arguments. We can distinguish the nature of these conflicts by seeing whether they defend Party principles and oppose those injurious to the Party, or simply concern the interests of some private group or clique. Looking back, we can see that, for the last twenty years, Feng Hsueh-feng has been hand-in-glove with Hu Feng, now shown to be a counter-revolutionary. The anti-Party activities of Ting Ling and Chen Chi-hsia in Yenan prove that their aims were to increase their own power and to oppose the Party's literary line. In 1953, at the Second Conference of Writers and Artists, they opposed the Party policy for literary criticism. In 1954, again, they opposed the Central Committee's criticism of the *Wen Yi Pao*. As the Party cannot tolerate such anti-Party activities, struggles were waged against them. All these were aimed at defending Party principles. The charge that they were a "sectarian attack" is a flagrant lie.

Not only have Ting Ling and Chen Chi-hsia slandered leading Party comrades in cultural organizations in this way; they have — like other rightists — slandered the Central Committee, accusing it of "listening to and believing one side only." As everyone knows, far from being cut off from what is going on in the world of letters, the Central Committee of the Party has a clearer and deeper understanding of the situation than writers themselves. It was the Central Committee which started the criticism of the *Life of Wu Hsun,* which encouraged people to surrender to the ruling class, the debate on the bourgeois appraisal of the *Dream of the Red Chamber,* and the struggle against Hu Feng's clique. It is precisely the correct leadership of the Central Committee which has enabled the literary movement to steer a Marxist course despite the onslaughts of various bourgeois ideas. The Party is too much in earnest to allow anti-Marxist idealist views to infiltrate the ranks of our writers and artists. Much less of course can it allow anti-Party ideas to spread inside the Party. On questions of principle, the political alertness of the Central Committee is sharper and stronger than that of any of us. In dealing with matters of this sort, they are more in earnest than any of us, who are often guilty of misplaced sympathy or liberalism. Ting Ling, Chen Chi-hsia and the rest of them despise our Party leadership, and their vicious propaganda actually reflects their secret hatred for the Party. They have lost faith not just in some leading Party comrades in literary circles, but in the Party as a whole and the Central Committee. This being the case, of course they oppose the Party.

Again they belittle the serious ideological struggle waged against them by the Party by calling it a quarrel between individuals. They claim to oppose certain individuals, not the Party. And they argue with a great appearance of reason: "These few are surely not the

Party?" It should be pointed out that this is a most unprincipled and vicious way of talking.

Intellectuals who are strong individualists frequently judge everything as it affects them personally. They consider their wishes as absolute and the Party as something abstract, which is why in the Party they see only individuals, not the organization as a whole. They invert the relation between the individual and the collective. Both Ting Ling and Feng Hsueh-feng have said, "The Party is on their side," or "The Party is in their hands," as if the Party were an instrument of power to be controlled by certain Party members. This shows the bourgeois greed for power and profit, and it is this low way of thinking which has made them consider the Party's earnest attempts to educate them as personal attacks. This is why they carry out their anti-Party activities under cover of opposing certain individuals.

Part and parcel of their vicious propaganda is their description of the ideological struggle in the Party as fearful and sinister, the Party as completely ruthless, and themselves as unfortunate victims of cruel injustice. Ting Ling said: "I have just stepped out of the grave. . . . They felled me with one blow . . . I am a poor, hired peasant . . . a proletarian who possesses nothing." They are adept in piling up epithets to show how "persecuted" they are, for they know from their experience as writers how prone people are to sympathize with underdogs, and want their deluded sympathizers to look on them as martyrs. But such arrant selfishness is precisely what Gorky lashed out against as the idolization of the "meek and offended" philistines.

Some of them also kept shouting that there was no freedom or affection inside the Party. Of course, however much freedom the Party grants extreme individualists, they can never be satisfied. For what they want is absolute freedom. In this connection I would like to quote Gorky again. He said: "Yes, I *am* opposed to freedom — from the moment it becomes merely another name for licence. And, as we know, this happens as soon as a man loses sight of his true social and cultural function and begins to give free rein to the ancient philistine individualism that is latent in him and to proclaim: 'Here am I, so unique and inimitable, yet they won't allow me to live in my own way.' And it is a good thing if he confines himself only to proclaiming it; for as soon as he begins to act in his own way he becomes, on the one hand, a counter-revolutionary and, on the other, a hooligan, which is almost equally vile and obnoxious." (Gorky: *Philistinism.*)

Is this not enough to put us on our guard? For a long time now a dangerous liberalism has been spreading rather widely in our cultural ranks. This provides a breeding-ground for anti-Party ideas,

and explains why the lies spread by the Ting-Chen clique had a certain currency. In such an atmosphere a wrong view is often taken of the relationship of Party members to the Party and of literature to the Party. This is an important question in literary work. During this campaign we must thoroughly criticize these wrong views, and set right the relation between literature and the Party according to Leninist principles.

Ting Ling and Feng Hsueh-feng both joined the Party nearly thirty years ago, and have made their contribution to literature. How could they degenerate to this extent? This question will be asked, and to answer it we should go to the roôt of their ideology.

The main thing here is supreme egoism — that form of bourgeois individualism sometimes found among intellectuals. Lenin once quoted Kautsky to illustrate this characteristic of intellectuals: "His weapons are his personal knowledge, his personal ability and his personal convictions. . . . Hence the freest play for his individuality seems to him the prime condition for successful activities. It is only with difficulty that he submits to being a part subordinate to a whole, and then only from necessity, not from inclination. He recognizes the need of discipline only for the masses, not for the chosen few. And of course he counts himself among the latter." (Lenin: *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back.*)

Intellectuals in the revolutionary ranks, those "chosen few," often consider their work or writing as something belonging to them as individuals. They forget what they owe to the revolution and the Party, forget that literature is not an individual pursuit which can be separated from the main task of the working class, and try to make capital out of their achievements in their relation to the Party and the revolution. Ting Ling's belief that one book makes you for life is a striking example of this type of thinking. She said: "What you write is your own. Any other work you do is for other people." This reflects "private ownership in the realm of ideas." She does not write for the people, but to make capital for herself. The greater such authors think their capital is, the less respect they have for the Party. The more fame they win as writers, the further they move from the Party. Their individualism finds expression not in their writing alone but in their hankering after power and status. So when they are in charge of any work, they look upon it as their private concern and put their own interests before those of the Party. Feng Hsueh-feng confessed that when satisfied he set himself above the Party, when disappointed he set himself outside it. This is typical of him, Ting Ling and the rest of them. The further this egoism goes, the less possible it is to reconcile it with the Party's collective life

Hard Times by Pan Ho

and discipline, until finally it ends in opposition to the Party. This is easy to understand.

I would like to say a word here about Feng Hsueh-feng's outlook, because I am relatively familiar with him; he is one who joined the revolution a long time ago and exercised considerable influence in the ideological sphere.

I first met Feng Hsueh-feng in 1939, two years after he resigned from the Party. That was during the high tide of nation-wide resistance to Japan, when all revolutionary forces were keeping as close as possible to the Party; but Feng refused to go where the Party sent him, and left his Party organization to slink home. That is very difficult to understand. Here we have two instances of his extreme individualism. In the first place he took a gloomy, not to say suspicious, view of the Party, because it had not satisfied his craving for power, and because during the first revolutionary civil war period he had not been able to stand up to the harsh revolutionary struggle. He therefore conceived a secret mistrust of the ideological struggle within the Party. In the second place he felt that the Party's collective life and organizational discipline conflicted sharply with the "absolute personal freedom" he longed for in his writing. He wanted to free himself from this discipline, and imagined that with his determination and ability he could make a career for himself in literature. Feng was eager to become Lu Hsun's successor. But his path was the opposite of that taken by Lu Hsun. Before the camp of revolutionary literature was established, Lu Hsun advanced from the role of a lone fighter to take part in collective fighting, while Feng retreated from the collective fight to become a lone fighter. Thus he did the reverse of Lu Hsun. Though Lu Hsun never joined the Party, he was a Communist at heart. Feng joined the Party but was the opposite of a Communist. Although the Party took him back, he retained his wrong ways of thinking. In 1940 he lost touch with the Party again. When I asked him to go to Kweilin he refused. Then he was captured by the enemy and spent three years quite unnecessarily in the Kuomintang Shangjao Concentration Camp.

But prison life failed to steel Feng Hsueh-feng or strengthen his loyalty to the Party and the revolution. In Chungking and Shanghai, after his release, his mistaken ideas continued to develop. In all these years, apart from writing, Feng has done no Party work. His ambition to "carve out a kingdom single-handed" in literature also proved an empty dream. For once a man turns his back on the common struggle he leaves the reality created by the collective, and the free development of personality which he desires becomes in Gorky's words the "self-penetration" of personality of its own world, of the tiny "self." When this is his mental state, his social outlook is bound to

veer towards nihilism and his views on literature towards idealism. Some of the essays Feng wrote in Chungking and Shanghai show strong nihilist tendencies. His attitude to the growing strength of the Chinese people's mighty revolution was also nihilistic. In the essay *Good Nature*, for instance, which he wrote in 1946 (*Essays of Feng Hsueh-feng*, Vol. I.), he described "good nature and tractability" as two of the main Chinese characteristics, saying, "I do not believe they (the people) are benumbed yet. Neither, of course, do I believe that they are starting a new life." We might ask how the Chinese people were able to liberate the whole country three years later if they were not making themselves a new life. This view of the people is thoroughly nihilistic.

With such an idealist world outlook and nihilistic social views, it was only natural that Feng's literary views should have coincided with those of Hu Feng. I do not intend to analyse these views here. But I would like to point out that he stressed realism, though his own literary views are divorced from reality. The greatest reality is politics, the question of our six hundred million people. As Chairman Mao said in his *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature*, "the political criterion comes first" and "popularization comes first." These are realistic demands based on the political struggle of the Chinese people, yet Feng opposes them. Evidently in questions of literature his starting point is art alone, not politics or the objective reality in China at the time. That is why he could not but lapse into idealism.

One fact strikes us about Feng's thirty years in the revolution. Every time a high tide of revolution came, he was passive. This was the case at the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War, on the eve of the liberation of the whole country, and during the upsurge of the socialist revolution. This is hardly credible of a revolutionary. Naturally I do not claim that Feng has no feeling whatsoever for the revolution or that he did not approve of it. That would be incorrect. His state of mind was as follows, I think: every time the revolution was particularly strong, the world of "self" seemed more frail and feeble. At such times an individualist is sharply aware of his own insufficiency. And at such times thwarted personal ambitions also rankle more deeply. Writing to me before the liberation, Feng said he felt "like a pebble kicked to one side." This, I should say, reflects this state of mind. Here we have the petty-minded yet most philistine reaction of an egoistic intellectual.

