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Front Cover: Woodcut by Wu Fan

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WANG YUAN-CHIEN

One Family

Half an hour or so before the office closed, the telephone on General Tseng's desk shrilled sharply. Putting down his red pencil, he picked up the receiver.

The call was from his house. In undisguised excitement his orderly told him: "Chief, your father's here!"

The general's heart missed a beat. "So he's come after all!"

Like a stone thrown into a pool, this news shattered his usual calm. Automatically he picked up the report on his desk. He had planned to finish going through it this afternoon, but it no longer held his interest. The blue type-written characters were dancing on the flimsy paper so that he could not take them in, while over and over the question repeated itself:

"He's here — what am I to do? . . ."

For nearly half a year this had hung over him. In May had come a letter out of the blue from a peasant in Kiangsi. Opening it, to his amazement he found himself addressed as "My son. . . ." The general's first reaction was a bellow of laughter. He told the political commissar: "Look, here's someone adopting me as his son! . . ."

Wang Yuan-chien is a young writer who has written many stories of lasting value, including the collections *The Party Fee* and *The Younger Generation.*

But as he read on, his smile of amusement gave way to a thoughtful frown. The letter said: ". . . Five years ago, Kuang Shan came home and told me you'd lost your life way back in the Long March, crossing the grasslands. I was so cut up, I wept and wept. But I couldn't believe you were dead. . . . The day before yesterday I heard that a speech of yours had been reported in the paper. I know there are cases of people with the same name, but surely not this time. . . . So I'm writing you a letter. If you're my son, write back. If not. . . ." There the letter broke off. The old man, no doubt, had not dared complete the sentence, while whoever it was writing the letter for him had been too touched to go on. Underneath was nothing but a name the general had never heard.

Obviously, a mistake had been made. The normal thing to do, since they were unrelated, would have been to write back explaining the situation. But the general did not do this. He sent an inquiry to the civil bureau of the county from which the letter came. A prompt reply informed him that this old man, Old Tseng, was a lonely man, all on his own. The state and the agricultural co-operative were supporting him between them. His son — the one with the same name as the general — had joined the first army corps of the Red Army in 1931, and had lost his life crossing the grasslands.

That evening the general sat down at his desk to write a reply to the old man. He started letter after letter but tore them all up, till it was well past midnight. No matter how gently he tried to break the news, each time he wrote "I am not your son" his hand began to shake, and finally the thought alone made his cheeks burn. Not till after one, when he decided to start the letter with: "Dear Father," was he able to express himself adequately. The next day he went to the post-office in person and sent off a postal order for twenty yuan with the letter.

No one had expected this. When the general came back from the post-office his orderly Chao whispered to the driver: "Other people adopt a son or daughter, but our chief's gone and adopted a father!"

Chao had no inkling, though, of what had passed through the general's mind as he sat up sleepless that night. The general's father had been dead for more than twenty years. During the Kuomintang's four campaigns against the Soviet bases, the old man had been murdered in the banian grove south of the village. As the general read this letter from the dead soldier's father, as he took up his pen, as he weighed each word of his reply, he recalled his own father. He had no idea what this Old Tseng looked like or what age he was — apart from his name he knew virtually nothing of him — yet he could not help visualizing him like his own father: black beard, long eyebrows, hair thinning at the temples and dusted with grey by the ears, with the same scar the size of a coin under the left ear. . . . Of course, he couldn't look like that, this old man who had been waiting for his son for more than twenty years.

And what of the son? It did look as if he'd died years ago as reported. The general cast his mind back to the comrades-in-arms who had fallen by his side. He put down his pen and stared, in a reverie, at the hoary locust tree outside the window. Could the old man's son have been Tseng Ching-liang, Fourth Squad leader that year? He had fallen covering the detachment's crossing of the River Hsiang. Or Tseng Yu-tsai, political instructor of the Fourth Company? He had toppled into a crevasse trying to rescue a porter. . . . Though these two bore different names, he linked them with the old man in his mind. . . .

In thought, the general retraced his own path in the wars. Slowly the glimmering leaves outside the window transformed themselves into the far-stretching grasslands. All round were dank reeds, mud, brimming swamps on which floated greenish yellow scum. A straggler, suffering agonies of hunger, as he was limping forward his knees buckled under him and one leg sank into the slime. When he tried to pull it out his other leg sank. He was disappearing bodily, the water was over his thighs, up to his waist. . . . Then a rifle was held out to him and a hoarse voice cried: "Lie flat and you can roll out!" The same instant that he took this advice he recognized Tseng Ling-

piao of the Sixth Squad. Tugging on the rifle, he rolled out of the morass. But by the time he had a firm footing on a hummock, Tseng Ling-piao through his efforts to save him was bogged down himself. He cried, "Old Tseng!" and snatched the rifle from his shoulder — too late. Without even time to gasp a word of farewell, Tseng Ling-piao was sucked into the swamp. Till the last he raised one hand to keep his rifle out of the water, a rifle with a small ration-bag tied to its barrel. The next moment bubbles churned up round him and his army cap with the red star floated away.

"I owe my life to him." The general turned involuntarily to the cot beside him where his small son was asleep, one chubby fist on the quilt. His eyes misted, blood rushed to his head. From that unforgettable hour to the present day, whether fighting, working or studying, the general had always driven himself to the limit. And one reason was his secret conviction that to him had fallen another's unfinished mission, towards completing which he must do what little he could. But today it had dawned on him that this was not all: if possible he should take up a new task too.

What did this new task involve? His eyes strayed to the old man's letter. True, he had never known Tseng Ling-piao's address or any details about his family, and there was not necessarily any connection between him and this old man. Yet the fact remained: Old Tseng's son had died a hero's death like Tseng Ling-piao, while the father had waited, hoping against hope, through the bitter days of the White Terror. . . . Waiting, waiting, waiting for more than twenty years.

"This old man has lost his only son; the only way to comfort him is to give him another son! No matter for how short a time!" Swayed by these considerations, the general had written his reply.

After that the general considered Old Tseng as part of his family. He supported him, did his best to cheer him. Every month when he drew his salary, however busy he was he would keep one evening free to write a "home letter." By degrees, to his astonishment, this regular exchange of letters drew them closer. To him, this utter stranger was Tseng Ling-piao's father — no, part and parcel of his own family. When the weather grew chilly he suggested to his wife: "Couldn't you knit a sweater for the old fellow? We should send him woollen socks too." If anyone in the household had a cold, he wrote quickly to ask after the old man's health. . . . And each sign of contentment in the letters from Kiangsi gave him extraordinary pleasure.

Despite all this, the uneasiness remained: one careless slip and he might expose himself. And this uneasiness had increased last month when his "father" expressed the wish to visit his "son." The general wrote two letters running advising him not to come. Of course he gave good reasons: he was busy with work, the journey was too hard for an old man. . . . He promised that as soon as he could find time he would take the grand-children home. He hoped by this means to keep his "father" away. For he knew that sooner or later the truth must out, but the longer he could delay that day the more warmth and comfort the old man would have. Evidently, however, he had underestimated Old Tseng's longing to see his son, for ignoring all these warnings he had come.

"Now what am I to do?" the general wondered. Veteran of a hundred battles, he was not lacking in initiative and in countless tight corners had never been at a loss. But now, like a traveller who has lost his bearings, he did not know which way to turn. Even when he left the office, he had no plan of action in mind.

As his car rolled smoothly through the autumn breeze towards the sunset, the general stared woodenly at the poplars falling slowly behind by the roadside. He leaned forward abruptly and said: "Slow down a little! Don't go so fast!" To him, the poplars seemed to be shooting past.

Old Han, the driver, grinned over his shoulder at him. "I'm not speeding!" He tapped the speedometer. The needle was flickering between "20" and "40."

"Slow down a little anyway!" The general smiled wryly at himself, but he wanted time to think this problem over. Oddly enough, the closer they got the simpler it seemed. He decided: "I'll tell him the truth. I just want to do what that dead comrade would have done — be a son to him." He rehearsed the words of comfort he might use: "No, uncle, your son gave his life for the revolution, but those of us still living are all your sons. . . ." That sounded too stiff and cold. He tried again: "Uncle, you've no son and I've no father. I want you to be my father, if you'll let me be your son. . . ."

As the car drew up at the house, the general was confident that he could handle this delicate situation.

With considerable excitement, not unmixed with misgivings, the general climbed the stairs to his sitting room.

His four-year-old son, Ya-fei, came skipping to meet him, hugging a huge, golden pomelo. "Daddy! Grandfather's come!"

The general looked round the room. By the low table, a short, wizened old man seemed submerged in an easy chair. A glossy bamboo pipe in his hands, head on his arms, he was dozing. The long journey by bus and train had been too much for him. The general stared at his grizzled hair and felt a pang to find him so old and worn. He had only to take a few steps forwards, he knew, and that grizzled head would be lifted, two eyes would be fixed on his lips waiting for the salutation not heard for over twenty years — Dad! To say: "No, I'm not your son!" would be too hard on this worn old man.

"No, I can't do it." A strange sensation swept over him. His eyes clouded and once more he saw that hand raised from the swamp, that rifle with its quivering strap. . . . Abandoned was his hardly-conceived plan of action, swept away by the emotion — now much intensified — he had felt on reading the old man's letters or writing his replies. Slowly relinquishing his small son's hand, he strode across to squat by Old Tseng's side. Stroking those thin shoulders he called softly: "Dad! . . ."

This word charged with so much meaning came strangely from his lips — it was more than twenty years since the general had used it. Then the thought flashed through his mind: "Now he'll find out."

As he had foreseen, the old man woke up with a jerk, his pipe clattering to the floor. But no disappointment flooded his face — he was half blind! Meshed with wrinkles like a spider's web, one of his eyes was sunken; the other showed only a slit in its red, swollen socket, almost as if he were winking. He struggled to open that eye as wide as he could, while his wasted hands stretched out, trembling, to fumble at the general's shoulders, neck and hair. Finally gripping his head he faltered:

"Ta-wang! . . ."

This pet name, heard for the first time, warmed the general's heart. Gazing squarely at the old man, he said:

"Dad! It's me!"

The old man's crumpled face smoothed out, he sighed. Leaning closer to his "son," he peered at him and fingered him, as if making sure that some long lost possession — now found — was indeed his own. The general leaned his head on the old man's chest and a warm drop fell on his cheek. For the first time he savoured the depth of a father's love.

It was the general who presently broke the tense silence. He straightened up and sat down by the old man. "Dad, how . . . you've aged." He had spoken at random. Not yet accustomed to this role of a son, only just in time had he bitten back his usual question to his men's relatives: "How old are you?"

"Yes! It's over twenty years!" The old man heaved another long sigh. "You were only seventeen when you left home, but now you're a bearded man. This year you must be forty-three. . . ."

"Exactly," the general said. This was not his true age and the necessity of lying made him uncomfortable. To cover his confusion he drew Ya-fei to the old man's side. "Look, I was a boy when I left; now I've grandsons for you."

"That's right, it's twenty-six years." The old man held the child close. Rather shyly, Ya-fei said: "Grandad!" and leaned his head against the old man's cheek. The innocent gesture touched the general's heart and he thought: "If only we can get this new family going!"

The small boy fingered the old man's white beard curiously and looked up suddenly to ask: "Grandfather, didn't daddy say you'd been killed by the Kuomintang?" Before the startled general could pass this off, the old man answered quite naturally: "Silly kid! How could I die without seeing you all?" He threw back his head and laughed.

That hearty laughter dispelled the general's doubts and made the whole room gay. Deliberately changing the subject, the general said with a smile: "This is the younger. My elder boy's eight already. He boards at school but he'll be home in a few days. They're two mischievous little devils!"

"Like father, like son — how could any boy of yours be well-behaved? Have you forgotten what an imp you were at that age? Always up to some devilry!" This kindly teasing made the general think: "My father would have said the same!" The old man dragged himself to his feet and limped to the door, to produce two enormous pomelos from a basket. These he handed to his "son" with a chuckle. "You can't have eaten home-grown fruit for some years."

"Well, I've eaten pomelos, but they never taste the same." That was true. He knew the old man's district was noted for this fruit. During the Kuomintang's four anti-Communist campaigns he had fought in these parts, but never tried the local products. He took out his penknife and neatly stripped the skin from the pink, juicy fruit.

"Do you remember?" Groping to put some fruit in his "grandson's" hand, the old man turned towards his "son." "You left home just as the pomelos had ripened. Your mother and I saw you to the orchard at the end of the village and nothing would do for you but to take a few along for the others. I was a strong man then, with good

eyes. I climbed a tree and tossed some down to you. Then we watched you for several *li*. . . ."

"I remember," the general murmured. But a totally different picture had risen before him. It was a dark night and the local bullies had surrounded the gate when he escaped over the wall to the Red Army. His father had given him a hand up from below, then passed him a bundle of clothes and slipped into his pocket the only fifty coppers they had in the house. . . . His father's eyes. . . . He looked at the old man and asked: "Dad, how did you lose your sight?"

"How do you think? It was those hounds of hell!" The old man burst into a torrent of words. After the Red Army set out on the Long March, loyal to the revolution, he had secretly guided the Red Army guerrillas. But in the autumn of 1936 a traitor informed against him and he was arrested. Aware that he knew every path to the guerrilla's hide-outs in the mountains, after torturing him the enemy ordered him to lead their troops there. The day before they were to set out, the old man tricked his guard into giving him a handful of lime and gritting his teeth he rubbed this into his eyes. . . . Because he was disabled, he was let out of gaol alive, and thanks to the neighbours' care he had retained the partial use of one eye.

"All these years, son," the old man concluded, "your father hasn't lost face for you."

The general was profoundly moved. With equal grief and admiration he had stood before his father's grave in 1951 and heard of the peasants' long struggle in the old bases during the fearful White Terror. Old Tseng's story brought to his mind the faded army cap floating on the swamp, the hand holding the rifle high. . . . Never before had he been so keenly aware of what the victory of the revolution had cost. Cost not only in blood but in tears from countless eyes. No love could be too much for these who had given up all for the cause. Drawn more closely to the old man, he gripped his hand tightly. "Dad, you must have known bitterness all these years!"

"Never mind! It was for the revolution! I used to say: 'I've half an eye left to see the end of this scum and our Red Army's return!' And sure enough I've lived to see this day." With trembling fingers he filled his pipe, let his "son" light it, and puffed hard. "Yes, this half eye still comes in useful, now I can see you again. More salt water has flowed from this one eye, my boy, than one young fellow could carry!"

In silence the general took out his handkerchief and wiped the old man's eyes. "Don't grieve, dad! Here I am!"

"Yes, now I've all I want. But," his face clouded, "one thing I do blame you for. It's years now since the victory and all the others still living went home for a visit, yet you didn't even write a letter."

He was right: how could any child have been so unnatural? The general wished desperately that they had got in touch earlier. But how was he to explain? He gave the first excuse that came to mind: "These years I've been studying. . . . I did write . . . my letter must have gone astray. . . ." It sounded terribly thin.