The longer a contradiction of this kind remains unresolved, the more discontented a man grows with reality. So Feng took a gloomy view of the new society and exaggerated the dark side of life, until finally he became a misanthropist. After the events in Hungary he said to Chen Chi-hsia: "Mankind is hopeless. What price evolution now?" Here we have a clear reflection of his secret pessimism and reactionary ideas. If mankind is hopeless, why make a revolution? What use is socialism? Feng has made a study of Lu Hsun. The nobility of spirit which enabled Lu Hsun to advance from evolutionism to the theory of class struggle sprang from his absolute confidence in the people, in history and in mankind. Yet Feng, who followed Lu Hsun for so long, can say "Mankind is hopeless." No true Communist could make such a statement. He has denied communism as well as the spirit of Lu Hsun.

Feng's anarchic outlook derives from extreme individualism, which sees reality as hopeless and wants to denounce and get away from it all. All those who oppose the Party share these ideas, but they are most insidious in Feng Hsueh-feng's case as he is a theoretician.

The problem is not the few members of this clique, but the fact that their ideas have begun to corrupt the minds of many of the younger generation. Influenced by Ting Ling, Feng Hsueh-feng and Chen Chi-hsia, a number of young folk have taken the wrong path. Here lies the gravity of the situation. This affects the whole ideological sphere, and is a big issue in it. Until this problem is solved, we shall have no flowering of art and literature, no triumph of socialist art and literature. Hence we must wage this struggle with determination and thoroughness, plunging deeply into it for a long period. No false pity should be allowed. All workers in art and literature should learn a good lesson from this campaign, and remould themselves thoroughly. It is even more necessary for Ting Ling, Feng Hsueh-feng, Chen Chi-hsia and the others to repent of their former mistakes, reform themselves and become new people.

NOTES ON LITERATURE AND ART

CHI PAI-SHIH, A GREAT ARTIST

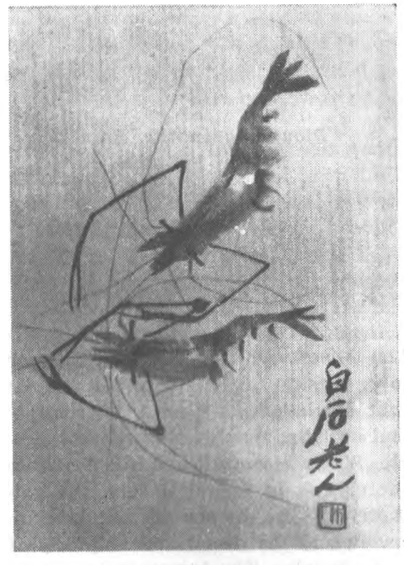
On September 16, 1957, Chi Pai-shih died in his late nineties. For seventy years he had worked unremittingly, and he left thousands of paintings which show the true and beautiful in life. His works will remain among the enduring treasures of Chinese art.

Chi Pai-shih was born in 1861 in the Hsiangtan district of the province of Hunan. The son of a poor peasant, as a boy he tended water-buffaloes and gathered firewood. He also learnt carpentry and did some wood-carving. Not till he was twenty-seven did he start to paint. In his eagerness to learn to read, write verses, carve seals and master the techniques of painting from local scholars, he often went without meals and worked at night by the light of torches. While making his living as a carpenter, he sometimes had to walk dozens of *li* to his employer's house, and on such occasions he would also pack his paints, paper and brushes in his toolbox, so that after his work he could paint under the lamp till late into the night. He was not only a painter, but a skilled seal-cutter and calligrapher. It is said of him that when he was learning to cut seals he carved one inscription after another on his stone, grinding it smooth again after each attempt. Once he gashed his finger with his chisel and lost so much blood that he fainted, but that did not deter him.

"Portrait of Chi Pai-shih," a coloured woodcut by Huang Yung-yu

All Chi Pai-shih's early life was spent among humble working folk, and his paintings reflect his optimism and integrity. He used the simplest materials and the minimum of strokes to paint everyday objects: cabbages, chicks, prawns, crabs, mountains and rivers, human figures, flowers and birds. . . . All his work is strikingly alive. With a few strokes he could paint chicks so that you can see their fluffy feathers and feel the tiny creatures' energy. His convolvulus flowers sparkling in the morning dew seem to be welcoming the rising sun. . . . All his work expresses love of life. His views as an artist were shaped by the thoughts and feelings of the working people, while the subjects he chose were invariably familiar in daily life. This is what distinguishes his life and work.

When studying painting, Chi Pai-shih did not follow one school but several, learning something from each. After he had mastered fundamental techniques, he ceased to copy others and began to create his individual style. Indeed, the paintings of his fifties are so different from those of his seventies that they scarcely seem the work of a single artist. Even after he was ninety, he continued to experiment with new forms. Much of his greatness lies here. He was never conservative. Though he absorbed much from old Chinese art, he evolved something new. His work is traditional yet fresh and modern. Thus he breathed new life into traditional painting. This made him a great artist, and one with an important place in the history of Chinese painting.



"Prawns" by Chi Pai-shih

Chi Pai-shih had absolute artistic integrity and stressed the necessity for accurate observation of real life. He made careful studies of birds and beasts, insects and fish, till he understood their spirit and movements. He once remarked jokingly that he would like to paint all insects and animals, but he dared not draw a dragon because he had never seen one. He tended the trees and flowers in his garden himself, and studied them day and night so that he could depict them truthfully. He kept birds and insects for the same purpose. Hard work and creative genius enabled him to reach a high level of artistic insight and technique.

His paintings of prawns are an example of this. He reproduces perfectly their exact contour, resilience and transparency, and their movements under water. Yet this is achieved with remarkable economy, without using a stroke more than necessary. This is why his prawns have such significance and vitality.

Throughout his hard life, Chi Pai-shih's moral integrity matched his honesty as an artist. When he was nearing eighty Japanese invaders occupied Peking, and Japanese and puppet officials frequently asked him to paint for them; but he pasted a notice on his gate saying that his paintings were not on sale to officials, who were not admitted to his house. He was a staunch patriot. During the same period he painted some tilting-toys to satirize the puppet officials of the Japanese. One of his crab paintings bore the inscription: "How long do you think you can lord it over us?" foretelling the end of Japanese domination.

After experiencing many momentous changes, the old artist finally saw the

birth of the new China. After the Chinese People's Republic was established, Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Premier Chou En-lai had friendly talks with him. The government saw to it that he lived in comfort, and repaired his old house. In 1952, during the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions which was held in Peking, he showed his devotion to the cause of peace by painting *Eternal Peace,* a huge picture more than ten feet in length. In February 1955 he signed his name at a meeting of Peking writers and artists to protest against the use of atomic weapons.

"I have painted for about seventy years," he said. "I paint things of beauty, things that have life. I want every insect I paint to be full of life. How can we let this beautiful world be destroyed?"

The year before he died he received the Peace Award for 1955 from the World Peace Council. On this occasion he said: "Because I love my homeland, the beautiful and fertile territory of China, and all that lives on this earth, I have striven all my life through my paintings and poems to depict the feelings of an ordinary Chinese. It is only during the last few years that I have realized fully that what I have been seeking all these years is peace."

—*CHI TANG*

"Ploughing in the Rain"
by Chi Pai-shih

SOME NOTES ON *FLOWERS IN THE MIRROR*

Each of the great classical Chinese novels, which appeared between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, is unique in form as well as in content. *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Kuo Yen Yi*), for instance, based on history and devoted largely to warfare and battles of wits, is written in concise and forceful language. The *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hung Lou Meng*), which deals mainly with love, family life and women, shows that feudalism is bound to collapse and acclaims new ideals and new people. *Water Margin* (*Shui Hu*) describes the clashes in feudal society, the gallantry of the heroes of the peasant revolt, and the deceit and stupidity of bad officials. The language is simple, vigorous, matter-of-fact, and occasionally very racy. An idealized picture is painted of the outlaw heroes, but the abuses of the ruling class are barely touched on, and there is very little feminine interest. However, another masterpiece, *Golden Lotus* (*Chin Ping Mei*) takes as its theme the depravity of high society and the sad lot of women. There is no laughter, no illusion here. This book takes your breath away with its revelations of the evils of a decadent society, and the style is completely dispassionate and serious. *The Scholars* is a magnificent satire on the literati who served feudal society. *The Journey to the West,* based not on real life but on mythology, combines rich imagination, satire and humour. These works reveal the richness of the Chinese novel during its best period.

A successor to these masterpieces, and one showing rich experience and erudition, is *Flowers in the Mirror* (*Ching Hua Yuan*) by Li Ju-chen. This was written in the first half of the nineteenth century, not long before the Opium War of 1840 which marked the beginning of modern Chinese history. The author is thought to have lived from 1763 to 1830. The first printed edition of this book was published in 1828.

This novel has a hundred chapters. In chapters 1 to 50, we read how Empress Wu usurped the imperial power of the Tang dynasty and made herself head of the state (684-705). One late winter day after drinking, she ordered all the flowers to blossom at once, and the hundred flowers promptly obeyed her order. Then the Heavenly Emperor was angry with the Goddess of Flowers and banished her with all the flower fairies to earth. She became the daughter of the scholar Tang Ao. Tang passed the palace examination, but because he was slandered and demoted he decided to give up an official career. He went on an ocean voyage with his wife's brother Lin Chih-yang, who was a merchant. Accompanied by an old sailor, Ninth Uncle Tuo, they travelled to many strange lands and had many adventures, until Tang Ao, who had eaten some herbs of immortality, disappeared on a fairy islet. When his daughter knew of this, with her uncle Lin she made a vain search for him. At the fairy islet she received a letter from her father, bidding her change her name and take the government examination for talented women, and promising that they would meet again. The girl also found a stone tablet inscribed with the names of the flower fairies together with their mortal names. Having copied these down, she returned home.

Chapters 51 to 100 deal with different themes. The empress held an examination for talented girls, and passed a hundred candidates—the flower fairies and Tang's daughter. The girls held many parties to celebrate, at which they showed their skill in calligraphy, painting, lyre-playing, chess, medicine, fortune-telling, astrology, phonetics, mathematics . . . as well as all sorts of riddles and drinking games. Then Tang Ao's daughter went to look for her father again. Meanwhile some loyal supporters of the true imperial house rebelled against the empress, and stormed the four strongholds of Drunkenness, Lechery, Avarice and Wrath. The emperor was restored to the throne, though the empress was still highly respected. She held another examination for talented girls, and summoned all the successful candidates to a feast, with which the novel ended.

The contents of *Flowers in the Mirror* show the author's wide knowledge and interests. The names of the strange lands across the ocean in the first part of the novel are taken from the *Book of Mountains and Seas,* an ancient record of myths; but the details are all Li Ju-chen's own, in-

troduced to express his own views on social reform. The descriptions of scholarly accomplishments in the second part, as well as the riddles and puns, are taken from the author's personal experience. He was an eminent phonetician, the pupil of the celebrated historian and philologist Ling Ting-kan (1755-1809). His ancestral home was Peking, but for many years he lived in Haichow in northern Kiangsu, where he stayed with his brother who was a magistrate. There he married and settled down. He served as assistant magistrate in Honan during a flood of the Yellow River, and worked on water-conservancy and dyke-repairing. Like all honest intellectuals of that time, he disliked the civil service examinations by means of which the ruling class restricted freedom of thought and chose its officials. As he was not too successful in these examinations, he spent most of his time on other studies, notably philology and phonetics. He compiled *Li's System of Phonetics* and made a thorough survey of the differences and similarity between northern and southern dialects. He began to compile a dictionary of dialects, to continue the work of the Han scholar Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.-A.D. 18), but this was never finished. The book by which he is known today is *Flowers in the Mirror*.

Li Ju-chen had a good deal in common with Wu Cheng-en (c.1510-1580), author of *The Journey to the West*, and Wu Ching-tzu (1710-1754) who wrote *The Scholars*. These three novelists were all scholars, familiar with the life of the literati and with their weaknesses and foibles. *The Journey to the West* now and again pokes fun at such men, while the whole of *The Scholars* is a satire on the literati. *Flowers in the Mirror* is a satire of the same sort, but presented in an allegorical form. Because Li Ju-chen specialized in language studies, there is more conscious erudition and pedantic wit, and an excessive number of puns and classical quotations, which sometimes are quite boring. This may be said to be the novel's main defect. Although *Flowers in the Mirror* cannot compare with *The Journey to the West* or *The Scholars*, however, it has more modern ideas. This is because Li Ju-chen was in touch with modern thought. This comes out most clearly in the first part of the book, that dealing with the voyage into strange lands.

This section, which describes the adventures overseas of the scholar Tang Ao, the merchant Lin Chih-yang and the sailor Ninth Uncle Tuo, reminds us of the Chinese maritime trade which developed since the fifteenth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Ching government prohibited such trading for fear it might introduce new ideas to the country and thereby strengthen the people's resistance to their rule. So it is quite remarkable that Li Ju-chen chose this theme. Moreover, in these adventures we find some fairly modern democratic ideas. For instance, in the Kingdom of the Great all men are equal, whether nobles or commoners. All good men have coloured clouds under their feet, all bad men black clouds. This is a new concept of social relationship, which may have grown out of the author's awareness of the hypocrisy of arbitrary social distinctions in feudal society. His appreciation of working men is also noteworthy. His most sympathetic character is honest, well-read Ninth Uncle Tuo. This shrewd and hale old sailor has a rich fund of practical experience, a good knowledge of medicine, and a strong sense of humour.

Many of his ideas were remarkable for that time. In the Land of Virtuous Scholars, for instance, he makes an old man propose the reformation of

the examination system. In the Kingdom of Black Teeth, he provides a new criterion of beauty, contending that beauty comes from simplicity, honesty and scholarship, and is not a question of powder and paint. In the Land of the Childless, he points out that if human beings could do away with selfishness, they would be happier. These were original and radical views for nineteenth-century China.

The same may be said of his criticisms of the evils of feudal society, which he has in mind when he ridicules the craftiness of the dwarfs, the sycophancy of the winged men, the boastfulness of the giants, and the viciousness of the double-faced, who smile at you but puff out poisonous fumes from a hideous face on the other side of their head. This description is well-known in China. In the Kingdom of the Great he satirizes the greed of landlords and nobles, and uses the medicine beast to make fun of quack doctors. In a dialogue in White Land he inveighs against the evils of the examination system, and to represent the rapacity of government officials he creates a mythical bird, which will not part with one single feather.

It is significant that Li Ju-chen, though an intellectual himself, did not try to gloss over the weaknesses of the literati of that period. Because he knew his own kind so well and disliked them so thoroughly, he pilloried them in this book. He describes how all in the Land of Virtuous Scholars wear scholar's caps, but all their food is sour; and when Lin Chih-yang tries to sell his goods they haggle interminably over the price. When the travellers go to a tavern for a drink, they find the waiter in scholar's dress and spectacles, talking like a pedant. An old man they meet is a sour, miserly scholar. When he leaves some wine in the tavern, he threatens to fine the waiter if any of it disappears. He takes home the remains of the food, and even pockets a toothpick someone has used. The behaviour of these "virtuous scholars" gives a true picture of the mean and embittered intellectuals in feudal society, especially at the end of the feudal period.

On the one hand Li Ju-chen expresses his ideals, on the other he satirizes existing abuses. Sometimes ideals and satire are intermingled, as in the episode in the Land of Courtesy. Here the author seems somewhat confused. Disgusted by the dishonesty of so many business transactions, he creates this fictitious land where buying and selling are done in quite a different way—the salesman asks a low price and the customer offers a high one. In this sense he is for the Land of Courtesy. He hopes for new human relationship, governed by self-sacrifice and consideration for others, and holds up to scorn the craftiness and deceit of his own society. But at the same time, the polite arguments and haggling over prices is reminiscent of bargaining as it used to be in China, and this shows a certain hypocrisy too.

One characteristic of Li Ju-chen's novel is the absence of long descriptive passages and the constant change of scene. As he uses so much material from ancient myths and allegories, his moral is often not clear. The fact is that he tried to attack so many evils and present so many of his ideals that the novel as a whole is rather disjointed. He took much of his material from books—especially ancient mythology—partly because he was a scholar, and partly because of the government censorship. Many scholars of the Ching dynasty were persecuted for their views. During the reign of Chien Lung (1736-1795), exception was taken to all writing which contained the least criticism of the Manchu rule, and the authors were punished with death. Thus Li Ju-chen could only state his

ideas in a veiled way, making use of myths or setting his story in imaginary lands abroad.

All these factors contributed towards his distinctive style. As a novelist he had certain defects already mentioned. As a thinker, of course, he had his limitations too. He is often pedantic and not daring enough. For instance, though he attacked men's oppression of women and believed that both sexes should be equal, the only way out that he could suggest was that women should also take the civil service examinations. He was against superstition, claimed that men were masters of their fate, and denied the doctrine of transmigration and the idea of retribution in another life; yet here and there he reveals the belief that men will be rewarded or punished by heaven in the end. In general, however, his thinking was ahead of his time. He attacked feudal society on many counts, and showed a longing for new social relationship. *Flowers in the Mirror* therefore marks a new development in the Chinese novel in the early nineteenth century, and this is one reason why it holds an eminent place in the history of Chinese literature.

—LI CHANG-CHIH

CHU TSE-CHING, POET AND PROSE WRITER

Chu Tse-ching was a well-known poet and essayist during the period following the May the Fourth Movement, as well as an outstanding critic and scholar.

He was born in 1898 in a coastal town in northern Kiangsu. Both his grandfather and father served as minor officials in the Ching dynasty, and his family lived in Yangchow. His boyhood followed the pattern of that of most sons of the scholar-official class. He received a traditional education, studying the classics and ancient prose and poetry.

He finished his high school education in Yangchow in 1916 and entered Peking University to study philosophy. After his graduation in 1920, he taught in several high schools in Kiangsu and Chekiang. In 1925 he became a professor in Tsinghua University. In 1931 he studied in England and travelled in Europe, returning the following year to head the department of Chinese literature in Tsinghua University.

After the war against Japanese aggression broke out in 1937, Tsinghua University evacuated and he taught in Changsha for a while before going to Kunming in 1938 to teach in the South-west Associated University. After the war he returned to Peking in 1946 as professor of Tsinghua University. During all these years—the worst period of Kuomintang rule—he had financial difficulties and suffered from ill health. He died in 1948 at the age of fifty.

Chu Tse-ching started writing in 1919 during the May the Fourth Movement, when a new literature began to spread under the impulse of patriotic and democratic ideas. Like many other young men who were aroused during that period, he felt impelled to express his feelings in writing, to begin with in modern poetry, the first field to bear fruit in China's literary revolution, though its achievements were not so impressive in the long run as those of fiction. But though the earliest modern poets considered Truth as the essence of poetry, and tried to follow the natural rhythm of daily speech, they had not freed themselves entirely from the influence of classical poetic conventions. Many archaisms can be found in their verses, and new ideas clothed in traditional and mechanical forms of expression tended to lose much of their vitality. Chu Tse-ching's poems were a notable exception in this respect. He retained some of the best traditions of classical poetry, such as its realism and concern for the sufferings of the people; but he dispensed with most of its hampering conventions, leading poetry forward along a new path.

In 1921 Chu Tse-ching joined the Literary Research Association founded by Shen Yen-ping (Mao Tun), Yeh Sheng-tao and Cheng Chen-to, which advocated "literature for life's sake." With Yeh Sheng-tao, Yu Ping-po and others, he started the *Poetry Monthly*, one of the periodicals published by this association. This magazine, which appeared in 1922, was the first of its kind after the May the Fourth Movement. His poems show very clearly his firm grasp of reality and love of life. His long poem, *Destruction*, first published in *Story Monthly* in 1923 and later included in the collection *Traces*, aroused the interest of poetry-lovers and exercised a considerable influence. His realism was finely expressed here. At the end of the poem he described the path he meant to tread:

I shall look up no more at the azure sky,
Nor lower my head to gaze at the limpid water,
But plant my feet with care,
Imprinting each step on the soil
And making deep footprints.
Though these impressions are small
And bound to vanish,
Though slow plodding matches ill
With the interminable road before me,
All I see are these clear footprints,
And they give me tremendous pleasure.
As for those distant vistas,
I cannot, will not trouble my head with them.
No more delay then,
On! On! On!