The door opened and his wife walked in to save the situation.

"Look, here's dad!" He caught her sleeve.

She nodded understandingly and hastened forward, crying: "Father!"

"Forget those unhappy times, dad." The general took the old man's arm. "Come, let's have a meal to celebrate this family reunion."

They took seats at a small round table, young and old, three generations of the family. Old Tseng was obviously much less distraught now. He made his "son" sit beside him and could hardly take his eyes off him. The look of anxiety on his wrinkled face was replaced by a satisfied smile.

To add to his pleasure, the general poured out a bowl of wine and set it down before him.

"So you haven't forgotten?" The old man took the wine with a smile, gulped down a mouthful and wiped his

moustache with his hand, seeing in his mind's eye a little boy running with an earthen bowl to buy five coppers' worth of wine. As for the general, struck by the familiarity of the old man's tastes and gestures, he was thinking: "Even in little ways he's like my father."

The general heaped the old man's plate with food he remembered his father had liked. Old Tseng ate sparingly, though, leaning forward constantly to watch his "son." "Well, you still bolt your food the way you did when there wasn't enough. . . ." Without warning he pointed a chopstick at the general's mouth. "I remember you had a wart here — why didn't I feel it just now?"

"That —" Before the general could answer, his wife came to the rescue. "It made shaving awkward so he had it removed!"

Presently the old man made another discovery. "After all these years you're quite changed." He spoke with feeling. "You used to hold your chopsticks in your left hand. . . ."

"After I was wounded I had to change!" The general hastily rolled up his sleeve. By a lucky chance he had a scar on his left wrist.

He seized this chance to steer the talk away from his "boyhood," by giving the history of his scars, describing the battles he had been in, the crossing of snow-bound mountains and the grasslands, his wife and children. . . . The old man listened raptly, and in his company the general himself was stirred as never before.

The meal stretched out: it was past ten before the old man finished his last spoonful of soup. Nodding after the wine and his journey, he was tenderly helped to his room by his "son" and "daughter-in-law."

But once in bed the old man sat up abruptly. His gnarled hands gripped the general by the shoulders. He opened his one good eye as far as he could to stare at him avidly. Hoarsely he demanded:

"You *are* Ta-wang?"

"Yes!" All the general's misgivings returned.

"You *are* my son?"

"Yes, dad!" The general put his arms round the old man.

"Ah, I've lived to see this day! . . ." He was shaken by sobs. The general, who had gone dry-eyed through a hundred battles, found tears running down his cheeks.

Still sobbing, the storm-tossed old man dropped off to sleep. The general gazed down at his tear-stained, smiling face: so haggard yet so kindly. He softly spread a quilt over him, turned off the light and tiptoed to his own room.

He lit a cigarette and paced up and down, his steps as heavy as his heart. He could not banish the thought of his dead comrades, the massed graves at home, his father's face, this old man's sobbing. . . .

His wife asked in a low voice: "Can this be the father of that Tseng who saved you?"

"Maybe, maybe not. . . ."

His son, still eating pomelo, said: "Daddy! Lend me your magnifying glass so that grandad can have a good look at me tomorrow. . . ."

"Tomorrow let's go out together to buy him some clothes," suggested his wife.

The general nodded slowly. Either in answer to his wife and son or to himself, he said: "Throughout the war years our people gave all they had! Those of us still living must try to make it up to them in whatever small ways we can!"

He swung round to the window and threw it open. The night was clear and cool. The sky was full of stars, and a shooting star flashed silently across the firmament.

The general drew a deep breath. Then he called to his orderly: "Chao! Tomorrow I want you to take my father to the hospital to register. Remember! To have his eyes seen!" He laid an emphasis which astonished even himself on the two words "my father."

Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustration by Chang Ta-kuo

LIU KEH

Jangchan

All those who knew the Tibetan girl Jangchan thought her stupid and homely. Her flat round face wore a perpetually dull expression as if she had never known happiness or sorrow. But if you looked deep into her dark eyes, you would find a certain melancholy and loneliness.

People paid her little attention. She on her part bothered little about the others nor cared what was happening around her. Every day, she rose early and retired late, going about her work quietly. Conscientious and careful, she was always fearful of making mistakes. Year in and year out she toiled without a whimper, never making any demands. But even so, Doling, the master, often took the whip to her.

Besides her mother she had no other kin or friend in the village. Her mother told her they had come to the village when Jangchan was still little. Her father had already left home; life was too hard. It had happened one evening when he was drinking heavily. He was going abroad, he told his wife, his eyes bloodshot. He would return to fetch them when he got rich. Then he had staggered away.

Liu Keh, a member of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, is one of those young writers who have acquired popularity during recent years. He has worked for some time in Tibet, where the incidents of many of his stories took place.

One year turned into another; every day at twilight the young mother with Jangchan in her arms climbed to the roof-top to gaze at the distant road where dust whirled. They waited and waited but the father never returned. People said he died on some strange road far, far away.

Then sickness spread throughout the area. One morning, when snow covered the grassland, the mother, tears streaming down her face, took little Jangchan by the hand and left their home to begin a life of wandering. Eventually they had come to this village and had settled down since there was a shortage of hands here after the terrible epidemic.

Little Jangchan was often beaten or bullied by the village children because she was not born there like everyone else. They called her an outside bastard. She spent a lonely childhood with no remembrance of joy. Her mother soon turned into a blind, feeble old woman who sat on the ground all day long churning butter for the master with her thin, quivering hands. Jangchan grew up and looked as fresh as her mother in the prime of her youth.

Although Jangchan didn't know how to dance or sing, whenever there was a holiday and everyone else gathered on the pasture in their best clothes she too tidied herself up. She'd wash her strong arms, bare the year round, flap the dust from her one and only shabby black robe and stick a little wild flower in her hair. She never joined in the gathering but hid herself behind a tree and peeped silently at those enjoying themselves. Only at such moments would a smile appear on her lips. This was perhaps the greatest joy in her life.

One spring when she had pinned another wild flower in her hair, a big rough hand gently touched her shoulder. "Go and join in the dance, Jangchan, you lead such a hard life."

She turned round to look into the honest and clear eyes of a broad-chested young man. Her breathing came sharp and fast and her heart pounded wildly. With a timid, startled cry, she turned and ran away.

That night, huddling in a corner by herself she repeated the young man's words, "Go and join in the dance, Jangchan, you lead such a hard life." This was the first time in her life that anyone except her mother had spoken to her with concern. The experience was strange and gratifying. She wept, trembling with excitement.

It soon ensued that every night when smoke and mist shrouded the kitchen and the goat-skin blower wheezed rhythmically, the young man came to sit by her side. In the dim quivering light of a tiny butter lamp, they ate *tsamba** together and sipped bitter *chingko*** wine.

The young man, a carpenter called Trashi Dondror, was employed by the master to build a new house. Honest and kind, he never drank to excess or gambled. He had been to many places and told Jangchan amusing tales. He also sang very tragic airs which sometimes made Jangchan shed tears. She loved to listen to his strong, clear voice and put her head close to his broad chest. When he spoke, she listened attentively, her lips pressed tight and a serene and gentle light sparkling in her deep, black eyes.

The young man opened Jangchan's eyes to many things outside the kitchen and roused in her a vague longing for the future.

The master's new house was soon completed and the carpenter prepared to go. He took Jangchan in to see Doling asking that she be allowed to go with him. He offered to give up all the wages due him as payment for the girl. But Doling shook his head obstinately.

"Not with that pittance of a wage."

When they could not get the master's consent after much pleading, Trashi Dondror, face pale, stood up abruptly, his hand on the knife at his waist. Trembling with fright, Jangchan dared not think what he might do but quickly pulled him out of the room.

*Pre-cooked *chingko* flour.

**A kind of barley-like grain cultivated in Tibet.

"Let's run away together, Jangchan," he said that night.

"No, no. Don't say that." She had never dared to think of anything like that.

"We'll run far, far away. Life is too bitter here."

"And is it not bitter elsewhere? Tell me, Trashi, is it not hard elsewhere?" she asked in wonder.

"I don't know. Still I think we should run away."

"The master will catch us and bring me back, he'll catch us. . . ."

"If he brings us back we'll run away again," said the young man stubbornly.

But Jangchan dared not. To her the master was the master. She dared not imagine a world without the master. How was she to live if she did not work for the master? Where could she run to anyway? Trashi bowed his head silently, but he furiously slashed down a little tree with a swing of his knife.

A few days later, after a trip to the fair, Trashi brought back a pair of ox hide boots for Jangchan. "There is no reason why you shouldn't have a pair of boots," he said with a wry smile. He also thrust five silver dollars into her hands and told her he was going away. He would get a room somewhere and earn a great deal of money. The next spring or the one after, he would come back for her. Trashi who never drank anything stronger than wine, got himself roaring drunk that night and staggered away.

Jangchan's mother died the next spring and Jangchan gave birth to a daughter. With the baby in her arms, she often climbed to the roof-top to stare at the distant, dust-covered road. Like her mother before her, she waited and watched for her man's return, but he never came back.

In the same way people told her the seemingly inevitable news: they said that he had died on some strange road far, far away.

She sank into grief and misery; her heart seemed torn to pieces, but she kept her tears from flowing. With an obstinate faith, she believed that he was still alive and would come back. . . .

Travellers and mule-trains often stayed in the village. Jangchan never tired of asking them whether they had come across a young man with a broad chest and clear eyes in their travels. The usual answer was, "Don't know him." Some spat in disgust at such an irrelevant question but occasionally a kind-hearted person would say, "He must be dead. Why wait for him any longer?"

One day she happened to ask a hump-backed old man among the crowd forgetting that she had asked him the same question three times already. The old man shook his head with a sigh. Then, blinking his bloodshot eyes, he answered cheerfully, "Trashi Dondror did you say? Yes, a burly, hefty man as strong as a yak."

At first Jangchan was stunned by the answer. Then, wringing her hands, she wailed, "Heaven! So you saw him. You really saw him." She knelt down in the mud and embraced the old man's knees.

"Yes, I saw him. He's alive."

From that day onwards, Jangchan again stuck little wild flowers in her hair. She brought out her new boots wrapped in layers of straw and put them on. "Yes, Trashi was quite right. Why shouldn't I have a pair of boots."

A neighbour looked at Jangchan in amazement, "Why, Jangchan, what's happened to you? Going to get married?"

Blushing, Jangchan smiled shyly. The serene and gentle light that used to shine in her black eyes reappeared. But a month passed and then another, a year turned into another year. The boots were worn out but still no Trashi returned.

A change came over Jangchan. She no longer worked well but became forgetful and slovenly. She broke dishes and let the *chingko* flour burn in the pan. She failed to empty the teats when she milked and even lost the scythe with which she was cutting grass.

The master, irritated by all this, said, "You must marry, Jangchan. Marry Bangdue of the vegetable oil press." And so Jangchan married Bangdue.

She left the master's kitchen still with her arms and feet bare, wearing the same old black robe she wore year

in and year out. But now she had the five dollars Trashi had given her in her pocket and led by the hand a little girl also named Jangchan.

The little oil press was close to the master's big house. Every day at dawn, the sound of a little bell tinkling in the tiny hut indicated that she and Bangdue had started pounding the rapeseed with a wooden pestle to which the bell was attached. This was a devise worked out by the clever master to make sure that his serfs were working diligently. When the bell stopped tinkling, the master knew his workers were idling. Bangdue and Jangchan kept the bell tinkling incessantly all day long so that the master had no cause to roar at them.

The tedious long days flowed by slowly like the trickle of black oil pressed out of the black oil cake by a thick wooden club and a heavy stone.

Bangdue was not broad in the chest and his eyes were not bright and clear. When he was drunk, he sometimes beat Jangchan and her little girl. But ordinarily, he was all right toiling silently on and on. He often told Jangchan that in another two years the master would give him some land as payment for his wages. Yes, in two years' time, he would have a bit of land. She listened with a wooden expression showing neither joy nor disgust. Since her husband said so, she supposed they would be getting some land. There was no reason why they shouldn't have some land.

When two years had elapsed and Bangdue went to the master, he was told, "Wait another two years. Isn't it just as well to work in the oil press?"

"Yes, yes!" Bangdue backed out timidly. Home in his little hut, he got furiously drunk and, clutching Jangchan by the hair, beat and kicked her brutally. She neither wailed nor resisted, but suffered his blows in silence. When night came she got to her feet slowly. Pushing back her dishevelled hair, she said calmly to her husband, "Let's go, Bangdue, go far, far away. Trashi was right, we should go away. Why shouldn't we?"

"Run away?" He stared at her in amazement, suddenly bewildered and frightened. After a long pause, he shouted shrilly, "You're talking rot. In another two years, the master is sure to give us land."

Jangchan said no more. A few days later on a pitch black night, she led two of the master's horses to their door and lifted little Jangchan on to one of them. With a sack of *tsamba* in her hands she walked up to Bangdue. "Let's go, Bangdue," she pleaded in a low voice.

He jumped up in fright and punched her. Jangchan staggered and fell. A little later, she approached him again, her body quivering, a cold stubborn look on her face. Bangdue sighed with indecision.

The next morning, the little oil press was as silent as death; the clear tinkle of the bell sounded no more. Very quickly Doling's horse hooves began pounding the road.

On the third morning Bangdue heard an angry roar behind him. He reined in his horse hesitantly. The next minute the master's whip whistled over his head. Once, twice, and three times the whip came down. The fourth time, something hit the master sharply on one cheek. Before him stood a dirty, emaciated woman whose flat face

A Fishing Port by Cheng Shih-fa→

Cheng Shih-fa is a promising young painter in the traditional style. He has created a distinctive style of his own that successfully combines a delicate line technique with an impressionist freedom of treatment derived from the classic masters. He is also known as a book illustrator.

remained wooden in expression though a terrible gleam of hatred burned in the depths of her big, black eyes.

A tremor shook Doling's big frame as he covered his cheek with his hands. For a moment he was too stunned to realize what had happened. Then, convulsed with rage, he cried, "Seize them!"

Not long after Bangdue was brought back, in much less than two years, he was given the bit of land he hankered after. But as for Jangchan, no one saw her any more.

Three years rolled by. It was spring again. New terms like "chain-breakers"* began to crop up in people's conversation. Soon, these "chain-breakers" themselves appeared in the village. One day a Tibetan officer of the "chain-breakers" came riding down the dust-covered road. He was broad in the chest and had bright clear eyes. The first sentence he uttered was, "Where is Jangchan?"

Three more years passed and again it was spring. One day the Tibetan officer of the "chain-breakers" brought his daughter Jangchan to the Central Institute of Nationalities in Peking and enrolled her as a Tibetan student. Like her mother, Jangchan had deep black eyes, but these eyes sparkled with a light of joy.