Among the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, awakened by the May the Fourth Movement but not yet able to merge themselves in the tide of revolution, bewilderment and perplexity were common. Some became mawkish or decadent, others turned into cynics or nihilists; but Chu Tse-ching faced life bravely, "imprinting each step on the soil and making deep footprints." In this way by degrees he drew closer to the people.

Chu Tse-ching went on writing for thirty years, but his career as a poet was a short one. After 1925 he lost some of the fervour of the May the Fourth period and stopped writing poetry, but started to express his daily thoughts in prose.

Lu Hsun once said of the prose of this period: "By the time of the May the Fourth Movement ... prose writing had made greater strides than fiction, drama or poetry. It naturally had its share of fighting spirit, but since the writers usually took English essays as their models, there was also some gentlemanly humour apparent; and some of these compositions were elegant and concise. This was to show the old literature that writing in the vernacular could also succeed in what the traditional literature considered its own speciality." (*The Crisis in Essay Writing*, first published in 1933.)

Certain of Chu Tse-ching's essays, such as *My Father's Back, Fleeting Time, The Lotus Pool by Moonlight, Plashing Oars and Lantern Light on the Chinhuai River*, have been acclaimed as representative of the best prose of that period. As Lu Hsun said, they challenged the old literature. Chu Tse-ching's style is fresh, concise, and distinctively Chinese.

Traces, published in 1924, does not include many essays, but depth of feeling and quiet elegance already characterized his style. The prose poem *Fleeting Time* comes from this collection.

The collection containing *My Father's Back* was published in 1928, and has been popular with the young for the last twenty years. *My Father's Back*, though less than two thousand words, is deeply moving. This story is acclaimed not for magnificent structure or fine phrases, but purely for its sincerity and genuine feeling. Simple as it looks, it has the power to touch men's hearts. Such writing shows Chu Tse-ching at his best.

The ten years before the outbreak of the war against Japanese aggression, when the Chinese revolution suffered reverses, saw the White Terror of Chiang Kai-shek's regime. The intellectual with a sense of justice but no firm political stand was unwilling to help the reactionaries, yet could see no way out for himself, and so he was distressed and perplexed. In one short essay in the collection *You and I*, Chu Tse-ching describes this period as the inarticulate period and himself as an inarticulate man. But even during his bewilderment he retained a serious attitude to writing. He was strongly against pandering to low taste and the cultivation of individual idiosyncrasies, and he attacked those who advocated humour for humour's sake. He believed that literature should be serious. When Lin Yu-tang, who catered specially for foreigners and amused them with all that was old-world and "quaint" in China, published such magazines as *The Analects* and *This Human World* purveying humour cut off from real life, Chu Tse-ching would have no truck with him. Instead he helped to edit *Tai Po*, a journal supported by Lu Hsun.

Chu Tse-ching's writings of this period can be found in the collections *You and I*, *European Sketches* and *London Sketches*. He wrote with tremendous care and was a purist. His Chinese is strictly vernacular and he uses effective expressions from everyday speech; if he introduces a classical phrase it is integrated with the vernacular. The chief features of his writing are its sincerity and moving quality. Yeh Sheng-tao, himself a stylist, once said that in a history of modern Chinese literature Chu Tse-ching should be introduced as one of the first to achieve distinctive style and purity in the vernacular.

Chu Tse-ching was not only a writer but a good scholar. A most conscientious research worker, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the study of Chinese poetry and literary criticism. During his twenty-odd years in different universities, he taught the history of Chinese literature, Chinese ballad, Chinese poetry, literary criticism and rhetoric. He had a wide range of knowledge and was profound without being pedantic or narrow. His approach was that of a historian, and his stand that of the people. He believed discrimination should be exercised in taking over the literary heritage of the past, to absorb the best in it and discard the dross. Though a specialist himself, engaged on research, he never despised popular literature. Indeed he edited and annotated many classics in order to popularize them. He hoped to make it clear that there was nothing mysterious or occult about the classics. In the last two years of his life he published such works as *Notes on New Poetry*, *Notes on Literature*, *Poetry as a Medium of Ideas*, *Criteria and Standards* and *For the Few and the Many*. And in the preface to *Criteria and Standards* he wrote: "Since the war ended I have been busier and my feelings have changed. I must write more, writing faster and less painstakingly, but making my language easier to understand."

His twenty-six works, including manuscripts not yet published, come to about two million words. The four-volume edition of his writings published by the Kaiming Press, Peking, in 1953, is not complete but contains twelve works such as *Traces*, *My Father's Back*, *You and I*, *Poetry as a Medium of Ideas*, *Essays on Literature and History*, *Chats on the Classics*, *For the Few and the Many*, *Criteria and Standards*, these being the most representative of his work, including essays and literary criticism.

In his writing as in his life, he consistently held a steady course. As a poet he had integrity and passion, deep sympathy for the weak and the down-trodden, love and admiration for youth. As a pioneer in the new literary movement, he was an indefatigable champion and educator of the young. But although from the very beginning he accepted the May the Fourth maxim of "literature for life's sake," it was not until his last years that he fully realized the need for literature to be closely linked with the people. He grasped this truth only through bitter experience after decades of groping in the dark. The turning point in his thinking and political stand came during the December the First student movement in Kunming in 1945, one of the most important student movements in China. The war against Japanese aggression had just ended, and immediately the Kuomintang reactionaries who hated communism and the people launched the civil war. The great demonstration of the students in Kunming, who went on strike against the civil war and demanded democratic rights, was dealt with savagely by the Kuomintang in the December the First massacre. Chu Tse-ching was deeply shaken, and his ideas underwent a change, becoming more progressive. Finally he saw the way clearly and thenceforward never swerved from his determination to serve the people and win democracy.

In 1946 Li Kung-pu, a fighter for democratic rights, and Professor Wen Yi-to, a well-known poet, were assassinated by Kuomintang agents, and a great memorial meeting was held for them in Chengtu. Although Chu Tse-ching knew in advance that Kuomintang agents meant to stir up trouble, in his just indignation he nevertheless attended the meeting and made an important speech, undeterred by threats. After his return to Peking, in addition to his heavy duties as a professor and writer, he kept up his fight against Kuomintang reaction. He took an active part in many progressive political activities: he signed the protest against arbitrary arrests; he signed the manifesto opposing the civil war started by Chiang Kai-shek and calling for peace; he drafted the Tsinghua professors' statement in support of the patriotic students who had gone on strike; and he regularly attended the discussions of progressive writers and artists, giving lectures on such subjects as *Wen Yi-to and His Poetry*, *On Character*, *On Seriousness*. Throughout his life he loved labour, loved his country and people. Though he could not afford treatment for his protracted illness before his death he resolutely refused to accept the American "aid" flour available to Chinese professors, because he opposed the United States' support of Chiang Kai-shek, who had started the civil war. Thus judging by the last years of his life, we can affirm that he was not only a good poet and profound scholar, but a courageous fighter for democracy.

After his death the following tribute was paid to his memory in an article in the *People's Daily* on August 19, 1949: "We should pay homage to Wen Yi-to, also to Chu Tse-ching, for they displayed the heroism of our people."

—*SHENG SHUN*

LOCAL OPERAS ON THE PEKING STAGE

The visits of local opera companies from all over China to Peking in 1957 added variety to the cultural life of the capital, and gave the different companies a chance to learn from each other, improve their technique and broaden their outlook.

The first to come to Peking was the Szechuan Opera Company from Chengtu, which brought with it many new and excellent dramas, all characterized by strong realism and local colour. Szechuan Opera has had a long history and possesses an extensive repertory. The chief emphasis is not on singing but on acting. Thus the actors' gait and gestures, the way they swing their long hair, move the "fins" of their hats or their fingers—above all, the way they use their eyes and lips—help to bring out the feeling and meaning of their lines. A good performer in Szechuan Opera need not have a first-rate voice but must be a gifted actor.

Changing Brides is a tragicomedy from Szechuan about the trouble which ensued when the emperor chose beautiful concubines from among his people. But though the audience may laugh much of the time, it is left with a sense of sadness.

Tan Chi-erh, based on a comedy by the Yuan dynasty dramatist Kuan Han-ching,* describes how a husband and wife outwit a powerful rival who wants to ruin them. Three of the most important roles in Szechuan Opera, those of young man, young woman and clown, can all be found in this drama. The versatile young actress Yang Shu-ying played Tan Chi-erh, Hsiao Fei played the clown's role, Lord Yang, and Yi Chen-hsiang played Tan Chi-erh's husband. This well-matched cast gave a most successful portrayal of the young wife's shrewdness, her husband's mixed feelings, and Lord Yang's panic.

The Lost Shoe, based on a story from the *Tales of Liao Chai*,* takes less than two hours to perform. A midwife helps a tiger to deliver its young, and the tiger repays her kindness. The midwife and her husband, an osteopath, are delightful characters, and this opera is a satire on official corruption and stupidity. All the chief roles are clowns, some good characters and some bad.

In *The Wedding Night* a bridegroom makes a scene because he imagines that his bride is an ugly girl he once met; but the story ends happily when his mother-in-law removes the fan with which his wife has hidden her face, and he sees she is a beauty. This drama has an ingenious plot, and the misunderstanding is not cleared up till the very end.

This Chengtu company has some first-rate actors. Yang Shu-ying, who takes young women's roles, aroused particular interest among Peking theatre-goers. A beautiful actress with a charming voice, she plays quite different characters equally well.

Peking audiences also enjoyed the Luchow and Szechow Operas from Anhwei. Luchow Opera originated as village opera, and consisted of simple, lively singing and dancing, accompanied only by gongs, drums and a chorus, with no stringed instruments. Later, influenced by other forms of opera, it produced full-fledged dramas with several scenes. The Luchow Opera Company which came to the capital was formed in Anhwei in 1951. It has revised certain traditional operas and staged new ones reflecting the life and problems of today. Under its able director, it gives highly competent performances.

The Divorce of Ting Hsiang, one of the Luchow operas performed, was well received in Peking. Adapted from a folk story popular in many parts of the country, this opera deals with a man named Chang, who divorces his wife, Ting Hsiang, after falling in love with another girl. Later Chang squanders all his money and comes to Ting Hsiang's house as a beggar. When she forgives him and offers him silver, he drowns himself in shame. Many local operas in Anhwei, Shantung, Honan and Shansi have dramatized this tale. Indeed in the Huai River valley there used to be special Ting Hsiang Opera groups which took two or three months to act the whole drama. *The Divorce of Ting Hsiang* follows the traditional story very closely. Ting Yu-lan, the gifted Luchow actress who played Ting Hsiang, showed great insight into the heroine's character with its combination of sweetness and firmness, honesty and intelligence. Her moving interpretation of this role was much praised.