Translated by Tang Sheng

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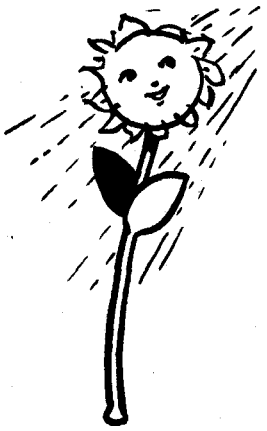
*What the Tibetans call the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army.



KAO HSIANG-CHEN

Sunflowers Turned into Big Mushrooms

Early in the morning, when it was just beginning to dawn, Wang Hsiao-ping quietly sneaked out of bed. He tiptoed very carefully past the beds of his grandmother and younger sister. The door was beside his grandmother's bed. He lifted the bolt noiselessly and pulled the door open slowly without making a squeak. Once safely out of the room he jumped with joy. What fun! Grandmother and sister didn't know. Let them be surprised when the green sprouts emerged quietly from the ground. Grandmother would surely say, "Hsiao-ping is a good boy. Let's write and tell father and mother." And Hsiao-na would blink her eyes helplessly.

Wang Hsiao-ping ran to the kitchen in a few steps. Groping in the dark he pulled at the drawer so hard that he nearly brought the whole cupboard down. He rummaged about, but could not find what he wanted. He had put

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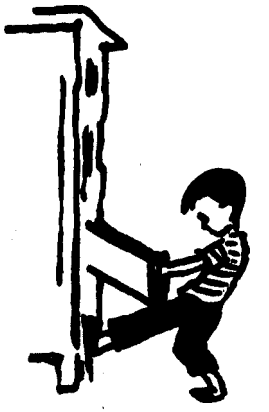
Kao Hsiang-chen is a woman office worker who writes for children in her spare time.



them there yesterday afternoon! Where had they gone to? He turned on the light, but could not find the package of sunflower seeds. His heart sank. He immediately ran back to the bedroom, swung the door open with a bang, waking both grandmother and sister.

"What's happened?" asked grandmother, half sitting up. She turned on the light. Hsiao-na sat up too, rubbing her eyes which were dazzled by the light.

"My seeds, where are my seeds?" Hsiao-ping shouted and stamped his foot.

"What kind of seeds? Don't shout so. You didn't give them to me, did you?" asked grandmother, fully awake now.

"Ten sunflower seeds, big and full. I got them from my school yesterday." Hsiao-ping nearly cried.

Her brother's agitation pleased Hsiao-na. "Maybe now he won't put on such airs," she thought. "He wouldn't even explain arithmatic problems to me when I asked him. And yesterday he said he would tear the picture up rather than give it to me. Well, now he's upset too. It must be very important since the seeds were given to him by the school."

"Where have you put them? Have you looked everywhere? All you know how to do is scream," said grandmother.

"I put them in the cupboard. I searched through the drawers already."

Hsiao-na's heart missed a beat when she heard that the seeds had been in the cupboard. She buried her head in the pillow.

"Maybe rats have stolen them," said Hsiao-ping.

"How could there be rats in a newly built concrete house?" Before grandmother had finished, Hsiao-ping ran back to the kitchen.

"Hsiao-na, why are you going back to sleep? Get up. The sun has reached the wall already," said grandmother.

Hsiao-na always jumped out of bed as soon as she awoke as if every day promised to be a festival, but today she wrapped herself in the quilt and refused to budge.

"Get up quickly. You'll be late," urged grandmother.

Hsiao-na turned towards the wall mutely, listening carefully to the sound of her brother moving about in the next room. Each sound seemed to be a reproach.

"What's wrong with you? Get up and let me make the bed."

Grandmother pulled the quilt off the bed, forcing Hsiao-na to sit up. She rested her chin on her knees, reached for her blouse, turning it this way and that, unable to find the sleeve. When she was ready to put her shoes on, she put the right shoe on her left foot.

"What's wrong with you today? What do you know about your brother's seeds?" asked grandmother. Hsiao-na, eyes fixed on the ground, shook her head slightly and hesitantly.

"Tell grandmother where you put the seeds."

"They have been eaten," said Hsiao-na under her breath. "Fei-fei and I looked for things in the kitchen for playing 'hospital.' I found a package of sunflower seeds which we used as pills. And later the 'patients' ate them up."

A week later Wang Hsiao-ping brought home a few sunflower seedlings and planted them outside the window. He watered them every morning and evening. He forbade the neighbours' children to go near them, nor would he let Hsiao-na water them for him. He threatened his sister and her naughty friends that he would cut off their fingers if they dared to touch the sunflower plants. To be doubly sure he begged grandmother to keep watch for him.

Grandmother was fifty-four years old. Her hair was grey and she was quite stout. She loved Hsiao-ping and Hsiao-na dearly and was never hard on them. She faithfully watched the sunflowers as she sat sewing at the window, a pair of spectacles perched on her nose. Fei-fei and the other children knew that while she pretended to be sewing she was watching to keep them away from the sunflowers. Naturally they were attracted all the more and they tried to come up close or throw stones at the plants from a distance to prove how brave they were.

A group of children stood under a big locust tree not far from the window, egging five-year-old Ying-ying on to touch the sunflowers. If he dared to do that they would know he is brave.

Ying-ying walked stealthily towards the plants but as soon as he stopped near the sunflowers, grandmother put her head out the window and hitting the window-sill with her scissors, threatened, "Stand still or I'll spank you!"

Ying-ying's heart jumped and he quickly ran back to the big locust tree. The other children laughed, and clapped their hands.

Sometimes grandmother permitted Hsiao-na to keep watch over the sunflowers, for she knew that Hsiao-na was an honest and reliable child and good friends with the neighbours' children. She taught them songs she learned in school and told them stories and they obeyed her, for she was a first-year pupil!

One afternoon Hsiao-na was dismissed from school earlier than usual. Grandmother said to her, "Watch over the sunflowers while I go to buy some meat for dumplings."

After grandmother had gone Hsiao-na went out to play with her little friends.

"Let's make dumplings," she suggested and the children agreed readily.

Each one was busy with his own task. Fei-fei kneaded the mud. Ai-chen found a piece of iron to be used as a knife and Hsiao-ti found a chopstick for a rolling-pin.

Ying-ying's task was to prepare the stuffing to put into the dumplings.

"Here is the stuffing," Ying-ying said, proudly putting the "stuffing" on the ground.

When Hsiao-na saw it she turned pale with fear and let out a scream — her brother's sunflowers! The other children, affected by Hsiao-na, were also frightened. Sensing that he had done something awful, Ying-ying began to cry.

Just then grandmother came home with a basket of food for stuffing.

"What's wrong? Who's been teasing you, Ying-ying? Come away from them. Come and make dumplings with grandmother," said she, taking Ying-ying's hand.

The children were not as active and gay as usual. They stood there as silent as tree trunks. When grandmother saw the torn sunflowers on the ground she dropped her basket and ran as fast as she could to the children.

"Aiyaya, you rascals. Who is the culprit? Speak up quickly."

The children looked at Hsiao-na and Ying-ying tensely. Ying-ying nervously looked at Hsiao-na for help.

"It's my fault, grandmother. I suggested making dumplings. . . ." Hsiao-na lowered her head and whispered.

"Make dumplings?" Grandmother looked at the children, puzzled. She intended to give them a piece of her mind, but when she saw how distressed they were she became helpless.

As soon as Wang Hsiao-ping came home from school that evening Hsiao-na ran up and told him what had happened. He threw his school bag on the bed angrily.

"It's all because of you, you and your friends. Always sabotaging. You can't ever do anything right." Hsiao-ping scolded his sister.

The next day Wang Hsiao-ping brought ten more sunflower seeds from school. With the seeds in one fist, he

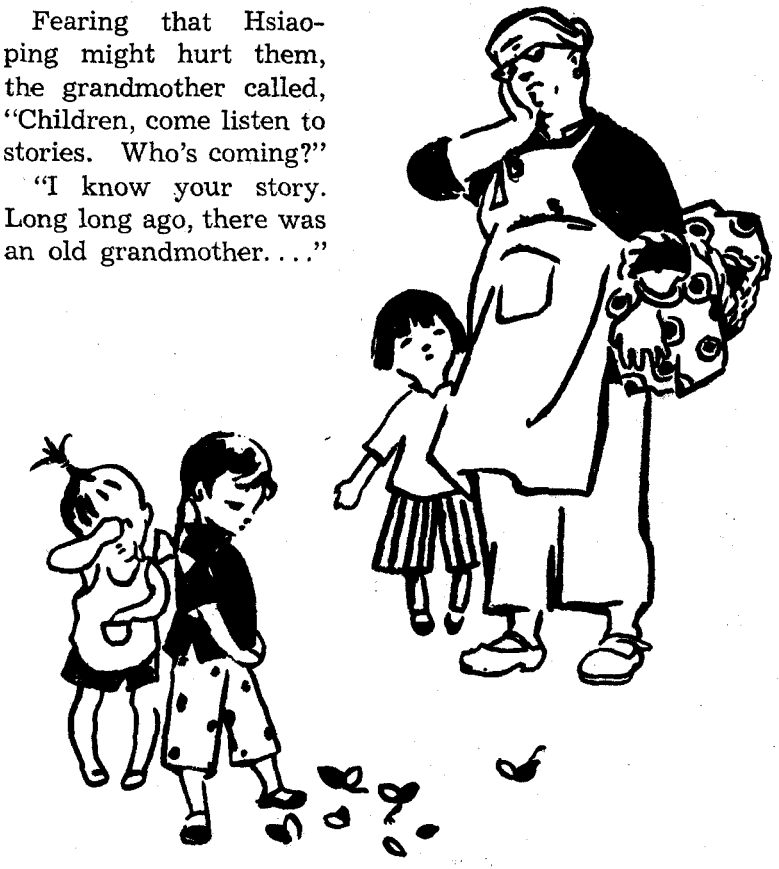
paced to and fro from the kitchen to the bedroom. He stood in front of the table for a moment and then walked to the window. He could not make up his mind to do what his teacher had advised. Should he let those little imps help him grow the sunflowers? They might prove to be a nuisance. But if I exclude them won't they make mischief again? Will they really behave themselves once they have a share in the work? No, I'll plant them myself, he finally decided.

The children gathered round when he began to dig.

"Get away, or I'll hit you," threatened Wang Hsiao-ping. "I'll spank anyone who damages a plant this time. And I mean it."

Fearing that Hsiao-ping might hurt them, the grandmother called, "Children, come listen to stories. Who's coming?"

"I know your story. Long long ago, there was an old grandmother. . . ."



"She had a beautiful grand-daughter," continued another child. They all refused to move. They were intently watching Hsiao-ping dig, then break up the big lumps of earth and finally bury the first seed.

"Why does it grow if it's buried underground?" asked Fei-fei, Hsiao-na's best friend.

"Because," said Hsiao-na seriously. "It feels uncomfortable if it doesn't come out. It is uncomfortable to be underground all the time, isn't it, brother?"

"Uncomfortable! Do you think a seed is like you?" said Hsiao-ping. Then he told them about soil, its varieties and characteristics, things that he had learned in his natural science class. He talked so earnestly that none of the children dared to show that it was all beyond their understanding. They looked at him respectfully. He was wonderful. He knew everything. He was a sixth-year pupil.

"My brother is going to be a scientist," said Hsiao-na proudly. "Will you let us break up the lumps of earth for you?"

"All right," said Hsiao-ping off-handedly, thinking that his sister was trying to flatter him. "But you must follow my orders," he added.

The work now went quickly. Hsiao-ping dug and the children broke up the lumps with their little hands.

"Don't make them too small. Make them as big as a hazelnut." Hsiao-ping supervised the work.

"Can a sunflower plant grow grapes, Sister Hsiao-na?" asked Fei-fei.

"Sure. It can grow whatever you want."

"I want grapes."

"I want big apples," said Ying-ying, breaking the lumps of earth. "What do you want?"

"I'll wait till it grows up to a big tree. . . ." Before Hsiao-na had finished, Hsiao-ping interrupted her.

"It will not grow to a big tree. It has a thick stalk which supports a golden plate. It is golden and very beautiful. The plate is always filled with sunlight. . . ."

The children looked at each other in surprise and smiled happily. Cherishing a beautiful vision, they worked industriously.

Four days passed and still nothing showed on the ground. Why didn't it come out? All the children waited eagerly. Finally Wang Hsiao-ping could wait no longer. He must dig one up and have a look. The next morning he got up especially early. As he was putting on his shoes, he heard noises outside the window.

"Dig here. Don't make any noise." It was Hsiao-na. To whom was she speaking? Then he heard the sound of digging. Wang Hsiao-ping ran out.

He stole up to grandmother quietly and shouted in her ear, "What are you doing so early in the morning, grandmother?" That gave her a fright.

He snatched her knife and dug carefully until he found a sprouting sunflower seed.

"It's coming out soon. Put it back," said grandmother happily. Her voice was young and gay.

Fei-fei came with a basin of water. It was her turn to water the sunflowers that day.

Green sprouts of sunflower plants came out at last. Their two leaves were like a pair of naughty eyes looking curiously at everything under the sun.

Wang Hsiao-ping became uneasy. He watched the children whenever he had time. He chased them away when they looked at the sunflowers too long. Once when Hsiao-na was playing ball with the other children their ball happened to roll near a sunflower. Hsiao-ping was so furious that he kicked the ball as far as he could and called them mischief-makers.

"Did you plant them by yourself? Do you think you're the only one who cares about them?" grumbled Hsiao-na.

One early Sunday morning Hsiao-ping and a schoolmate went fishing. The weather was fine and the sky was clear except for a dark cloud in the northwest. A cool wind rustled in the reeds. Soon the wind grew stronger and the reeds shook violently. Yellow sand was blown about as the sky darkened. The black cloud grew bigger and bigger and muffled thunder crashed in the distance.

"It's going to rain," said Hsiao-ping happily.

"That's good," said his schoolmate.

Big raindrops fell. Hsiao-ping and his schoolmate sought shelter under a willow tree and watched the bubbles on the water.

"It's hailing!" Hsiao-ping shouted. He suddenly remembered that the sunflowers had just come out. Disregarding the heavy rain and hail the two boys quickly ran home.

They arrived home drenched to the skin. Water trickled down from their hair and their rain-washed eyes smarted.

"What kind of sunflowers do you have? It looks like mushrooms are growing outside your window," said Hsiao-ping's schoolmate.

Hsiao-ping rubbed his eyes with his wet hands. There, under his window was a row of red, yellow and white, big and small mushrooms.

"Yes, sunflowers — mushrooms," he said softly and doubtfully.

As they came closer they recognized Hsiao-na and the other children shielding the young, delicate sunflower seedlings with basins and umbrellas. The hail rattled like a nursery band playing.

"How good! The sunflowers have turned into mushrooms," said Hsiao-ping gratefully. He bent down and helped Ying-ying hold his umbrella steady in the wind.