Szechow Opera, first popular as a form of folk dancing in northern Anhwei and northern Kiangsu, after a history of two hundred years now has a fully developed dramatic form. *Gathering Cotton* is representative of the operas this company brought to Peking. After gathering cotton in the fields, two country girls rest under a tree, where each boasts of her lover and the happy life they will have when they are married. But when the old man who is watching the melon field overhears them and bursts out laughing, the two girls blush and run off with their cotton baskets. Szechow Opera is sung in the local dialect, and has a great variety of sweet, lilting melodies. There are no strict rules for the singers, however, who can introduce variations in the basic tunes. Falsetto as well as natural voices are used, but the latter predominate, and this makes the singing unaffected, invigorating and easy to understand. Another striking feature of this opera is the "lute-mandolin" which is the chief instrument of the orchestra. This looks like a small *pi-pa* or Chinese lute, and is usually made of the best plane wood by the musician who plays it. The musician must have great skill to follow the improvizations of the singers. Different kinds of musical accompaniment are found in Chinese folk opera, but it is seldom that a plucked instrument is the chief accompaniment. In recent years other strings as well as flutes have been introduced in Szechow Opera, to make the accompaniment richer and more expressive. The "lute-mandolin" still has the main role, however.

Early in the summer, Peking theatre-goers were privileged to see Chaochow Opera, Hainan Opera and Canton-Hankow Opera. This was the first time in history that these were performed in Peking.

Chaochow Opera is popular in the provinces of Kwangtung and Fukien, as well as among overseas Chinese. It has its distinctive melodies, sung in a natural voice in the Chaochow dialect, while often two or three actors sing a whole song or the end of a song in unison. Chaochow Opera has preserved many ancient tunes and combined them with folk music. *Chen San and Wu-niang* and *Su Liu-niang*, two operas based on folk stories, received an enthusiastic welcome in the capital. Special praise was given to the singing and acting of the experienced actress Hung Miao who plays the old woman's part and to her young colleague Yao Hsuan-chiu who plays the young woman's role.

* See *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1957, page 125.

* See *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1956, page 108.

Hainan Opera, from Hainan Island, is extremely popular on the island and also known in other countries of Southeast Asia. Before liberation the young people of Hainan produced dramas in modern costume expressing revolutionary ideas, thus aiding the nation's revolutionary struggle. In recent years many old dramas and old melodies have been revived. Hainan Opera has close ties with Chaochow Opera, from which a number of its best actors have learned. One of the dramas performed in Peking was *The Dog Steals the Gold Pin.* A woman who loses a gold hairpin insists that her husband's sworn brother has stolen it, and goes to his house to demand it. When later her sister finds the pin in the dog's mouth, she apologizes to the man wrongly accused. Though the plot is so simple, the character of the silly yet rather pathetic woman is very well drawn.

The Canton-Hankow Opera of Kwangtung, which began to develop two hundred years ago from the Hankow Opera of Hupeh, now uses quite different language, music and stage conventions. The Canton-Hankow Opera Company which visited Peking brought some outstanding actors. It performed seven operas, most of them traditional ones, the best being *Paili Hsi and His Wife.* Singing has an important place in this opera, which deals with a good minister named Paili Hsi in the Spring-and-Autumn Period (722-481 B.C.). After he becomes rich and powerful he remains true to his wife, and she is faithful to him in spite of all hardships. The story is not elaborate, and contains only three characters; yet the audience was enthralled by the high standard of acting, interesting music and excellent singing.

The Hankow Opera of Hupeh is one of the oldest local operas, and has had a considerable influence on Peking Opera, supplying the latter with two of its chief tunes—*hsi pi* and *erh huang.* The Hankow Opera Company from Wuhan brought many fine dramas to the capital. One of these, *The Plum Blossoms Twice,* shows us an evil minister during the Tang dynasty (618-907), who oppresses the people but surrenders to the enemy, and two lovers who go through many trials but remain true to each other. The chief actress, Chen Po-hua, had a most exacting role, but held spectators spellbound by her enchanting voice. Indeed this whole company was admired for its technical brilliance.

In September 1956, the best exponents of Puchow Opera gave their first performance in Peking since liberation. Puchow Opera has a long history, and is extremely popular in southern Shansi, eastern Shensi and northern Honan. Its actors receive a most exacting training, and special conventions are used to express emotions. Yen Feng-chun attracted attention by the skill with which he conveyed fine shades of feeling by tossing his long hair or beard, moving the "fins" of his hat, or similar gestures.

Another widely-known opera to come to Peking was Honan Opera, which originated as far back as the fourteenth century and was popular in the Honan countryside by the end of the eighteenth century. Before 1919 it was usually performed in the open, and four or five actors would stage their own show, each playing several parts. The properties were very simple too—a table, two chairs and a mat on the ground. The male roles never powdered their faces, but simply rouged their cheeks and painted their eyebrows, while the women usually wore jackets and skirts. But after this opera began to be performed in towns and cities, it absorbed certain features of other local operas while maintaining its own traditions. Today its costumes, stage properties, make-up and lighting effects are up to the standard of other local operas, even surpassing them in some respects. Because this opera comes from the countryside, its language is vivid, simple, easy to follow, and rich in popular sayings.

Five Honan Opera companies visited Peking in 1956, bringing with them many first-rate dramas. The Anyang Company of northern Honan, headed by the famous artist Tsui Lan-tien, performed *Fighting with Spears,* which is mainly acrobatic. The Loyang Company with its noted actress Ma Chin-feng gave us *Mu Kuei-ying Takes Command,* showing how this woman general of the Sung dynasty led an army in her old age to defend the country. Many dramas present Mu Kuei-ying's early career, but this is the first to deal with her old age. The Sian Lion Company, headed by the playwright Fan Tsui-ting, performed the patriotic opera *Wang Tso Cuts Off His Arm,* which portrays an episode in the war against the Golden Tartars during the Sung dynasty. And the Honan Opera Company from Hopei presented the romance *Yeh Han-yen.* All these operas were highly praised by Peking audiences. Honan Opera is characterized by simple language and clear enunciation, while its music has great charm and is well fitted to convey noble sentiments.

The last company of Honan Opera players to come to Peking was the Honan Provincial Company, led by Chang Hsiang-yu, most versatile of Honan actresses. This talented artist is a true patriot. During the war to resist America and aid Korea she led her company on a tour of the country, and with the proceeds from their performances bought an aeroplane for the Chinese People's Volunteers. Many opera-lovers who have not seen her on the stage know her work from gramophone records or her film. In *Questioning Hung-niang,* an episode from *The West Chamber,* she plays the part of the clever, mischievous maid. In *The Broken Bridge,* a scene from *The White Snake,* she gives a subtle rendering of the love mixed with anger of a wife who is cruelly abandoned. In *Hua Mu-lan* she has the role of the fearless heroine who disguises herself as a man and goes to the wars. In *The Final Sacrifice* she portrays a girl whose lover is condemned to death owing to her father, and her grief at their final parting. In *Tortoise Hill* she gives a moving interpretation of a fishergirl's sadness at her father's death, her admiration for a young hero and her brave fight against the enemy. These performances show the brilliance with which Chang Hsiang-yu varies the basic tunes of Honan Opera, and proves her well able to play widely different roles. She herself denies that she has exceptional gifts, but says it is hard work over many years which has brought her to the top of her profession.

All local operas, as indicated here, have their distinctive music or stage conventions. Since liberation they have done away with what was outworn or offensive and produced new dramas, introducing innovations in the choice of subject, language and music, in accordance with the policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom." The present achievements, however, are merely the first step in this direction.

—WEN SHIH-CHING

CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

Written Chinese has marked characteristics of its own. It consists of monosyllabic characters each of which would fit into a small square, and these can be divided into six types of word formation. Since these characters are both pictographic and phonetic, writing in China is a branch of art closely related to painting and poetry.

The six types of words may be briefly explained as follows:

1. *Hsiang Hsing* or pictographs are simply pictures of objects. For example (日), the character for "sun," was originally (⊙), a circle with a dot in it. (月) meaning "moon" was (☽), representing a crescent moon.

2. *Chih Shih* or indicative characters indicate certain meanings by geometrical symbolism. Thus "above" is (上), "below" is (下). The long horizontal stroke suggests the ground level or surface, and the other line an object above or below.

3. *Hui Yi* are ideographs or suggestive compounds based on a natural association of ideas. For example, "faith" (信) is made up of "man" (人) and "word" (言), for faith means that a man must abide by his word. Again "courage" (武) consists of "cease" (止) and "spear" (戈), as a truly courageous man can make others put down their arms. "Rest" (休) is made up of "man" (人) and "tree" (木), because a man may rest by leaning against a tree.

4. *Hsing Sheng* or phonetic compounds have two component parts, one indicating the meaning, the other the sound. In the words for "river" (江 or 河), the left side stands for water while the right suggests the sound. There are many such formations in Chinese, and they are easily recognizable.

5. *Chuan Chu* are characters nearly related in sense. For example, (老) means "old," (考) means "ancestor," and (耆) means "old man"; they all consist of an element common to their group.

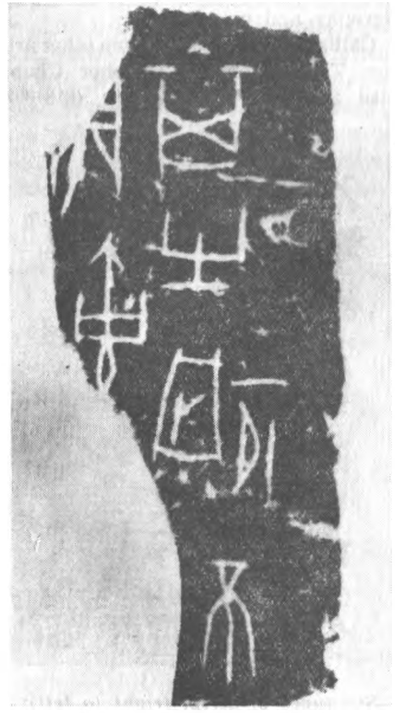
Bone-inscription characters written by a modern calligrapher, Wu Hu-fan

6. *Chia Chieh* or borrowed characters are adopted for extending meanings. Thus "command" (令) is also used in the sense of "magistrate," for a magistrate gives commands.

The first four types are pictograms, ideograms and phonograms, while the last two types show how new ideas can be expressed without creating fresh characters *ad infinitum*.

In ancient China calligraphy was considered one of the Six Arts, the others being ritual, music, archery, charioteering and mathematics. Scholars were required not only to know characters but to write a beautiful hand. As society developed so did calligraphy, thus we now have many different scripts: bone-inscription, bronze-inscription, majuscule, miniscule, official, rustic, cursive, uncial and so forth.

A bronze tripod (the inscription is inside)



Rubbing of a bone inscription

Bone-inscriptions (*chia ku wen*) have been found on animal bones and tortoise shells excavated in Anyang since 1899. These inscriptions, made more than three thousand years ago, are the earliest Chinese writing yet discovered. The characters were probably first traced with a pen, then carved with a sharp instrument and smeared with a red or black dye. They are usually angular and have an archaic appearance.

Bronze-inscriptions (*chung ting wen*) were carved on ancient bronze vessels, the number of words varying from a very few to more than five hundred. This script is in general elegant and distinctive.

The majuscule script (*ta chuan*) is traditionally attributed to a keeper of historical records named Chou who lived in the reign of King Hsuan (827-781 B.C.). Elegant and regular, it

Rubbing of a bronze inscription

is considered a model of early calligraphy.

The miniscule script (*hsiao chuan*) is ascribed to Li Ssu, prime minister of the First Emperor of the Chin dynasty (221-207 B.C.). This is a less regular and more cursive variant of the majuscule style.

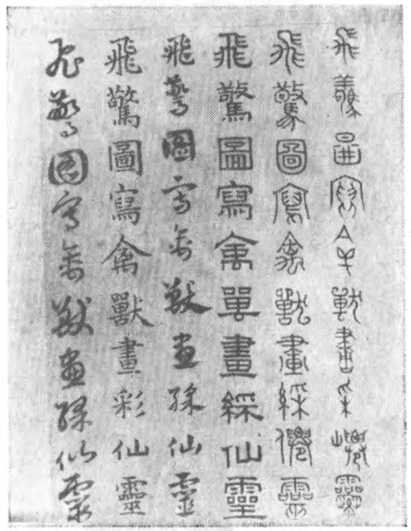
The official script (*li shu*) is said to have been invented by the censor Cheng Mao also during the reign of the First Emperor of Chin. A story has it that this man spent ten years in prison, during which time he revised three thousand characters of the ancient script and produced a simplified form suited for use by scribes and clerks.

The rustic (*tsao shu*), uncial (*kai shu*) and cursive (*hsing shu*) scripts appeared during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). The rustic hand was designed for speed, and its simplified characters are not easy to read, though the general effect is vigorous and flowing. The uncial script is that still commonly used today in writing and printing. The cursive hand is a cross between these two.

All these scripts derive beauty from the strokes of the characters and the style of the individual writer. Though the strokes are subject to rules, good calligraphers express their taste and skill through their brushwork, so that some styles remind us of beautiful girls, tragic heroes, running streams, floating clouds or wild swans in flight. Each character consists of a few strokes only, yet there is scope for infinite variety. Thus good calligraphy gives deep aesthetic satisfaction.

Chinese calligraphy is akin to Chinese painting. Indeed these two arts are often mentioned together, for the same gifts are used in each, and history records the names of many scholars who excelled in both calligraphy and painting.

Calligraphy may learn from other arts too. The famous calligrapher Chang Hsu in the Tang dynasty (618-907)



Six types of script (right to left): majuscule, miniscule, official, cursive, uncial, rustic

is known to have improved his style after watching the performance of a celebrated dancer.

In writing Chinese, the method of holding the brush is of great importance. Wang Hsi-chih, a great calligrapher of the Tsin dynasty (265-420) is said once to have tiptoed over to snatch the brush from the hand of his son who was writing, and to have been delighted when he did not succeed, for the lad's firm grip showed his serious attitude to calligraphy. A writer should hollow his palm and raise wrist and elbow, for in that position the hand can move freely and the handwriting will be dynamic and vigorous.

The history of the Chinese written language during the last four thousand years shows not only a change in scripts but also a process of gradual simplification as the complex old characters evolved into simpler forms. Chinese writing has its advantages. Though the characters are monosyllabic and the number of sounds is limited, the different written forms ensure that characters of the same sound can be distinguished; and since the language is ideographic, people speaking different dialects can still understand the meaning of the characters. Written Chinese has some serious defects, however. The chief is that some words have so many strokes they are difficult to write, recognize and remember. The number of characters is also too large—over forty thousand in all. This makes it hard to wipe out illiteracy or develop our culture, and it has to a certain extent hampered our scientific advance. That is why we are now simplifying the language. This is done in the main by cutting down the number of strokes. For example, the verb "manage" (辦) has been simplified to (办). "Edge" (邊) has been changed to (边). "Pavilion" (臺), "table" (檯) and "typhoon" (颱) have all been reduced to (台). Simplifications have also been made in certain component parts of the characters, thus the radical (糸) is now written as (纟), (言) as (讠), and (幾) as (几). But while these measures save a good deal of labour and time, they do not solve the problem completely. So plans are now being made for the gradual alphabetization of our written language, and once this reform is carried out, it will be an important milestone in the development of written Chinese.

—*YEN CHIEN-PI*

Chinese Writers and Artists Celebrate 40th Anniversary of the October Revolution

The influence of the October Revolution on Chinese literature has been as profound and far-reaching as on the Chinese people's revolution. Guided by the light of the October Revolution, the Chinese people initiated the May the Fourth Movement in 1919, which began China's new cultural movement. Now millions of China's students, workers and functionaries, young and old, have become devoted readers of Soviet literature. Many of them in their youth were inspired by Soviet literature and our own revolutionary literature, and so joined the revolutionary ranks. In the hard war years they were able to draw strength from Soviet literature, and now that the whole country is engaged in socialist construction they look for models and lessons in the new reality reflected in Soviet writing.

China's new literature grew up under the influence of Russian and Soviet literature. Our great writers, Lu Hsun, Kuo Mo-jo, Mao Tun and others in the vanguard of literature devoted much time and energy to translate and introduce Russian and Soviet works to China. Lu Hsun looked upon the introduction of Soviet literature as "a Promethean task." Steeled in revolutionary struggles and influenced by Soviet writing, our socialist-realist literature has had a healthy growth.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the great October Revolution, writers and artists in Peking attended a huge rally on November 6. Present at the meeting were Chen Yi, Vice-Premier of the State Council; Chou Yang, Vice-Chairman of the Federation of Writers and Artists; Hsia Yen, member of the Presidium of the Federation of Writers and Artists; and some 1,200 poets, writers, dramatists, musicians, artists and other workers in different cultural fields. The guests of honour were N. G. Sudarikov, counsellor of the Soviet Embassy, and other Soviet friends. There were also other foreign guests. Chou Yang reviewed the impact of the October Revolution on China's revolutionary struggles and Chinese culture, and Sudarikov spoke on the tremendous development of Soviet art and culture during the past forty years. After the meeting a programme of music and selections from Peking and Russian operas were given by Peking artists.

On the same evening a mass rally of 18,000 Peking citizens and guests was held in the Peking Gymnasium. Speaking at this rally, Liu Shao-chi, Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, pointed out that the October Revolution ushered in a new era, that all the peoples of the world are advancing step by step along the path opened up by the October Revolution, and that they will enter at different times a new historic epoch, the epoch of socialism and communism. Hundreds of visiting Soviet artists and Chinese artists presented an excellent joint programme including selections from *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote*, and *The Shore of Happiness* performed by members of the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre, who had already won the hearts of Chinese audiences. Four Chinese ballet dancers from the Peking School of Dancing also took part in the selection from *Swan Lake*.

Peking's celebration of the 40th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution reached its height on November 7, when half a million people took part in the evening rally on Tien An Men Square. Festive lights formed glittering pendants round the giant Tien An Men gate and the tops of nearby buildings. The square was flooded with light and darting searchlights blended with the fireworks to form a kaleidoscope of colour in the sky. Crowds of happy dancers overflowed from the square down neighbouring avenues. They danced and enjoyed the celebrations until late into the night.

As their tribute to the occasion, publishing houses throughout the country brought out many excellent books depicting the hard struggles of the Soviet people during and after the October Revolution and their fine qualities. The People's Literature Publishing House, the China Youth Publishing House, the China Drama Publishing House and others printed translations of many new Soviet works as well as new editions of such works as Gorky's stories and plays and Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don.*

All the literary magazines devoted special numbers or columns in November to the great anniversary, and printed poems, articles and stories in honour of the occasion. *Wen Yi Pao* (The Literary Gazette) devoted two numbers to the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution. *People's Literature* reserved a special column in its November issue for the October Revolution and printed articles by such well-known Chinese writers as Kuo Mo-jo, Mao Tun and Pa Chin on their reaction to the October Revolution, as well as accounts of the influence of Soviet literature on Chinese literature.

I-Wen (World Literature) devoted a combined issue of two numbers to Soviet literature and printed translations of the best work of more than twenty Soviet writers: their essays, memoirs, literary criticism and letters to Chinese writers. The bi-monthly, *Graphic Art*, brought out a special number with reproductions of Soviet sketches and engravings and warm and comradely letters from Soviet artists to Chinese artists. *Popular Films* and *Film Stories* also commemorated the great anniversary in special numbers.

Writers and artists in all parts of China launched a movement to study the experience of Soviet writers, and to find a variety of literary forms to popularize information on the achievements of Soviet construction. The associations of writers and artists in different provinces and cities organized recitals of Soviet poems, meetings to discuss Soviet literature and talks by Chinese writers on their visits to the Soviet Union.

At the time of the anniversary, a "Soviet Film Week" opened simultaneously in Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai and other big cities and provincial towns, and new Soviet films were

shown in all the large cinemas. Other cinemas revived more than fifty popular Soviet films such as *The Life of Lenin, Chapayev, Far from Moscow, Son of the Guerrillas, The Unfinished Story, Hero of the Golden Star,* and *Troubled Days* which depicted the October Revolution and the construction and achievements of the Soviet Union at different stages of its history.

Outstanding Soviet plays were staged in the major cities and towns. Peking theatres presented Pogodin's *Man with the Gun,* Rachmanov's *The Tide of Revolution,* Aflnogenov's *Distant Land* and other well-known Soviet plays. Concerts of Soviet music and performances of Soviet dances and acrobatics were also held in the bigger cities and towns. Radio stations in all parts of China arranged special programmes of Soviet music.