Translated by Yu Fan-chin
Illustrations by Lin Wan-tsui

HAI MO

Fourth Sister

Reminiscences are sometimes bitter, sometimes painful, sometimes sweet, and sometimes full of regret. But I have come to know that recollections of the past can provide a strong impetus for the present and evoke great hopes for the future.

I remember it was summer in 1942.

At that time our army was engaged in operations along the Great Wall. Since 1941 the Japanese had been paying particular attention to the anti-Japanese bases in east Hopei. So they launched their autumn "mop-up" that year earlier than usual. Unfortunately, I was seriously ill just then. If it was only malaria which I had long been accustomed to, I wouldn't have minded much. At the worst I would feel hot and cold in turn and when the headache got too bad I could do strenuous exercise and get over it. The trouble was my malaria had turned into relapsing fever. Just at this time the army received orders to fight outside the Great Wall. I was ordered to stay back and rest.

The sick and wounded among us used to call such rest hiding-out. Hiding-out originally meant concealing important supplies from the enemy. However, after years of the enemy's cruel "mop-up," hiding places had become more and more scarce. In fact, this concealing of

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Hai Mo is a writer of short stories and film scenarios.

the wounded always brought to the people concerned a feeling of dread, solitude and helplessness. And no wonder! For one used to fighting side by side with his comrades-in-arms, the sense of loss on leaving them and his weapons seemed extremely fearful.

Where would I be sent to rest? Nobody told me. In the past when we fought against the "mop-up," we used to send the sick into enemy territory, sometimes even into the enemy's blockhouses guarded by Chinese puppet soldiers. The year before, some of our sick comrades in hiding were discovered by the Japanese, and this made me all the more worried. Delirious with a fever of forty-one degrees, I had no idea where I was being taken by the stretcher nor was I able to protest.

When I came to, I found darkness all around me. I groped about with my hand, but couldn't find the edge of the brick bed or the low table by my side. I tried to recollect how I got here but I couldn't. A person who's been sick for a long time often feels empty and lost. I felt at that time as if I were thrown into a deep bottomless valley, or to be more precise, as if I had just been thrown down and my body was still hanging in mid-air. What was more agonizing was the splitting headache and dryness in the throat I was suffering from. My throat was especially bad. It was so swollen that I felt as if it were sealed with wax. I tried to cry out. After a desperate struggle I finally tore a rent in my wax-sealed throat. After that I felt a little better. I heard a rustling sound near by. Somehow I imagined that I had been taken prisoner or else some other misfortune had fallen on my head. But in the next minute I felt a coolness by my mouth, my lips touched a bowl of water. Without bothering about its source I drank the water in one gulp. A little while later, another bowl of water was proffered to my lips and I drank it again. Then, a baby started crying, but immediately I sensed that someone had stopped the baby's mouth with her breast. Then all was as silent as death again. Gradually I sank again into a coma that was half sleep.

When I regained consciousness, I felt as if immersed in a pool of blood. Actually it was the bright sunlight pricking my eyelids. When I opened my eyes hurriedly, they felt painful and I could see nothing but flickering gold stars. Slowly I made out the things round me. This was a thatched hut re-erected from broken walls and charred beams. I was lying on a half crumbled brick bed. Dry grass still green in colour were spread thickly on the ground and the imprint left by someone's sleeping form was on it still.

Where was I? Who was the owner of this hut? Startled, I looked around. Vigilance and apprehension gave me a rush of strength which made me able to scramble to my feet. Supporting myself against the edge of the bed I struggled slowly towards the door. Before I could step outside a fit of weakness seized me, the house began to turn and I fainted again.

"Wake up! Wake up!" I came to with the sound of a woman's voice calling. To be more accurate, it was a young girl calling me — a girl in her late teens. She helped me to a sitting position. I noticed that she wore only a vest above her ragged trousers. When she saw that I had opened my eyes she became self-conscious and hastily pulled a tattered fur coat down from the bed to throw over her naked shoulders.

"Comrade, why don't you behave? I wish you'd do as I say. I'm terribly busy now. If you are thirsty, here's some water; as for food, I've got baked potatoes for you. After I have finished I'll tend to you, all right? . . ." She gathered a bundle of grass to spread outside the door, took my quilt and pillow from the bed and put them on the soft grass. Then she said in a coaxing voice as if addressing a child: "It's dull in the hut, you can lie out here and watch things. But don't try to get up any more!"

"Fourth Sister! Another batch's coming!" A man's voice, loud and husky, called from afar.

"Aye," replied the girl.

She turned and, pulling the fur coat from her shoulders, hung it on a tree near by before she dashed off like the wind.

Now that I was outside I was able to see my surroundings much clearer. The hut was built on a hillside. Opposite, another hill stood a hundred metres or so away. There was no cultivated land anywhere. The hills were just rocks, weeds and bushes. The path between the two hills was narrow and steep. There were few households and all of them seemed poor. Of the few huts remaining the one I lived in was the best. The others had nothing left but charred walls and broken tiles.

What place was this? After surveying things for a while I began to comprehend. Probably this was what the Japanese called "no man's land." That meant I had already crossed the Great Wall and had entered into Jehol.

Jehol, I had already heard much about this area which had suffered so severely in the war. The Japanese forced the people to move out of their scattered villages and band together in enclosures near railway and highway lines where the enemy could control them better. The people called these enclosures human pig pens. All villages the Japanese destroyed in accordance with their policy of loot-all, kill-all and burn-all, creating a vast no-man's land. It was the enemy's purpose to make it difficult for the Communist Eighth Route Army to operate, for the people in the villages enthusiastically gave their army every support. Only the very staunchest of the people remained living and fighting in the no-man's land. I had long cherished a deep admiration for them. But this time I had come not to pay them my respects but to cause them trouble with my fever and weakness.

I felt heavy-hearted as I pondered. Just then the young woman's laughing voice drifted up, perhaps I should have said Fourth Sister's laughter.

"Fourth Sister, don't carry so much. Careful you don't overstrain yourself!" a man's husky voice said.

"Well, Pa! This year you can't laugh at me for having no strength, eh?" Fourth Sister retorted.

With this Fourth Sister emerged from the valley below. She still had only the vest on over her trousers. On her shoulders were two big bundles of cotton-padded army

uniforms. These were probably things which the Army Quartermaster wanted hidden here. She came nearer, panting and smiling. Her dusty vest was soaked with sweat. As she passed and saw I was sitting up, she gave me a frowning look: "Comrade, lie down, I won't stand for any nonsense!"

That morning I saw her make five trips, each time carrying heavy loads of uniforms. Although I was in much pain, for some reason I behaved differently from usual and I didn't let out a single groan.

At the same time I felt my fever had subsided a little and the sense of emptiness I felt the night before had vanished.

When the sun was setting in the west, Fourth Sister reappeared on the hill. The sun behind her shone upon her sun-burnt body, making her look like a bronze statue. This time she did not go down for more uniforms but came towards me. She went first to the tree to put on the ragged coat. Then she asked me smiling, "Feeling better?"

"Much better," I said.

"Any pain?"

"Not much. This sickness is like that — the fever runs for a few days and then everything's all right again."

"You make it sound like nothing. Yesterday afternoon when they carried you here you looked dreadful."

"Have my people gone?"

"Gone long ago!" She brushed the dust from her trousers and brought me some more water.

"Were you busy concealing supplies?"

"Yes. Things are tense. Rush job."

"Why don't they get men to carry these things?" I felt sympathetic towards her.

"Things are getting worse every day. Originally there were seventy to eighty households here, now only a dozen or so remain. We do our hiding separately, each person is responsible for his or her lot. Even your Army Quartermaster people won't know where I hide mine."

I examined her closely. She was just a young slip of a girl. It was strange to hear her speak in such a bold, competent manner.

Fourth Sister of course did not know what I was thinking. She noticed that I was gazing at her fixedly and showed a trace of embarrassment for the first time, pulling her coat closer together over her breasts. I took out a cloth uniform tunic from the pack under my pillow and offered it to her. "Put this on," said I.

Fourth Sister looked at me with a laugh. "I don't want it. Come, you must drink some water. We've got to be moving." She handed me a bowl of water, "Water is scarce in the hills, so drink up!"

"Please take it — as a present."

Fourth Sister became serious: "It's not that I don't appreciate your kind offer, but here in the hills we are hiding a lot of uniforms for the Eighth Route Army. How can I wear this?"

"Why not? It's a personal gift from me."

"How would people know that?" When she saw that I had no answer she said again, "Hurry up. We've heard that the enemy may be coming to search the hills today."

Fourth Sister noticed that I was pondering over something. She changed her tone. "Don't worry. You've been put in my charge and I'll be responsible for your safety. Let the enemy come. There are plenty of places to hide higher up in the hills. Our eyes are wide open but the enemy is blind. Have you ever seen a blind man catch a man who can see?"

She said these words so eloquently that I suspected she had learned them from somebody else. In any event I had to trust her. I obeyed her orders and drank two bowls of water.

"We don't live here often," she said. "Most of the year we live on the hill top. See that patch of weeds and wild grass? Last year crops grew there, but as soon as they ripened the Japanese forced the people from the enclosures to come and cut all our crops for horse fodder. This year we didn't plant at all."

"But, what do you eat?" I asked.

"Eat. . . ." She paused, then said as if coaxing a child, "Anyway I won't let you go hungry."

Just then, a white-haired old man came up the hill, a sleeping baby in his arms. He had a stick under one armpit and carried the baby carefully with both hands stretched out flat to make the baby as comfortable as possible. Fourth Sister hurried over to take the child and put him on the soft grass.

"Pa, you go first!" said she to the old man.

"H'm, being a slow bird I had better fly first!" Leaning against his stick, the old man lighted his pipe.

I recognized the old man's loud and husky voice as the one I had heard that morning. When he turned and saw me he asked eagerly, "Comrade, how do you feel? Up here in the hills it's not like on the plains. We haven't good food here."

"It's good enough, Old Uncle!" I hastened to reply.

"Fourth Sister, wouldn't it be better if I took the baby along!" the old man said again.

"Oh, Pa! Hurry and go now. I'll bring the baby to you later. Go now, or I'll have to get someone to help you climb the hill!"

"All right, I'll go." The old man limped off. I smiled. He hated having to be helped.

"He's our family group leader," Fourth Sister explained.

"What group leader?" I asked.

"Leader of the Party group," said Fourth Sister. "He's been captured by the Japanese five times. Three times they beat him until he was unconscious. Once they broke his back."

"Fourth Sister!" the old man had reached the slope and was calling back. "When my grandson wakes up give him some water. He hasn't had any for a long while. And, don't forget to give the documents to my son!"

"Aiya! You run along now. I know." Fourth Sister was getting impatient.

"Also take along my fur rug for this comrade to use!"

Fourth Sister got some things ready for me, then she

said, "Comrade, there's no stretcher for you. I'm afraid you'll have to use my two-legged stretcher."

"What?" I didn't understand.

"I'll carry you on my back."

"No, how can I allow that?"

"Don't fuss, please! Time is pressing," she urged impatiently.

Just then I was startled to hear the sound of many voices. Fourth Sister hurriedly explained, "See, our militia is being withdrawn."

The funny thing about voices in the hills is as soon as you hear them you see the speakers coming round the bend. About seven and eight militiamen came up from behind the hut led by a particularly youthful looking man. "Are you still here?" he asked Fourth Sister.

"We're leaving right away," said Fourth Sister bringing out a bundle of documents from under the bed and handing it to him. "Pa says to give you these."

Taking the documents, the man turned to gaze at the sleeping baby for a second or so before he said to me, "Comrade, go with her. She's a Communist and you can trust her. If there's anything you need, she'll see to it." Then he turned to Fourth Sister. "Hurry up. Our position is between the northern ridge and the eastern gully. Don't go there unless things get desperate. All our materials are over there. The district Party committee thinks the enemy's 'mop-up' might last three months or so this time. You had better move about and not just stick in one cave. Too bad our tasks are so heavy this year. There aren't enough people to go round or I'd get someone to help you."

"Go on. Go along! You're getting to be like pa, you fuss so."

The young man said no more and turned to leave, but before he had gone two steps he came back to say, "We've still got two sentries at the foot of the hill. But they won't be coming this way. They'll go east in half an hour."

"I know!" Fourth Sister gave him a look and an affectionate smile.

The young man gazed long at her before he ran off to catch up his militiamen. After his departure, Fourth Sister began to take quick action. Without giving me a chance to protest, she pulled me up to sitting position. Then bending her body slightly, she put one of my arm round her shoulder and so half carried and half supported me on her back. I was too weak to pull away or refuse her help. Willing or not, I had to let her carry me.

The mountain road was tortuous and steep. I was no longer delirious and saw everything quite clearly. Being a man of fairly big build I felt like a thousand-ton weight buttressed by a slender hemp stalk when half-carried like this by such a frail young thing. At first every time she ascended a steep rock, I was afraid we'd fall, but before long a sense of shame and mortification replaced all other emotions. I dared not move or shrink away from her either. I seemed to have been conquered by her strong personality. I could but do as she willed and try not to make her burden heavier.

After we had gone a distance, I suddenly discovered that she had not brought the baby along. "Where's your baby?" I asked.

"Let him have a nice nap at home," she answered, panting. "Poor baby, he hasn't had a proper nap for several days. He's a really naughty rascal and quite spoiled by grandpa. He either refuses to sleep at all or sleeps for hours once he drops off." She looked at the sky. "I think there's still time. The enemy left Hsinglung this morning. They can't get here until dark at the earliest. I'll get you half-way up the hill and then go down for the baby. I'll be able to bring up a bucket of water too."

I supposed she was right. At any rate I had to trust to her experience. It struck me that every one round her had to conform to her strong will. Of course I could be no exception. I remembered the young man who had left us with such affection in his eyes. Though I could guess

they were husband and wife, I couldn't help asking, "Who was that man who gave you orders just now?"

"He's the secretary of the Communist Party branch here. He's called Fourth Brother. I suppose you've noticed." I smiled and she smiled too.

Fourth Sister made everything seem very lively and cheerful; in fact she appeared almost carefree and lighthearted. In comparison I felt too much of a weakling. But what could I do? I could not get down from her back while she was climbing uphill; struggling on my part would simply add to her burden. I felt more like a lamb than a grown man several years older than she. I had to be tame and obedient.

Fourth Sister put me down outside a cave half-way up the hill and brushed the sweat dripping down her cheeks. Her hands, muddy from grasping at the brushwood and rocks all along the way, smeared dirt all over her pretty face. But she was unaware of all this. "Don't move please. I'm going for the baby and will be back as soon as I've taken him to grandpa." Like a little squirrel, she skipped and ran down the hill. Before she had gone very far, I noticed that she pulled the shabby fur coat off her shoulders. It was obviously not meant for this weather.

I was all alone on the hill. She had left me in a shady spot where the mountain breeze wafted cool, bringing a bitter flower scent to my nostrils, which helped to clear my head. I saw there were thornsticks all round me and tried to pluck one down. To my surprise I couldn't break it. Had I really become so wasted and feeble? I tried to stand up by myself, but before I had quite straightened my knees, the sky and earth started whirling round me. I had to desist. Looking downwards, I was amazed at the steepness of the hill and marvelled how Fourth Sister had managed to bring me up.

As I was sitting in a bend in the hill, it was not possible to see the houses further down. After a long wait, about thirty minutes at the least, there was still no sign of Fourth Sister. Suddenly two shots were fired somewhere. I could tell it was from a .38 gun. The shots reverberated long

in the valleys and I wondered what had happened to my protector.

After another wait, I felt that I had come to the end of my patience. I grasped the only weapon near me, a hand-grenade strung on my belt, and my thoughts turned to possible accidents. Just then, Fourth Sister, face pale and perspiring profusely, returned. She was murmuring to herself faintly, "I didn't expect they'd be here so quickly . . . so quickly. . . ."

"Where's the baby?" I asked.

She hesitated. "Somebody must have taken him away for me," she said, coming to my side and putting one of my arms over her shoulder, quickly helped me to move for a safer place. "Let's hurry, the enemy has begun to search the hills."

The rest of the way was even harder. I wished that I had been in a coma. But no, I had to be fully conscious of everything although there was not an ounce of strength in my limbs. It seemed to me nothing could be more mortifying than this help I was getting from Fourth Sister. Just imagine your indignation if you saw a child feeding a grown-up or a cat carrying a bear; actually I felt myself to be more disgusting than either. At that moment, my obedience was a shield for my shame.

After a stretch of dangerous mountain path, Fourth Sister took me into a gap. We must have passed a critical point, for now she put me down on a flat boulder to catch her breath. Turning to look down, I noticed a heavy streak of smoke rising from the gully. A more careful scrutiny informed me that the thick smoke was rising from the hut we had vacated.

The situation was bad. It seemed Fourth Sister had not been telling me everything. "Oh, the baby!" I cried.

My eyes fell on Fourth Sister. She was leaning weakly against a tree and staring down the hill with a dazed look. From a profile view I could see a stream of tears flowing like rain on the wild flowers at her feet.

What kind of a man was I! There was no easing the pain in my heart. I stood up abruptly, to do what I had

no clear idea, except that I was consumed with an irrepressible desire to rush downhill to where the smoke was rising. Unfortunately, I fell, head forward.

I used to think there were two kinds of debt that could never be repaid: those of a son to his mother and a patient towards his nurse. But the care and devotion I got from Fourth Sister far surpassed either that of a mother or nurse. Imagine my uneasiness then at the thought of her utterly selfless and profound solicitude for me during my unconscious hours; in fact my inexpressible and heartfelt gratitude gnawed at my heart cruelly and gave me no peace.

It seemed I had been in a high fever during the five days since Fourth Sister lost her beloved baby and I fainted on the boulder. I was in a semi-delirious state all this time and was only vaguely conscious of what happened in my moments of clearness. There was no recollection of how Fourth Sister carried me into the cave but when

I thought of my clearer moments I wondered how I, for whom she cared as a comrade, could have been so selfish. I talked of chilliness and dampness in the cave. Then Fourth Sister put both my cotton quilt and grandpa's fur rug under me to ward off the damp from below. She even covered me with her tattered fur coat. I should never, never have asked for water. It was only today when I asked for water again, that I realized the bowls of "water" that I had been drinking were the milk from her breast. That was why every time I asked for water, she always picked up my enamel bowl and then turned her back on me. It took her a good deal of trouble before she was able to give me this most noble "drink of water."

"I'm sorry there's so little water for you," she told me apologetically, "the enemy has the hill surrounded. Don't you see their camp fires at night? They've been out there for three days. Only in the night can I creep out to get a little water from the thin trickle in the stone crevices."

A pain rose in my chest. She risked her life every night to get me drinking water for the simple reason that I might recover quickly so that "some day, we will all go and recapture our Peking. . . ."

The enemy made more noise and bother searching around the hills. At times the sound of their footsteps seemed to pound right above our heads. And that's no exaggeration either — there was a path about five feet above the roof of our cave. The enemy soldiers would shout: "Come out, Eighth Route Army men. The Imperial Japanese Army will not kill you but will give you rewards."

These words produced no fear in my heart but a deep repulsion and disgust. Sometimes it got so bad that I wanted to sit up and take action. At such times, Fourth Sister always consoled me. She said once, "Don't worry, the enemy won't be able to get down here. This path has never been discovered by outsiders. My father-in-law happened into it when he was hunting."

That reminded me to ask where the old man had gone.

"He has his particular lair," said Fourth Sister. "The evening you came we had a group meeting in the family.

My responsibility was to take care of you; grandpa was to take the baby and hide in the big cave. My husband was to protect the community's grain with the militia; when necessary they must fight openly with the enemy. My brother-in-law was to take the old, the women and the children out to hide in the gullies. He's the head of our village, you see. You've met, I think. When he left, he said goodbye to you and I remember you nodded back."

I had no impression at all of all this. She continued after a pause, "Every time there's a 'mop-up' by the enemy our family doesn't stay together; we each have our duties and we hide ourselves where we can. In this way the enemy can't kill all of us. . . ." Her head bent lower and her voice suddenly broke. "Comrade Chang, you must listen to my directions closely . . . I've made one slip already, I can't let anything happen to you. After the 'mop-up' I'll be severely criticized at our family group meeting, I'm afraid. . . . You see, my father-in-law is always blaming me for any little thing happening to the baby, and now. . . ."

I felt a desperate desire to obliterate myself. I meant to say something, but couldn't think of a single thing. Fourth Sister must have sensed my discomfiture, she moved closer and said, "Comrade, this has nothing to do with you. You have no responsibility whatever in this matter."

Dusk fell. There was a gloomy sombreness in the cave. Outside, the dazzling glow of sunset played on the dark green leaves of the bushes at the cave entrance. A few floating clouds in the blue sky had turned a deep purple. There were wild bursts of gun-fire, then the enemy again lit camp fires here and there. Fourth Sister poked her head out of the cave and looked round. The sad expression disappeared from her face. She stood up, stretched lazily and reached for my enamel bowl. When she got to the entrance, I said, "Be careful."

"The enemy's going back to their camps. Didn't you hear them firing at random?"

After about the time it takes for two meals, she returned. In one hand, she held the bowl, in the other a

bunch of wild flowers. She had placed a piece of cotton wool in the bowl to hold the water otherwise there would not have been a drop left after her climb back. To my surprise she handed the flowers to me. She meant to cheer me up now that I was getting much better. She had done her job for a comrade.

We stayed another two days in the cave. I was feeling much better. I had thrown off fever and now suffered only from wobbly legs, weakness all over and a bad headache. Unfortunately we'd exhausted our supply of cooked rice though Fourth Sister had been very frugal and mixed wild herbs in the rice at every meal to make them last longer. Now that there was not a single grain in the bag, Fourth Sister suggested that we should not stay on in the cave. On the eighth evening we left the cave that had been my temporary home. I wanted to walk by myself now, but Fourth Sister would not hear of it. Gripping the vines and wild grass that grew profusely, she helped me walk downhill little by little. We slipped through the bushes not far from the enemy's camp and found shelter in another part of the hill. The next few days we played hide and seek with the enemy.

The Japanese had reaped the ripe harvest planted by the villagers, and taken away all the crops they could put their hands on. They had even fed the stalks to their horses.

What did we eat during all this time? Fourth Sister had said to me before she carried me into the hills, "I won't let you go hungry," and she really lived up to her words. Miracles happened one after another. After we left our cave home she led me down devious half-hidden mountain paths. She would grope among the wild grass, growing knee high along the way, and discover stalks of millet or corn. At other times she'd make a few *kaoliang* appear behind clumps of bushes. Once, when all other sources were exhausted, she produced a pumpkin from a pile of dead leaves and vines.

"There is no road that man can't cross," she told me. "The Japanese invaders have forced us to think of all sorts of devices. You see, every spring our people come

up the hill with sacks of seed. They plant a few *kaoliang* here and one or two corn there. The more isolated and wild the spot, the more seeds we sow. The Japanese may have lots of soldiers, but they don't have enough to cut and pull out all we've planted. This makes it convenient of course for our guerrilla warfare; we're able to find food all over the hills. Let the enemy soldiers come. They may be powerful, but they can't conquer us when we've sown seeds all over the place."

Less than three months later, the enemy brought their "mop-up" to a close. Naturally they failed to root out the people's resistance seeds. I too didn't stay long enough to take part in Fourth Sister's family group meeting. I had meant to defend her against her family's criticism for the loss of her baby son, but orders came for me to return to the ranks and I left in a hurry. However, two years later I heard from someone coming from these parts that Fourth Sister's baby was found soon after the "mop-up" that year. He had been picked up before the enemy got there by a passing guerrilla who had heard him cry. I was also told that Fourth Sister was severely criticized by grandpa at their family meeting even though the baby had not come to any harm and that she was pardoned only because she had done so well in saving a sick comrade entrusted to her care.

More than a dozen years have gone by since I bid my benefactress goodbye. During this time great changes have occurred in our country and to me personally. For some unknown reason I have been thinking about Fourth Sister recently and wondering how the baby who was lost and found again has turned out. I've made up my mind to go this autumn to the area that used to be known as the no-man's land. I don't dare to hope that I will find Fourth Sister or learn about her family, but I'm sure I'll be able to see thousands and thousands of fine people like her.

Translated by Chang Tang
Illustration by Wu Chin-po

YEN CHEN

The River Lien in Moonlight

The Lien* in moonlight seems a golden chain,
Through silver mist small boats ply to and fro;
Like flocks of water-fowl on silent wing
Past winding tea plantations they fly low.

The boatman punts with his long bamboo pole,
Beneath the awning gleams his cheerful light;
"Ahoy, there, boatman! Don't you mean to moor?
Where are you heading at this time of night?"

Yen Chen started writing poems in 1953. Now at twenty-eight he is one of China's promising young poets.

**Lien* in Chinese means chain.

The boatman splashes water on his face,
And points at hills couched dark against the sky.
"The tea's in bud: just hear the lasses sing!
Am I to sleep while that bright moon rides by?"

The creaking of the boat fades far away,
Its shape is lost, the stream is still again;
Alone the scent of tea hangs in the air,
The Lien in moonlight seems a golden chain.

A Midnight Call

The green willows seem silk in the moonlight,
And the mountain some dark, sleepy cloud;
But what takes you so late to that door, doc,
And what makes you start knocking so loud?

Our team-leader's improving a tool there,
You can hear the quick chirr of his saw;
And that sound, like a cithern's gay music,
Draws the doctor post-haste to his door.

The team-leader has thrown the door open,
In comes doc with the scent of fresh hay;
"You still making your rounds, doc, at midnight?
No-one's ill in our work team today."

"You're the patient I want," says the doctor.
"This insomnia must mean you are ill.
We can't have you not sleeping at night, man. . . ."
Soon doc leaves, and this time all is still.

Translated by Gladys Yang

WANG PO-HSIANG

Ssuma Chien's "Historical Records"

The *Historical Records,* written two thousand years ago by Ssuma Chien of the Han dynasty, is the greatest historical work China has produced, and one of our finest works of literature. Thanks to Ssuma Chien's knowledge of life in all parts of China, his enlightened approach to history and his brilliance as a man of letters, he was able to make a discriminating selection of material and to write a new form of history. His monumental work gives us a realistic picture of different historical figures and many aspects of Han society, as well as much information about earlier times. The excellent plan of this work, and its presentation of history from various angles, made it a

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model for later historians from the Han to the Ching dynasty. In fact, this became the accepted way of writing history. The richness of its contents, its remarkable character sketches and the vast panorama it presents of social life induced later prose writers to imitate its style, and in this way it has had a profound influence on Chinese literature.

Ssuma Chien was born in 145 B.C. in Hsiayang county, Fengyi, in what is now the province of Shensi. When he was a child of about six his father, Ssuma Tan, was appointed the imperial archivist and took his son with him to the capital, Changan (present-day Sian). Ssuma Chien began his studies there and was able to read the classics by the time he was ten. After his twentieth year he travelled widely.

Soon after this he was given a minor official post, which afforded him better opportunities for travel. He went on government missions, accompanied the emperor on his journeys, or toured the country collecting material for his archives. From references to himself in the *Historical Records*, we see that present-day Fukien and Kwangtung were the only regions he did not visit. He knew nearly all other places south of the Great Wall, being especially familiar with the lower reaches of the Huai and Yangtse Rivers. This enabled him to make a close study of social conditions in the most populous parts of China and those richest in tradition.

Ssuma Tan died in 110 B.C., and three years later Ssuma Chien succeeded his father as imperial archivist, and began to collect materials for his history. He was then thirty-eight. He edited and studied the historical documents in the imperial library, consulted many people, verified facts, and supplemented them by his own investigations. In 104 B.C. when he was forty-two, his preparations were completed and he started to write his history. Five years later he offended the emperor by defending General Li Ling who had been defeated and captured by the Huns. The emperor accused Ssuma Chien of maligning the commander-in-chief, and had him imprisoned and punished with castration. Despite this cruel indignity, he continued to write in gaol. After three years he was pardoned and appointed palace secretary, a post slightly higher than that of archivist but one usually held by eunuchs. Humiliated as he felt, he went on writing for five or six more years in order to finish his history, and completed his work in 91 B.C. when he was fifty-five. The *Historical Records* is divided into: *Twelve Dynasties, Ten Tables, Eight Sciences, Thirty Chief Families* and *Seventy Lives.* In all there are one hundred and thirty sections, or more than half a million Chinese characters. Though Ssuma Chien made certain minor additions and changes, he stopped writing when he was fifty-six, and we have no reliable information about his last years. The date of his death is still debatable.

There had been a good deal of historical writing in China before the time of Ssuma Chien. Some of these works are lost, but those that remain to us include chronicles such as the *Spring and Autumn Annals, Anecdotes of the States* and *Records of the Warring States,* political documents like those preserved in the *Book of History,* and critical accounts of different schools of thought in the writing of such philosophers as Chuang Tzu and Hsun Tzu of the Eastern Chou dynasty (770-221 B.C.). There was, however, no systematized, comprehensive history of China. Ssuma Chien was able to assemble all the material needed for this great task, and to create a new form for it.

The *Twelve Dynasties* contains records of the twelve most important rulers from the legendary Yellow Emperor down to Ssuma Chien's own sovereign. Important social changes were included in these records, so that they are systematic annals. Historical events which could not be grouped under any definite year were incorporated in the *Ten Tables.* These present clearly the dynastic successions, the dealings between different states, and the appointment of important officials. *Eight Sciences* shows the development of ceremony, music, law, calendar science, astronomy, sacrifice, water conservancy, weights and measures. The *Thirty Chief Families* deals with the most important nobles and princes during the Spring and Autumn period, the time of

the Warring States, and the Chin and early Han dynasties. Most of the *Seventy Lives* give the biography of one celebrity, but in certain cases several men belonging to one category are grouped together, even though they may belong to different periods. There are also accounts of foreign countries and the minority peoples within China, showing their relations with the Han people. The records usually end with the author's comments, and give certain supplementary facts, or refute misconceptions on the base of Ssuma Chien's personal investigations. His comments are balanced and matter-of-fact, unlike those of some later historians who deliberately advanced startling conclusions.