Provincial and municipal cultural departments sponsored photographic exhibitions depicting life in the Soviet Union and the friendship between the Chinese and Soviet peoples. Chinese artists organized exhibitions of Soviet art and selected outstanding Soviet oil paintings and pictures for reproduction. Five eminent painters in the traditional style, Yu Fei-an, Wu Ching-ting, Hu Pei-heng, Chin Chung-wen and Tien Shih-kuang collaborated on two large paintings — a landscape and a picture of flowers and trees — to symbolize the profound influence and world significance of the October Revolution.

The celebrations throughout China were enthusiastically attended. Artists, writers and the whole publishing world took an eager part in them. All this shows the immense influence of the October Revolution on Chinese cultural circles, and the importance Chinese writers and artists attach to this occasion. The Chinese people look upon this anniversary as their own festival, just as they consider their own revolution the continuation of the great October Revolution.

The Publication Programme of the People's Literature Publishing House

The People's Literature Publishing House recently drafted a comprehensive, long-term plan for the publication of translations of world classics. The programme for the next five years has been virtually decided upon, and from now on world classics and important modern works of literature will appear in systematic succession in Chinese.

In the field of Indian literature selections will be made from *The Ocean of Stories,* an anthology of folk tales, and the book of fables *Pancatantra.* The plays of Kalidasa and other important dramatic works such as Bhavabhuti's *Malali-Madhava,* and Visakhadatta's *Mudra-Raksasa,* as well as the selected works of Tagore in nine volumes will begin to appear this year. Premchand's novel *Godan* will also be introduced to China. The two great epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* will not be translated in their entirety at present owing to their length, but abridged translations are soon to appear.

The many classical Japanese works to be translated include *Manyoshu* (Collection of a Myriad Leaves), *Genji Monogatari* (Tales of Genji), and *Ise Monogatari* (Tales of Ise), Ono Yasumaro's *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters), Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *Joruri* (Ballad Dramas), Shikitai Sanba's *Ukiyo Buro* (Bath House) and *Ukiyo Doko* (Barber Shop), and Masaoka Shiki's *Haiku* (Short Poems). Representative works of Futabatei Shimei, Tokutomi Roka, Natsume Soseki and other celebrated writers of the Meiji and Taisho periods will also be published, while this year Chinese readers will be able to read the selected works of such revolutionary writers as Kobayashi Takiji and Miyamoto Yuriko.

The first volume of the works of Euripides has recently appeared in Chinese, and the next two volumes will follow this year. Other Greek classics in the programme are the complete works of Aeschylus and Sophocles, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* and Aristotle's *Poetics.* A beginning was made in introducing Roman literature last year with the publication of Virgil's *Eclogues,* and translations are to be made of the works of Ovid, Terence and Plautus, and Apuleius' *The Golden Ass.*

Classical Russian literature is to be represented by translations of the chief writers from Lomonosov to Bunin, as well as the selected works in several volumes of Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Ostrovsky, Nekrasov, Dostoevsky, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Tolstoy, Korolenko and Gorky. Translations will also be made of classical works and epics of other nationalities in the Soviet Union. For instance, a selection is being made of the best short stories by Ukrainian writers, and an anthology of classical Ukrainian poetry is in the plan.

Theoretical works from Russia and the Soviet Union will include histories of literature, literary criticism, biographies of writers, studies and memories.

In the field of English literature, last year Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and the selected poems of William Blake were published. These will be followed by a seven volume edition of Scott, a nine volume edition of Dickens, a five volume edition of Thackeray, a four volume edition of Hardy, and selections from the poetry of Robert Burns, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth and Coleridge. In drama, in addition to publishing the few plays of Shakespeare not yet translated, translations will be made of the works of Marlowe, Sheridan, Congreve and Fielding.

Last year saw the publication of such French classics as Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize* and Le Sage's *Le Diable Boiteux.* This year the People's Literature Publishing House will produce the first volume of Hugo's *Les Misérables,* Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* Émile Zola's *La Fortune Des Rougon* and *L'Argent,* and Alfred de Musset's *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle.* Translations will also be made of the *Chanson de Roland,* the *Fables* of La Fontaine, and the dramas of Molière, Racine and Corneille; while in addition to translations in several volumes of the selected works of Hugo, Maupassant, Zola and Balzac, Chinese readers will have an opportunity to read Baudelaire's *Fleurs Du Mal,* the poems of Paul Verlaine, Boileau's *L'Art Poétique,* Taine's *Philosophie de l'Art,* Lafargue's *Essais Critiques* and other French masterpieces.

According to a rough estimate, three hundred world classics from more than forty countries will be published by 1962. Apart from the titles listed above, these will include such important works as *The Arabian Nights,* the *Nibelungenlied,* Heinrich Mann's *Der Untertan,* Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks,* Manzoni's *The Betrothed,* Walt Whitman's *Selected Prose Works,* and the stories of O. Henry and Edgar Allen Poe. There will be dramas by John August Strindberg and Ludvig Holberg, *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner, and *Salah Asuhan* by Abdul Moeis. Some books

chosen from the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe are *Martha* by the Polish writer Orzeszkowa, *Old Czech Myths* by Jirasek, *Bank Ban* by the Hungarian author Katona, selected works of the Rumanian writer Creanga, poems and short stories by the Bulgarian poet Vazov, poems by the Albanian poet Cajupi, and *The Mountain Wreath* by the Yugoslav writer P. Njegos.

The People's Literature Publishing House has secured the help of many eminent scholars and authors in order to carry out this plan. Thus Natsume Soseki's *Kusamakura* is to be translated by Feng Tse-kai, the poems of Tagore by Hsieh Ping-hsin, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* by Professor Feng Chih, Hegel's *Philosophy of Fine Art* by Professor Chu Kuang-chien, Taine's *Philosophie de l'Art* by Fu Lei, and the *Iliad* and *Don Quixote* by Wu Shih.

The Asian Film Week

A blue sky and a blue globe, with a white dove carrying film reels to the countries of Asia—this poster for the Asian Film Week symbolized the desire of all Asian peoples for peace. Last autumn this poster could be seen everywhere in Peking, and Chinese hearts were filled with friendship for their brothers and sisters in other Asian lands.

Cultural relations between China and the rest of Asia date back to very early times, and after the sixth and seventh centuries—the time of the Sui and Tang dynasties in China—such contacts increased. The achievements of other lands in literature, music, painting and sculpture had a great influence on Chinese civilization. In recent years the cultural relations between China and other Asian countries have grown even closer. Many classics of Asian literature are being translated into Chinese, and many Asian countries have sent cultural and art delegations to visit China and give performances here. During the last few years we have had Korean, Indian and Japanese film weeks; and through the exchange of films and the visits of film delegations our people have been able to know more about Asian films, and our film-workers have made friends with many colleagues in different Asian countries, where Chinese films have received a warm welcome too. This was the background to the Asian Film Week.

Fifteen countries, more than half of all those in Asia, took part in this festival, sending not only films but delegations also to Peking. The members of these delegations visited the Peking Film Studio and the Chinese News and Documentary Film Studio, and met Chinese film-goers in five Peking cinemas. During the film week Asian films were shown in ten cities including Peking, Shanghai, Nanking and Canton. Some of these were making their first appearance in China, including the technicolor feature films *Jhansi Ki Rani* from India, *People of the Rice Field* from Japan, *I Met a Girl* from Soviet Tajikstan, *Santi and Vina* from Thailand, and *Woman Basket-ball Player No. 5* from China. Other feature films were *Thu Chit* from Burma, *Bjajaprana* from Indonesia, *Where To?* from Lebanon, *Modern Mongolia* from the People's Republic of Mongolia, *Baghi* from Pakistan, and *Mega Mendong* from Singapore. There was also the film of the stage play *The Saga of Sadosung Fortress* from Korea, and the coloured documentary *Spring in the North Vietnam Plateau* from Vietnam. Other documentaries were *The Order of the Yellow Robe* and *Art and Architecture of Ceylon* from Ceylon, and *The People's Life in Vietnam* and *Resisting Drought* from Vietnam. Thanks to these films, the Chinese audiences came to know more of the life and aspirations of their neighbouring peoples. They felt as though they had visited many different countries in Asia, and enjoyed the beautiful scenery of Lebanon, the lakes, mountains and boundless grasslands of Mongolia. They were also introduced to many interesting national customs, such as the Water-Lantern Festival in Thailand when coloured lanterns float on the river, and young men and girls go boating in the moonlight, singing, dancing, and filling the night with poetry and colour. These films also presented dances and songs with marked national characteristics, as well as examples of the ancient culture of different Asian countries. Thus *The Order of the Yellow Robe* and *Art and Architecture of Ceylon* introduced the traditional art and folk customs of Ceylon.

On the eve of the first performance of these Asian films, the weather began to turn chilly and it started to drizzle in Peking; but long queues waited before every cinema to buy tickets. In response to the public demand, the cinemas had to increase the number of shows. As soon as Ta Hua Cinema announced there was to be an additional performance of *Jhansi Ki Rani* at five a.m. on September the first, a long queue formed immediately; and even when it was announced that the tickets were nearly sold out, the people in the queue were reluctant to leave. There has never been a film show at such an early hour in China before, nor such a display of enthusiasm.

During the Asian Film Week the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and the Association of Chinese Film Workers held a Photographic Exhibition of the Asian Film Week in Peihai Park.

The Japanese film delegates Seigo Shindo, Yuko Mochizuki, Kiyohiko Ushihara, head of the delegation (2nd, 3rd, and 5th from left), with Tsai Chu-sheng (1st on left) and Ssutu Hui-min (4th on left), chairman and vice-chairman of the Association of Chinese Film Workers, and Khmatov, head of the Soviet Tajikstan Film Delegation (1st on right)

National Handicrafts Exhibition

To enable Chinese craftsmen to exchange experience and learn new skills in order to speed up the development of the handicraft arts, for a week during the summer of 1957 the first national conference of handicraft artists was held in Peking. This is the first time in history that craftsmen of different nationalities of China have met in this way. Among the 465 delegates representing 106 different trades there were veteran artists in their eighties as well as promising young workers in their early twenties.

The austere halls of the conference building were transformed into a palace of art by 2,388 remarkable handicraft exhibits from twenty-seven provinces and municipalities.

Visitors to the exhibition were struck by the Uighur embroidery from Sinkiang and the Miao embroidery from Kweichow. The embroidery of Szechuan, Hunan, Kiangsu and Kwangtung has long been famous for its lifelike figures and flowers, but the equally exquisite work of some national minorities was hitherto almost unknown.