Ssuma Chien's greatness is evident not only from the fact that he created a new historical form, but also from his attitude to his work. He travelled widely in search of current historical materials, made a selection from these and drafted records, verifying his facts by comparison of different versions. He made use of his travels to carry out investigations all over China, and often corrected mistakes he found in the records. In this way he was able to reveal the reason for the people's hard life and write a remarkably accurate history. His aim was to tell the truth, and he fought all his life against falsehood and hypocrisy. For example, the *Twelve Dynasties* deals mainly with the rule of kings and emperors, but during the five years of fighting and confusion which followed the Chin dynasty Hsiang Yu was the man who actually led the insurgent forces against Chin, therefore between the records of the First Emperor of Chin and the First Emperor of Han, Ssuma Chien inserted an account of Hsiang Yu. And though the First Emperor of Han was succeeded by his son, the actual authority was in the hands of the empress dowager. So Ssuma Chien wrote a record of Empress Dowager Lu. It was not his way to deny a defeated hero, who led the revolt, his place in history, or to consider women as less important than men. In fact he made this penetrating comment: "Though the Empress Dowager ruled as a woman from within doors, the empire was at peace, there were few punishments and few criminals, the peasants

tilled the land diligently, and there was an abundance of food and clothing."

Similarly, his strong sense of right and wrong made him write frankly of the ugly conduct of rulers. Thus he exposed Emperor Wu's superstition, greed, and ambition, the obsequiousness and craftiness of certain ministers, their avarice and cruelty, scheming and backbiting, and the licentiousness of nobles like the Prince of Wen and Prince Li of Chi. He described these vices truthfully, and made his condemnation clear. Because this attitude offended the ruling class, some of his contemporaries dubbed his work "a slanderous book." Ssuma Chien's fighting spirit made him a champion of justice and a spokesman of the people. He did not discriminate against the different professions and trades of his day, but gave equally fair pictures of scholars, gallants, peasants, merchants, physicians, fortune-tellers, astrologers and so forth. Those who deserved his sympathy could be sure of having it, and he was not sparing of his criticism either. So strong were his likes and dislikes that readers of later ages can almost see his characters in the flesh and share the historian's partisan view of them.

After touching on Ssuma Chien's achievements as a historian, we must take note of his great influence on Chinese literature. His writing is highly realistic. He seizes on typical characters and depicts them vividly, breaking with the stultified literary conventions of his day and using the colourful vernacular. He boldly rewrites archaic passages from old books to make them easily intelligible, interspersing them with colloquialisms and local figures of speech. He deliberately rejects the euphuistic parallelisms popular at the time in favour of a more irregular prose which is clear, concise and pleasing. All the characters he describes are very much alive and have strong individuality. Their conversation is authentic and in character, subtly conveying the atmosphere on that occasion. In his choice of episode he shows himself a master of significant detail able to make history come alive. This is evident in his description of the tragic air Ching Ko sang when he set out

to assassinate the King of Chin, knowing that he could not return alive, his attempt to stab the tyrant, and his scornful smile as he leant against the pillar dying. The graphic account of General Li Kuang is another example. We are told of his fine marksmanship, how he got drunk at a farmhouse, the care he took of his men, and his impatience with bureaucracy. When captured by the Huns he stole a horse and escaped and, when cut off by the enemy, though his men were pale with fear he was quite undismayed. Yet in spite of all his exploits, because he failed to please the commander-in-chief he was finally driven to suicide. These short biographies are full of brilliant pictures and dramatic scenes.

Because of his power to move, Ssuma Chien founded a new school of writing. When the well-known prose writer Han Yu* wanted to break away from the mannered, artificial style in vogue during the Tang dynasty, he evolved a new kind of prose inspired by Ssuma Chien's *Historical Records,* so that later writers praised him for reviving prose after eight dynasties. The best prose writers of the Sung and Yuan dynasties, as well as Ming and Ching writers, all carried forward this tradition. Certain stories and anecdotes, like the *Tales of Liao-chai* by Pu Sung-ling** of the early Ching dynasty, were also much influenced by Ssuma Chien's style. Even the early translators of Western works into classical Chinese imitated Ssuma Chien's language, because it was the most popular form of prose.

Throughout the centuries, the lively tales from the *Historical Records* have been favourites with Chinese of all walks of life. Many Ming prose romances, such as the *Romance of the Warring States* by Yu Shao-yu and the *Romance of the Early Han Dynasty* by Tseng Wei, took their material from Ssuma Chien. Folk artists and storytellers are still performing or relating episodes from these romances all over China. Chinese drama owes a great

*An essay on him by Chi Chen-huai and a selection of his writings were published in *Chinese Literature* No. 2, 1959.

**See *Chinese Literature* No. 6, 1959, p. 108.

debt to Ssuma Chien too. Numerous Yuan and Ming dramas are based on stories from the *Historical Records.* Eleven of the *Selected Yuan Plays* edited during the Ming dynasty and the *Sixty Dramas* printed at the beginning of the Ching dynasty owe their plot to Ssuma Chien. The same is true of many popular Peking operas and local operas which are performed today. The modern writer Kuo Mo-jo also drew on material from Ssuma Chien for his historical plays *Chu Yuan, The Tiger Tally* and *Cherry Blossom.* This testifies to the fact that, two thousand years after it was written, Ssuma Chien's *Historical Records* still retains its great influence on Chinese literature.

SSUMA CHIEN

Hsiang Yu

Hsiang Chieh, whose cognomen was Yu, was a native of Hsiahsiang. He was twenty-four when he first raised the revolt. His uncle Hsiang Liang was the son of Hsiang Yen, a commander of Chu who was killed by the Chin general Wang Chien. Members of the Hsiang clan had been generals in Chu for several generations, and came to have this surname after being given the land of Hsiang as their fief. As a lad Hsiang Yu studied to be a scribe, but without success. He then trained as a swordsman, again without success. When Hsiang Liang was angry with him, however, he said:

"Scribes simply make lists of names, and swordsmen fight single foes — that is not worth learning. I want to be able to beat ten thousand men."

Then Hsiang Liang taught him military strategy, and Hsiang Yu was overjoyed. But after learning a little, he again refused to study to the end.

Later Hsiang Liang was arrested at Yaoyang, but released when he asked Tsao Chiu, gaoler of Chi, to write to Ssuma Hsin, gaoler of Yaoyang. Because Hsiang Liang had killed a man, he went with Hsiang Yu to Wuchung to avoid his enemies. As all the worthies there lacked his ability, he generally took charge of each large conscription of corvée labour or important funeral. And he seized such chances to subject his followers and the young men to military discipline, in order to test their worth.

When the First Emperor of Chin crossed the River Cheh during his journey to Kuaichi Mountain, Hsiang Liang and Hsiang Yu looked on.

"I can take over from him!" exclaimed Hsiang Yu.

"Don't talk so wildly!" said Hsiang Liang, stopping his mouth. "Do you want our clan wiped out?"

But this sent Hsiang Yu up in his estimation.

Hsiang Yu was over six feet, strong enough to carry a bronze cauldron, and more brilliant and ambitious than other men. All the young men in that district went in awe of him.

In the seventh month of the first year of the reign of the Second Emperor,* Chen Sheh and his men rose in Tacheh. In the ninth month Yin Tung, Governor of Kuaichi, said to Hsiang Liang:

"All the men west of the Yangtse have revolted. Heaven must have decreed Chin's downfall. Whoever strikes first, they say, becomes a leader, while those who delay are led. I want to raise troops with you and Huan Chu as my generals."

Huan Chu was then an outlaw in the marshes.

*209 B. C.

"Since Huan Chu became an outlaw, no one but Hsiang Yu knows where he is," said Hsiang Liang.

He went out and told Hsiang Yu to wait outside with his sword. Then he went back, sat down again by the governor and said: "Please summon Hsiang Yu to take your orders to Huan Chu."

When the governor agreed, Hsiang Liang called Hsiang Yu in. With a glance at him he said: "The time has come."

Hsiang Yu drew his sword and cut off the governor's head. Hsiang Liang picked up the head and put on Yin Tung's seal and insignia. The governor's followers flew into a panic and Hsiang Yu killed dozens of them, till all in the office cowered in abject terror and no one dared stand up. Then Hsiang Liang summoned the chief citizens and the officers whom he knew, told them why he meant to raise a revolt, and mobilized an army. He sent men to take the neighbouring districts, and gathered a picked force of eight thousand men, appointing the local gallants as his lieutenants, scouts and sergeants. One man complained that he had received no post, but Hsiang Liang retorted:

"When I asked you to see to something in a funeral, you didn't do so well. That is why I have given you no work."

All agreed that this was just. So Hsiang Liang became the governor of Kuaichi, with Hsiang Yu as his adjutant, and they took over all the districts in that province.

Shao Ping, a native of Kuangling, attacked that city for Chen Sheh but failed to take it. When he heard of Chen Sheh's defeat and flight and of the Chin army's approach, he crossed the Yangtse and pretended that Chen Sheh had ordered him to make Hsiang Liang the chief minister of Chu.

"You have conquered the land to the east," he said. "Now lead your army west against Chin!"

Hsiang Liang led eight thousand men west across the river. When he heard that Chen Ying had taken Tungyang, he sent an envoy asking him to join forces with him and advance west. Chen Ying was a secretary in the Tungyang government, known and respected throughout the

county for his integrity. After the young men here had killed their magistrate, thousand of men banded together and started looking for a leader. When they could find no one suitable, they asked Chen Ying to lead them. Chen Ying declined on the score of unfitness, but they forced him to take charge, and some twenty thousand men of that county followed him. The young men wanted to set him up as their king, and form a grey-turbaned army of their own.

Chen Ying's mother said to him: "Since I married into your family, I have not heard that any of your ancestors ever attained noble rank. It is not good to win fame overnight. Better serve as a subordinate. Then if you win, you will become a noble; if you lose, you will escape more easily if your name is not known to all."

So Chen Ying dared not be king.

"The Hsiang family has produced generals for several generations," he told his officers. "They are well known in Chu. For our revolt, we must have them. With the help of this noble family, we are certain to overthrow Chin."

They took his advice, and went over to Hsiang Liang with their troops. After Hsiang Liang crossed the River Huai, Ying Pu and General Pu also came over to him in force. The army, now nearly seventy thousand strong, was at Hsiapei.

Meanwhile Chin Chia had made Ching Chu King of Chu, and stationed his troops east of Pengcheng to resist Hsiang Liang.

"Chen Sheh was the first to rise," said Hsiang Liang to his officers. "But since he was defeated we do not know what has become of him. Now Chin Chia has turned against him and made Ching Chu king. This is vile treachery."

He led his men against Chin Chia, and put him to flight. Hsiang Liang pursued him to Huling, where Chin Chia turned to give battle. After one day Chin Chia fell, and his men surrendered. Ching Chu fled and perished in the land of Liang.

Hsiang Liang took over Chin Chia's army, and camped at Huling before marching west. Chang Han led an army of Chin to Li, and Hsiang Liang sent his generals Chu Chi-shih and the Lord of Yufan against him. When the Lord of Yufan was killed and Chu Chi-shih's army was routed and retreated to Huling, Hsiang Liang led his men to Hsueh and killed Chu Chi-shih. He had sent Hsiang Yu to storm Hsiangcheng, but the city resisted stubbornly. After taking it by storm, Hsiang Yu put all the defenders to the sword before going back to report to Hsiang Liang.

When Hsiang Liang heard that Chen Sheh had died, he summoned his generals to Hsueh for a council. By this time Liu Pang had risen in Pei and joined him.

Fan Tseng, a seventy-year-old native of Chuchao, though a private citizen, was a good strategist. Now he went to advise Hsiang Liang.

"Chen Sheh deserved to fall. Of the six kingdoms conquered by Chin, Chu was the least to blame. Since King Huai went to Chin and failed to return, the people of Chu have never ceased to mourn him. That is why Nan-kung of Chu said, 'So long as there are three households left in Chu, Chu will be the land to overthrow Chin.' But when Chen Sheh rebelled, instead of making one of the house of Chu king he set himself up — that is why he could not last. Once you took up arms in the east, Chu generals flocked to you from every side, because you come of a line of generals of Chu and they hope you will restore the royal house."

Hsiang Liang agreed with him, and made a search among the people till he found Hsin, grandson of King Huai, who was working as a shepherd. He made him King Huai of Chu, to satisfy popular feeling. Chen Ying was appointed chief minister and given five counties as his fief. King Huai's capital was Yutai. Hsiang Liang styled himself Lord of Wuhsin.

Some months later their army attacked Kangfu, and joined forces with Tien Yung and General Lung Chu's men to relieve Tungngo, routing the army of Chin. Then Tien Yung led his troops back to Chi and drove away King Chia,

who fled to Chu. His chief minister Tien Chiao fled to Chao. Tien Chiao's younger brother Tien Chien was a general of Chi, but he remained in Chao, not daring to return. Then Tien Yung made Shih, son of Tien Chan, King of Chi. After defeating and pursuing the Chin army which had besieged Tungngo, Hsiang Liang sent several envoys to urge the Chi forces to advance west with him. "We will send troops only if you kill Tien Chia," said Tien Yung, "and make the King of Chao kill Tien Chiao and Tien Chien."

"Tien Chia was the king of a friendly state, who turned to us in trouble," objected Hsiang Liang. "We can hardly kill him."

Neither would the King of Chao kill the other two to please Chi. So Chi sent no troops to aid Chu.

Hsiang Liang ordered Liu Pang and Hsiang Yu to attack Chengyang. They slaughtered all the defenders and advanced west to defeat the Chin army east of Puyang. The Chin army withdrew into Puyang. Next Liu Pang and Hsiang Yu attacked Tingtao, but failed to take it. They marched west and occupied all the districts up to Yungchiu, where they utterly defeated the Chin forces again, killing Li Yu. They turned back to attack Waihuang, but could not take it.

After Hsiang Liang struck west from Tungngo, defeated several Chin armies and advanced as far north as Tingtao, while Hsiang Yu and the others killed Li Yu, he began to underestimate Chin and to swagger. Sung Yi gave him some advice.

"If a general swaggers and his men loaf after a victory, they are sure to be defeated. Now your troops are taking it easy while the Chin army grows stronger every day. I am worried to think what will become of you."

Hsiang Liang paid no attention, but sent Sung Yi as his envoy to Chi. On the way Sung Yi met the Chi envoy Hsien, Lord of Kaoling.

"Are you going to see my master?" he asked him.

"I am," said Hsien.

"I am sure the Lord of Wuhsin will be defeated," said Sung Yi. "If you travel slowly, you will escape with your life. If you hurry, you will run into trouble."

Then Chin mobilized all its men to reinforce Chang Han. They attacked and routed the Chu army at Tingtao, and Hsiang Liang was killed.

Liu Pang and Hsiang Yu had left Waihuang to attack Chenliu, but the city was stubbornly defended and could not be taken.

"Now Hsiang Liang's army is routed, our men are afraid," they said.

They went east with Lu Cheng's army. Lu Cheng stationed his men east of Pengcheng, with Hsiang Yu in the west and Liu Pang at Tang.

After defeating Hsiang Liang, Chang Han thought he had nothing to fear from the other Chu troops. He crossed the river to attack Chao, and routed its army completely. Chao Hsieh, the King of Chao, with Chen Yu his general and Chang Erh his chief minister, fled to the city of Chulu. Chang Han ordered Wang Li and Sheh Chien to besiege the city, while he stationed his own army to the south and constructed a causeway to supply them with grain. Chen Yu, a general of Chao, stationed tens of thousands of men north of the city. This force was known as the Army North of the River.

After Chu was defeated at Tingtao, King Huai took fright and removed from Yutai to Pengcheng, where he combined the forces of Hsiang Yu and Lu Cheng under his own command. He made Lu Cheng his chief of staff, his father Lu Ching prime minister, and appointed Liu Pang Governor of Tang and Marquis of Wuan, giving him the troops of Tang.

When the Lord of Kaoling, the Chi envoy whom Sung Yi had met, reached the Chu army, he said to King Huai: "Sung Yi predicted that the Lord of Wuhsin would be defeated, and a few days later he was. Here is a man who understands warfare, who foresees defeat before a battle is fought."

King Huai summoned Sung Yi for a talk, and was so taken with him that he appointed him commander-in-chief to rescue Chao, with Hsiang Yu, Lord of Lu, as second in command, and Fan Tseng as third in command. All the other generals took orders from Sung Yi, whose title was Lord Chief Marshal.

They marched to Anyang, and camped there for forty-six days without advancing.

"I hear the Chin army is besieging the King of Chao at Chulu," said Hsiang Yu. "If we cross the river quickly and attack from outside while the men of Chao strike from inside, we are bound to defeat the Chin army."

"No," objected Sung Yi. "A gadfly which can attack a bull may not be able to kill a flea. Now Chin is attacking Chao. If they win they will be exhausted, and we can take advantage of that. If they lose we can march west with sounding drums and storm their capital. Better let Chin and Chao fight it out first. In actual fighting I am no match for you, but in strategy you are no match for me."

Then he issued an order to the troops: "Any man who is fierce as a tiger, stubborn as a goat, greedy as a wolf, or disobedient to orders, will be killed."

He sent his son Sung Hsiang to advise the King of Chi, and saw him to Wuyen, where he gave a banquet. In the chilly weather and heavy rain, the men were hungry and cold.

"Instead of hitting out hard at Chin, we have stayed in one place all this time," said Hsiang Yu. "The harvest has failed, the people are destitute, and our men are eating taros and peas because they have no grain; yet he holds a banquet instead of leading our troops across the river to get food from Chao and join forces with Chao to attack the enemy. He claims he is waiting for Chin to be exhausted. In fact, the strong Chin army is bound to take the newly established capital of Chao. Once Chao falls, Chin will grow stronger — there will be no exhaustion for us to profit by. Besides, our men have recently been defeated, our king sits uneasy on his throne, and has put all the resources of the kingdom at the command of Sung Yi.

Our country's whole future is at stake. Yet instead of caring for his troops, Sung Yi acts selfishly. He is not a loyal subject."

So the next morning when Hsiang Yu went to Sung Yi's tent to pay his respects, he cut off his head. Coming out, he announced to the army: "Sung Yi has been plotting with Chi against our state. King Huai sent me secret orders to kill him."

At this all the generals trembled and dared not protest.

"Your family first established our state," they said. "Now you have killed a traitor."

They made Hsiang Yu their deputy commander, and sent men to Chi to catch and kill Sung Yi's son. General Huan Chu was dispatched to report this to King Huai, who appointed Hsiang Yu commander-in-chief, with the Lord of Tangyang and General Pu under him.

By killing the Lord Chief Marshal, Sung Yi, Hsiang Yu struck terror into the whole of Chu and his fame spread to other states. He sent the Lord of Tangyang and General Pu across the river with twenty thousand men to raise the siege of Chulu. As they met with little success, Chen Yu asked for reinforcements. Thereupon Hsiang Yu led all his troops across the river. They sank their boats, smashed their cooking vessels, burned their huts, and carried only three days' rations with them, to show their determination to fight to the death and not to turn back. They besieged Wang Li's troops, fought nine battles with the Chin army, cut its supply route and routed it completely. Su Chiao was killed, Wang Li captured, and Sheh Chien who refused to surrender perished in the fire.

The army of Chu was now the first among all the states. Other troops had built more than ten ramparts to rescue Chulu, but none had dared to attack. When the men of Chu attacked the army of Chin, the others watched from their ramparts. Though the warriors of Chu were outnumbered one to ten, their war-cries shook the sky, striking terror into the hearts of all who heard them. And so they defeated the Chin army. When Hsiang Yu sum-

moned the generals from the other states to his camp, they entered on their knees, not daring to look up. Then Hsiang Yu became their commander-in-chief, with all their troops under him.

Chang Han's army was at Chiyuan, Hsiang Yu's south of the River Chang. They confronted each other for some time without fighting. Chang Han's army retreated several times, and the Second Emperor dispatched men to censure him. This alarmed Chang Han, who sent his secretary Ssuma Hsin to Hsienyang for further orders, Ssuma Hsin waited outside the outer gate of the palace for three days, but Chao Kao* would not see him for he did not trust him. Then Ssuma Hsin was afraid and returned to the army by a different route. The men Chao Kao sent after him failed to catch him.

When Ssuma Hsin reached the army, he reported: "With Chao Kao in control there is nothing we can do. If we fight and win, he will envy our success. If we lose, he will have us killed. I hope you will think this over carefully."

Chen Yu also sent Chang Han a letter saying: "When General Pai Chi served Chin, he conquered Yenyin in the south and wiped out the army of the Lord of Mafu in the north. He captured more cities and territories than could be counted, yet he was ordered to die. Meng Tien, another Chin general, drove away the Huns in the north and conquered several thousand square *li* in Yuchung, yet he was killed at Yangchou. This was because their achievements were so great that Chin could not enfeoff them sufficiently, so some legal pretext was found for their execution. Now you have commanded Chin's armies for three years, and lost hundreds of thousands of men, while more and more rebellions are breaking out in the different states. Chao Kao has deceived and flattered the emperor so long that now things are desperate he is afraid he may be executed, and wants to kill you as a scapegoat. He will appoint someone else to save his own skin. You have been away

*Chief minister of Chin.

from the capital for a long time, and have many enemies at court. You will be killed whether you win battles or not. Besides, Chin is destined to fall — even a fool can see that. Now you have no voice in the government, and if you remain at the front you will soon have no country of your own. Alas, alone and unfriended you are doomed! . Why not turn your army back, and ally with the different states to attack Chin and divide the empire between you? Then you can be a king and reign supreme. This is surely better than dying by the axe, and causing the death of your own wife and children?"

Chang Han began to waver, and secretly sent his officer Shih Cheng to come to some agreement with Hsiang Yu. Before an agreement was reached, Hsiang Yu dispatched General Pu with troops by night across Sanhu to the north bank of the River Chang, where he attacked and defeated the Chin army. Then Hsiang Yu led all his forces to attack the Chin army on the bank of the River Yu, and completely routed it. When Chang Han sent an envoy to sue for peace, Hsiang Yu called his officers to discuss the matter.

"Our food supply is low," he said. "I want to accept his offer."

His officers agreed. Then Hsiang Yu set a time to meet Chang Han at the Yin Ruins south of the River Huan, and there they signed an agreement. When he saw Hsiang Yu, Chang Han spoke with tears of what Chao Kao had done. Hsiang Yu made him King of Yung, and kept him in the Chu army. He appointed his secretary Ssuma Hsin commander of the vanguard to lead the Chin troops ahead of the main forces.

They reached Hsinan. Before this, when troops conscripted as frontier garrisons from the eastern states passed through Chin, the Chin soldiers who met them often bullied them. Now that the Chin forces had surrendered, the triumphant soldiers of the different states treated them as slaves and captives, and humiliated them.

The men of Chin whispered among themselves: "Commander Chang Han tricked us into surrendering. If we enter the Pass and conquer Chin, well and good. But if

we fail, they will send us east as captives, and Chin will kill our parents, wives and children."

Hsiang Yu's generals heard this talk and reported it, whereupon he summoned the Lord of Tangyang and General Pu.

"There are many Chin soldiers, not entirely loyal to us," he said. "Once inside the Pass it will be dangerous if they disobey us. We had better kill them all, taking with us into Chin only Chang Han, Ssuma Hsin his secretary, and Tung Yi his lieutenant."

So one night the Chu army massacred more than two hundred thousand Chin troops south of Hsinan.

They advanced and conquered part of the land of Chin, but found Hanku Pass defended and could not force it. When Hsiang Yu heard that Liu Pang, Lord of Pei, had already taken Hsienyang, he was very angry and made the Lord of Tangyang and others storm the Pass. Hsiang Yu followed, and reached the west of the River Hsi. Liu Pang's army was at Pashang. Before he got in touch with Hsiang Yu his left marshal, Tsao Wu-shang, sent a messenger to Hsiang Yu to say: "The Lord of Pei wants to be king inside the Pass, with the Chin prince Tzu-ying as his prime minister. He will keep all the booty to himself."

In a rage, Hsiang Yu swore: "Tomorrow I shall feast my men, and then we shall smash Liu Pang's army."

At this time Hsiang Yu had four hundred thousand men at Hungmen near Hsinfeng, and Liu Pang had one hundred thousand only at Pashang.

Fan Tseng also told Hsiang Yu: "When the Lord of Pei was in the east, he hankered after wealth and beautiful women, but since entering the Pass he has taken no loot nor women. This shows he has great ambitions. I told a man to watch his halo,* and it takes the shape of many-coloured dragons and tigers — the halo of an emperor. You must lose no time in attacking him!"

*The ancient Chinese believed that over the heads of famous men there sometimes appeared a vapour or halo, which astrologers could detect.

Hsiang Yu's uncle, Hsiang Po, the left minister of Chu, was a friend of Chang Liang, Marquis of Liu, who served with Liu Pang. Hsiang Po galloped to Liu Pang's army by night to see Chang Liang secretly, and told him what had happened. He urged Chang Liang to go away with him.

"Otherwise you will perish," he warned him.

But Chang Liang replied, "The King of Han sent me here with the Lord of Pei. It would not be right to leave him in this emergency. I must tell him."

He went in and told Liu Pang.

"What shall I do?" asked Liu Pang in great alarm.

"Who advised you to take this course?" inquired Chang Liang.

"A fool of a scholar advised me to hold the Pass and not let the others in, for then I should be able to rule all Chin. I took his advice."

"Do you think, my lord, that your troops can resist Hsiang Yu?"

"Of course not," answered Liu Pang after a pause. "But what shall I do?"

"Let me tell Hsiang Po for you that you have no intention of opposing Hsiang Yu."

"How did you come to know Hsiang Po?"

"While Chin was powerful we were friends, and I saved Hsiang Po's life once when he killed a man. So he came to warn me of this danger."

"Which of you is the elder?"

"He is."

"Please fetch him in. I shall address him as my elder brother."

Chang Liang called Hsiang Po, who went in to see Liu Pang. Liu Pang offered him a goblet of wine, and pledged his word to link their families by marriage.

"Since entering the Pass, I have not touched so much as a hair," he declared. "I have kept a census of the population and sealed up the treasuries until the commander's arrival. I sent officers to guard the Pass to prevent disturbances or banditry. Day and night I was waiting for

the commander — how dare I rebel against him? Pray tell him that I could not be so ungrateful."

Hsiang Po agreed to speak for him.

"Tomorrow you must go early to apologize to Lord Hsiang Yu in person," he said.

"I will," agreed Liu Pang.

Then Hsiang Po went back by night to the army and told Hsiang Yu all that Liu Pang had said.

"If the Lord of Pei had not conquered Chin, you would not have been able to enter," he pointed out. "It is wrong to attack a man who has done so well. You should treat him handsomely."

Hsiang Yu agreed.

The next morning Liu Pang rode up with some hundred horsemen to see Hsiang Yu. When he reached Hungmen, he made his apology.

"I attacked Chin as hard as I could in co-operation with you," he said. "You fought north of the river while I fought south, but I happened to be the first to enter the Pass and conquer the land of Chin, so here we meet again. Now some mean fellow has maligned me, and made you mistrust me."

"It was your left marshal Tsao Wu-shang," replied Hsiang Yu. "Otherwise I would never have thought such a thing."

Hsiang Yu kept Liu Pang to drink with him. Hsiang Yu and Hsiang Po sat facing east, the patriarch Fan Tseng faced south, Liu Pang north, and Chang Liang, who was in attendance, west. Fan Tseng shot Hsiang Yu several glances, and raised his jade pendant three times as a signal, but Hsiang Yu paid no attention. Then Fan Tseng got up and went out. He summoned Hsiang Chuang and said to him: "Our lord cannot make up his mind. Go in and offer a toast. After that you can do a sword dance, and strike the Lord of Pei on his seat and kill him. Otherwise you will all become his captives."

So Hsiang Chuang went in to offer a toast, after which he said, "Our prince is drinking with the Lord of Pei, but

we have no entertainers in the army. May I perform a sword dance?"

"Very well," said Hsiang Yu.

When Hsiang Chuang unsheathed his sword and started dancing, Hsiang Po did the same. Moreover, he shielded Liu Pang with his body, so that Hsiang Chuang could not hit him.

Chang Liang went outside the gate to see Fan Kuai, who asked: "How goes it?"

"Touch and go!" replied Chang Liang. "Hsiang Chuang is doing a sword dance, trying to get at the Lord of Pei."

"Things are desperate!" said Fan Kuai. "Let me go in and have it out with him."

Fan Kuai went with sword and shield to the gate of the camp where guards with crossed halberds tried to bar the way. He charged at them and knocked them down with his titled shield. Bursting in, he lifted the curtain and stood facing west, glaring at Hsiang Yu. His hair was bristling, his eyes nearly starting from his head. Hsiang Yu raised himself on one knee and reached for his sword.

"Who is this stranger?" he asked.

"This is the Lord of Pei's bodyguard, Fan Kuai," answered Chang Liang.

"Stout fellow!" said Hsiang Yu. "Give him a stoup of wine."

They gave Fan Kuai a stoup of wine. He bowed his thanks and drank it standing.

"Give him a shoulder of pork," directed Hsiang Yu.

They gave Fan Kuai a shoulder of pork. He set his shield upside down on the ground, placed the pork on it, carved it with his sword, and wolfed it down.