Skilled craftsmen can work wonders with very simple materials. The golden chrysanthemums and pink or crimson peonies made of silk by Yangchow artists are triumphs of realism. The Tzukung fans from Szechuan, which seem to be made of pale yellow silk, are actually woven with flower and bird designs out of bamboo fibres as fine as silk. The wooden chopsticks and ornamented screens from Nanyang in Honan at first sight look like ivory or jade. The straw landscapes from Swatow, which glitter like gold and give such a vivid impression of life in the tropics, are in fact made of ordinary straw, split into half, pressed smooth and pasted on black paper. Some handicraftsmen create lovely works of art with a pair of ordinary scissors, for the paper-cuts on exhibition with their flowers and trees, fish and insects, birds and beasts, are not merely designs but look like traditional paintings. "The Pine and the Moon" made last year by the famous artist Chang Yung-shou is exactly like a painting by some old master.

Among the more valuable exhibits were a coral carving of a court lady playing with a parrot, a horse carved in green jade, which seems just about to take flight, a jasper reproduction of a scene from *The West Chamber*, and a green jade flower worth thirty thousand yuan. These works of art were highly praised by craftsmen from all over the country, whose enjoyment as they gazed was increased by the heady perfume of the sandal-wood fans from Kwangtung.

All who saw the stone-carving "Grape-vine by the Mountainside" agreed that this was a masterpiece with its luscious clusters of grapes and squirrels frisking among the luxuriant foliage. One deaf and dumb sculptor with uncanny skill carved an old fisherman who looks absolutely alive. There were splendid examples of wood-carving too, but spectators were most struck by the work of an artist of twenty-one, who became a professional only three years ago. His "Eight Fairies Cross the Sea" and "The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid" won high praise. The white or green jade cups from Kansu, known as "cups-that-shine-by-night" because they are reputed to gleam in the darkness, and praised by the Tang dynasty poet Wang Han in one of his poems, were also much admired.

A clay sculpture from Shenyang gave a forceful and vivid portrayal of how Cheng Cheng-kung (Koxinga) freed Taiwan in the seventeenth century.

Other beautiful works of art were exquisite ivory-carvings, lifelike porcelain figures from Shihwan, delicate and colourful lacquerware from Fukien, extraordinarily skilful imitations of ancient pottery, and many other examples of the rich handicraft arts which have developed in China over several thousand years.

One encouraging feature of the exhibition was the proof it gave that many handicraft arts which had died out have now come to life again. The art of making bamboo-fibre screens with inlaid designs of flowers and birds in Wenchow, Chekiang, was revived in 1953 after having been lost for fifty years. For three centuries craftsmen in Hainan Island made simple yet sophisticated carvings of coconut shells, some were used as tribute for the Manchu court; but after the outbreak of the war against Japanese aggression this art virtually died out, not to be revived till after liberation. The delicate yet strong iron wall-decorations which come from Wuhu date back to the end of the Ming dynasty; but the last handicraftsman able to make these was forced out of business before liberation, and only went back to his old trade last year. The carved lacquer utensils of Hsinchiang in Shansi, with layers of different coloured lacquers over a wooden base, are fresh and pleasing; yet for about twenty years this ware stopped being made. Now the organizations responsible for leading the handicraft arts are still searching for folk products which were not seriously considered before, or are no longer being made.

The contrast so evident in this exhibition between the past decline and present prosperity of these traditional arts brings out the difference between the old and new society. Before liberation, craftsmen lived from hand to mouth and were not respected as artists. The best maker of pipe-organs in Tientsin before liberation made a precarious living by repairing instruments for the monasteries and temples. By 1948 only five or six of the skilled flute-makers of Yuping in Kweichow were left, some having been driven to suicide by poverty. Many craftsmen who made bamboo fans in Szechuan could not afford a change of clothes before liberation. Today, however, old artists are respected and young craftsmen are well cared for and educated. The remarkable objects of art shown in this exhibition are the best proof of this.

The Chinese Production of *Sakuntala*

To commemorate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the China-India Friendship Association, the Chinese Youth Art Theatre staged Kalidasa's famous drama *Sakuntala* for two successive seasons last year. Kalidasa lived about one thousand five hundred years ago, during the same period as our celebrated poets Tao Yuan-ming and Hsueh Ling-yun. This was a great age in Indian literature, and *Sakuntala* was one of the masterpieces of that time. The heroine of this poetic drama is Sakuntala, a beautiful, passionate girl, and the play deals with the love between her and King Dushyanta in a hermit's forest in ancient India.

As this was the first classical Indian drama to be staged in China, many difficulties were encountered in the production, notably in the casting,

costuming and stage settings. Pai Shan succeeded in appearing so like an Indian girl in her excellent interpretation of Sakuntala that she won high praise from Indian friends in Peking. The Chinese Children's Theatre took part in some of the dances to introduce the birds, beasts and plants in the forest; and the well-known Cheng brothers of the Chinese Acrobatic Theatre performed the lion dance. Mrs. B. Singh and Mrs. P. K. Guha of the Indian Embassy attended rehearsals to show the actors how to wear Indian costumes, and also designed and cut out costumes for them. The famous Indian dancer Kamala Lakshman and her sister, who visited China while the play was under rehearsal, came to the theatre and performed each dance at the request of the director, Wu Hsueh. Their beautiful movements, brilliant technique and depth of feeling were of tremendous help to the Chinese artists, enabling them to grasp the distinctive features of different dances. All this friendly assistance contributed to no small degree to the success of the production.

The famous Indian dancer, Kamala Lakshman, shows Pai Shan, who plays Sakuntala, how Indian women sprinkle water

The 250th Anniversary of the Birth of Carlo Goldoni

Carlo Goldoni, the founder of modern Italian comedy, is one of the most popular European dramatists in China. As early as 1925 his most representative work *La Locandiera* (The Mistress of the Inn) was introduced in an adapted form to Chinese audiences, and was extremely well received in a number of cities. In 1956 the Central Drama Institute staged his *Il Servitore di due Padroni* (A Servant with Two Masters), which met with an enthusiastic reception in Peking and many other parts of China.

A scene from "La Locandiera," performed by the Central Drama Institute at the commemoration meeting

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of Goldoni's birth, the People's Literature Publishing House and the Drama Publishing House last year published selected works of Carlo Goldoni, including *La Locandiera, Il Servitore di due Padroni, La Vedova Scaltra, Il Bugiardo, Il Ventaglio* and *Le Bourru Bienfaisant.* In September Chinese dramatists and writers held a commemoration meeting at which the Central Drama Institute produced *La Locandiera.* Prior to this a similar meeting had been held in Tientsin, and the Tientsin People's Art Theatre had produced *Il Servitore di due Padroni.* The dramatist was also commemorated in Shanghai, Canton, Shenyang, Hankow and Chungking. An exhibition of his works was held in Peking, and in October the Chinese Writers' Union and the Peking Library jointly sponsored a series of public lectures introducing Goldoni's life and work.

ARTISTS IN THIS NUMBER

Li Hu, born in 1919, comes from a poor family in Szechuan. He taught for four years in primary and middle schools and entered university in 1942. Working while he studied, he began to learn painting, a thing he had wanted to do since childhood. After liberation he was able to travel widely and see the buoyant life of the Chinese people as they built socialism, which has inspired him. His *Portrait*, reproduced in this number, is one of his recent works.

Lu Tsun-pei, a young woodcut artist, now 27, comes of a peasant family in Haimen County, Kiangsu. He is now an art editor on the *Kwangming Daily*, a national paper published in Peking. Two of his paintings, *The Check-dam on the Yungting River* and *Getting in the Compost for Winter*, were chosen for the Second National Exhibition of Graphic Arts in 1956, and were also shown in the First Exhibition of Young Artists.

Yun Shou-ping (1633-1690) was born in Changchow, Kiangsu. His father had been a Ming dynasty official, and when the Ming dynasty fell, he lost him in the chaos which ensued. The boy was adopted by a high official of the succeeding Ching dynasty. Some time later he met his father again by chance; the father had become a monk in the Chiufeng Temple in Hangchow. Yun Shou-ping entered the temple as a child monk.

Both his father and his uncle, Yun Hsiang, a well-known landscape painter, taught the boy general education and painting. Yun Shou-ping started with landscape painting. He became a close friend of another famous landscape painter, **Wang Hui (1632-1720)**, though they each developed a markedly individual style. Yun Shou-ping's graceful, effortless style is considered to have surpassed Wang's. His treatment of flowers and plants broke the old, rather stereotyped, method prevailing at the end of the Ming dynasty, which used heavy ink outlines. He looked to earlier traditional painting and developed the "boneless" method—that is, to paint entirely with colour-charged brushes and no Chinese ink outline or emphasis. Using the actual flower as models, he chose pastel shades and with light strokes created pictures that are graceful and yet have a strength of their own.

His *Poppies*, which is reproduced in this issue, is an example of this. Many artists have subsequently tried to learn from him but very few have mastered his beautiful, lively style.

Pan Ho was born in 1926 in Canton. He had been fond of sculpturing and painting ever since he was a boy, but he had no opportunity of studying, nor could he get any help in the old days. He had to grope in the dark for a long time, and painfully learn from experience. After the liberation of Canton, in 1949, he studied for sometime in the South China Institute of Art and Literature and afterwards was enabled to travel. His *Hard Times*, reproduced in this issue, was done after his recent trip to Hainan Island, where he visited some veteran guerrillas in the old revolutionary base in the Wuchih Mountains. His aim was to depict the strong will and optimistic spirit of the revolutionary fighters of those difficult days.

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CHINESE LITERATURE

is pleased to announce that in response to requests from readers, the magazine will become a bi-monthly beginning this issue. This will provide more space for the publication of important works, and mean that readers are more promptly supplied with new writing which reflects life in China today, as well as with accounts of fresh developments in Chinese literature and art.

In addition to modern writing, the magazine will continue to publish works from old Chinese literature, others written since the May the Fourth Movement in 1919, and studies of individual authors. This should contribute to its readers' understanding of the ancient traditions and continuous development of Chinese literature. The work of different minority peoples in China, folk literature, literary criticism and new publications will continue to be introduced. As regards illustrations, the magazine will retain those features which have proved popular: each issue will carry coloured reproductions of both ancient and modern works, including paintings in the traditional style, woodcuts, sculpture and oil paintings.

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