"Stout fellow!" cried Hsiang Yu. "Can you drink any more?"

"I am not afraid of death — why should I refuse a drink?" retorted Fan Kuai. "The whole world is against the king of Chin, because like a tiger or wolf he has killed more men than you can count and tortured others cruelly. So King Huai promised his generals that the first to conquer the land of Chin and enter its capital should be king. Now the

Lord of Pei has conquered Chin and entered Hsienyang first. But he dared not touch a single hair. He sealed up the palaces, withdrew his troops to Pashang to wait for you, and sent men to guard the Pass against bandits and other emergencies. But though he has laboured so hard and achieved so much, instead of rewarding him with noble rank you listen to some mean fellow and decide to kill this hero! Such behaviour is worthy of defeated Chin, but hardly of Your Lordship."

Hsiang Yu had no answer ready.

"Sit down," he said.

Fan Kuai sat next to Chang Liang. Presently Liu Pang went out to the privy, taking Fan Kuai with him.

Hsiang Yu ordered his lieutenant Chen Ping to call him back.

"I have come out without taking my leave," said Liu Pang. "What shall I do?"

"Where big issues are at stake you cannot trouble about trifles," said Fan Kuai. "In matters of consequence you cannot observe the minor courtesies. They are the chopper and board, we the fish and meat. Why should we take our leave?"

So Liu Pang started off telling Chang Liang to stay behind to make his excuses.

"What did you bring with you, my lord?" asked Chang Liang.

"Two jade pendants for Lord Hsiang Yu, and two jade cups for the patriarch Fan Tseng. As they were angry, I did not dare present them. Please do so for me."

"Very good, my lord," said Chang Liang.

Now Hsiang Yu's army was at Hungmen, while Liu Pang's was at Pashang only forty *li* away. Leaving his chariot and horses, Liu Pang rode off alone. Fan Kuai, Hsiahou Ying, Chin Chiang and Chi Hsin followed on foot, carrying swords and shields. They skirted Li Mountain and took a short cut to Chihyang.

"From here to my army is only twenty *li*," said Liu Pang to Chang Liang. "When you reckon that I am back, you can go in again."

By the time he should have reached his army, Chang Liang went in to apologize for him.

"The Lord of Pei had too much to drink and was unable to take his leave," he said. "He humbly sends me to present two jade pendants to Your Lordship and two jade cups to the patriarch."

"Where is he now?" asked Hsiang Yu.

"Knowing that Your Highness meant to find fault with him, he left alone. He must be in his camp by now."

Hsiang Yu accepted the pendants and placed them on his couch. But the patriarch put the jade cups on the ground, and drew his sword to smash them.

"Bah!" he cried. "It is no use advising a young fool. The Lord of Pei will wrest your empire from you and take us all captive!"

As soon as Liu Pang reached his army, he had Tsao Wu-shang executed.

A few days later Hsiang Yu led his troops west, massacred the citizens of Hsienyang, killed King Tzu-ying of Chin who had surrendered, and set fire to the Chin palaces. The conflagration raged for three whole months. Having looted the city and carried off the women, he went east.

Someone advised him: "The region inside the Pass has mountains and rivers as natural barriers all around, and the soil is fertile. You could make this your capital and rule supreme."

But now the Chin palaces were destroyed by fire, and Hsiang Yu longed to go back to his home in the east.

"What use are wealth and rank if you do not go home?" he retorted. "That is like wearing embroidery at night — no one can see your splendour!"

"They say the men of Chu are apes in men's hats," observed the other. "Apparently this is true."

When Hsiang Yu heard this, he had the man boiled in a cauldron.

Hsiang Yu sent a messenger to report to King Huai.

"Let it be as we agreed," replied the king.

Then King Huai received the title of Emperor Yi. As Hsiang Yu wished to be a king, he first made the other generals kings.

"When the revolt broke out, as a temporary measure we restored the different kings to attack Chin," he said. "But we are the ones who took up arms, and risked our lives on the battlefield for three years until Chin was overthrown and the empire pacified. Emperor Yi has done nothing. Let us divide up his land and make ourselves kings."

"Very good," said the generals.

They divided the empire, making themselves kings and lords.

Hsiang Yu and Fan Tseng suspected that Liu Pang might seize power. Though they had settled their dispute, now they had broken the agreement they feared the other states might not support them. So they laid a plot.

"The lands of Pa and Shu are mountainous and impassable," they said. "That is where all the exiles were sent by Chin."

They announced: "Pa and Shu are also inside the Pass." So Liu Pang was appointed King of Han to rule over Pa, Shu and Hanchung, with his capital at Nancheng. And the land of Chin was divided into three kingdoms under the Chin generals who had surrendered, as buffer states against Liu Pang.

Hsiang Yu made Chang Han King of Yung, ruling over the territory west of Hsienyang, with his capital at Feichiu. His secretary Ssuma Hsin, the gaoler of Yaoyang who had helped Hsiang Liang, was made a king. So was the staff officer Tung Yi, who had advised Chang Han to surrender to Hsiang Yu. Ssuma Hsin was appointed King of Sai, ruling over the territory east of Hsienyang as far as the Yellow River, with his capital at Yaoyang. Tung Yi was made King of Ti over Shangchun, with his capital at Kaonu.

Pao, King of Wei, was sent west to be King of West Wei, ruling over Hotung with his capital at Pingyang. Shen Yang of Hsiachiu, Chang Erh's favourite who had conquered the province of Honan and joined forces with the Chu army by the river, was made King of Honan with his capital

at Loyang. Cheng, King of Han, remained where he was, with Yangcheh as his capital. Ssuma Jang, a general of Chao who had conquered Honei and won several victories, was made King of Yin over Honei with his capital at Chaoko. Hsieh, King of Chao, was removed and made King of Tai. Chang Erh, the able minister of Chao who had followed the Chu army through the Pass, was made King of Changshan, ruling over the land of Chao, with his capital at Hsiangkuo.

Ying Pu, Lord of Tangyang, who had proved the bravest general of the Chu army, was made King of Chiuchiang with his capital at Liu. Wu Jui, Lord of Po, who had led the Yueh tribesmen as reinforcements and followed Hsiang Yu through the Pass, was made King of Hengshan with his capital at Chu. Kung Nao, Emperor Yi's minister who had led troops against Nanchun and won many victories, was made King of Lingchiang with his capital at Chiangling.

Han Kuang, King of Yen, was removed to be King of Liaotung. The Yen general Tsang Tu, who had joined the Chu forces to rescue Chao and followed Hsiang Yu through the Pass, was made King of Yen with his capital at Chi. Tien Shih, King of Chi, was removed to be King of Chiaotung. The Chi general Tien Tu, who had joined the Chu forces to rescue Chao and followed Hsiang Yu through the Pass, was made King of Chi with his capital at Lingchih. Then there was Tien An, grandson of the former King of Chi, who was conquered by Chin. When Hsiang Yu crossed the river to rescue Chao, Tien An took several cities north of the River Chi and came over to Hsiang Yu with his forces. He was therefore made King of Chipei, with his capital at Poyang. Tien Yung, who had disobeyed several of Hsiang Liang's orders and refused to lead his troops after those of Chu to attack Chin, was given no title. Though Chen Yu, Lord of Chengan, had abandoned his commander's seal and refused to follow Hsiang Yu into the Pass, he was known to be a talented man who had done much for the land of Chao. When it was learned that he was at Nanpi, he was given three adjacent counties. Mei Chuan, a general under the Lord of Po who had many bold deeds to his

credit, received a fief of one hundred thousand families. As for Hsiang Yu, he set himself up as Overlord of West Chu, with nine provinces as his kingdom and Pengcheng as his capital.

In the fourth month of the first year of the Han dynasty,* the kings withdrew their troops and returned to their kingdoms. When Hsiang Yu reached his kingdom, he gave orders for Emperor Yi's removal, saying:

"In ancient times an emperor had one thousand square *li* only of territory, and always lived at the upper reaches of the river."

He decided that the emperor should move to the Sheng district in Changsha, and kept urging him to leave, till all the emperor's ministers gradually left him. Then Hsiang Yu secretly told the King of Hengshan and the King of Lingchiang to attack and kill the emperor on the river.

Since Cheng, King of Han, had won no victories, Hsiang Yu would not let him go to his kingdom but took him to Pengcheng. There, having degraded him to the rank of a lord, he killed him. When Tsang Tu went to the state of Yen, he tried to drive away the former king, Han Kuang, to Liaotung. As Han Kuang refused to go, Tsang Tu attacked and killed him at Wuchung, and annexed his territory.

When Tien Yung heard that Hsiang Yu had removed the King of Chi to Chiaotung, setting up the Chi general Tien Tu in his stead, he was very angry and refused to let Tien Tu proceed to Chi, but revolted and attacked him. Tien Tu fled to the land of Chu. Since King Tien Shih was afraid of Hsiang Yu, he fled to Chiaotung, his new state. Tien Yung pursued him in anger, and killed him at Chimo. Then Tien Yung made himself King of Chi, and marched west to attack and kill Tien An, King of Chipei. He now ruled over the whole land of Chi. Tien Yung gave Peng Yueh a commander's seal and ordered him to revolt in the

*206 B. C.

land of Liang. Chen Yu also sent Chang Tung and Hsia Yueh in secret to advise him.

"Hsiang Yu has not divided the country fairly," they said. "He has put all the former kings in poor districts, but made his generals and ministers kings of rich districts. And he drove the former King of Chao north to the land of Tai. I do not think this is right. Now I hear Your Highness has taken up arms, unable to endure this injustice. I hope you will lend me some troops to attack Changshan and restore the King of Chao. We will gladly serve as your bulwark."

Tien Yung agreed and sent troops to the land of Chao. Chen Yu mobilized the men of his three districts, and together they attacked Changshan and routed Chang Erh, who fled to the land of Han. Then Chen Yu welcomed back the former King of Chao from Tai, and the king made Chen Yu King of Tai. By this time, the Han army had also turned back and conquered the three kingdoms of Chin.

When Hsiang Yu heard that the King of Han had seized all the land within the Pass, and that Chi and Chao had rebelled against him in the east, he was very angry. He made Cheng Chang, former governor of Wu, King of Han to repel Liu Pang's advance, and ordered Chiao, Lord of Hsiao, to attack Peng Yueh. But Peng Yueh defeated the Lord of Hsiao. Then Liu Pang sent Chang Liang to conquer Han, and wrote to Hsiang Yu: "Since I have not received the territory promised me, I want to take the land within the Pass. As soon as the agreement is carried out, I will stop and not presume to advance further east."

He also sent Hsiang Yu a letter showing that Tien Yung and Peng Yueh had revolted.

"Chi means to ally with Chao to overthrow Chu," he said.

Then instead of advancing west, Hsiang Yu went north to attack Chi. He summoned Ying Pu, King of Chiuchiang, to bring reinforcements. But Ying Pu did not join him on the pretext of illness, merely sending a general with several thousand men. For this Hsiang Yu bore him a grudge.

In the winter of the second year of the Han dynasty, Hsiang Yu went north to Chengyang, where Tien Yung joined battle with him. Tien Yung was defeated and fled to Pingyuan, to be killed by the people there. Hsiang Yu went further north, and burnt or razed to the ground all the cities and houses, massacred Tien Yung's men who had surrendered, and took captive the old, the weak and the women. He conquered the land up to Peihai, causing great destruction. Then the men of Chi gathered together and rebelled. Tien Yung's younger brother, Tien Heng, rallied what was left of the army, numbering tens of thousands of men, and revolted at Chengyang. Hsiang Yu was forced to stop and launch several assaults against the city, but he failed to take it.

That spring, Liu Pang advanced east at the head of the allied troops of five states, five hundred and sixty thousand strong, to attack Chu. When Hsiang Yu knew of this, he sent his generals to attack Chi in the north, while he himself led thirty thousand picked troops south from Lu to emerge at Huling. In the fourth month, the Han soldiers entered Pengcheng, sacked the city, seized all the women, and caroused every day. Then Hsiang Yu struck west and fell upon the Han army one morning from Hsiao, coming east to Pengcheng. By noon the Han forces were completely routed. They fled in disorder to the Ku and Ssu rivers, where more than one hundred thousand of them were killed. They retreated south to the hills, but the army of Chu pursued them to the banks of the River Sui, east of Lingpi. The Han troops fell back, hard pressed by the men of Chu. There was great carnage, and more than one hundred thousand fell in the river, stopping the Sui from flowing. The pursuers threw three cordons round Liu Pang. But just then a great wind sprang up from the northwest. It blew down trees and houses, and caught up sand and pebbles so that the day turned black as night. This wind beat against the Chu army, and threw it into confusion. Its ranks broke, and Liu Pang was able to escape with several dozen horsemen.

Liu Pang set out for Pei, meaning to take his family west with him. But as Hsiang Yu also sent pursuers to Pei, Liu Pang's family fled and missed him. On the road he met his son, later Emperor Hsiao Huei, and his daughter, later Queen Yuan of Lu, and made them ride in his carriage. But when the Chu cavalry came hot on their heels, Liu Pang in his desperation pushed his son and daughter out. Then Hsiahou Ying, Lord of Teng, got down and helped them in again. This happened three times.

"Though things look black, we cannot drive fast," protested Hsiahou Ying. "How can you abandon them?"

They made good their escape. Liu Pang looked in vain for his father and wife, later Empress Lu. Shen Yi-chi was their escort, but while searching for Liu Pang they met Chu troops. The men of Chu reported this to Hsiang Yu, who kept them with his army.

At this time Empress Lu's brother, Lu Cheh, was in command of the Han troops at Hsiayi. There Liu Pang went, to raise another army. By the time he reached Hsinyang, all his defeated soldiers had reassembled. Hsiao Ho also mobilized all the old and weak within the Pass who had not been conscripted, and sent them to Hsinyang. Thus their army became a force to reckon with again. The Chu troops, advancing from Pengcheng, followed up their victory and fought the Han army south of Hsinyang between Ching and Soting. But Liu Pang's men defeated them there, checking their advance further west.

Since Hsiang Yu had rescued Pengcheng and pursued Liu Pang to Hsinyang, Tien Heng was able to reconquer Chi and set up Tien Yung's son, Tien Kuang, as king there. After Liu Pang's defeat at Pengcheng, all the other kings went over to Hsiang Yu. At Hsinyang the Han army had constructed a causeway to the Yellow River to convey grain from Aotsang. In the third year of the Han dynasty, Hsiang Yu repeatedly cut off their supplies, so that there was a food shortage. Liu Pang was alarmed and sued for peace, claiming only the land west of Hsinyang.

Hsiang Yu would have agreed, but Fan Tseng, Lord of Liyang, said: "The Han army is easy to crush. If you let them go, you will be sorry later."

So Hsiang Yu and Fan Tseng hammered at Hsinyang. Liu Pang in his desperation adopted a plan devised by Chen Ping to alienate Hsiang Yu and Fan Tseng. When Hsiang Yu's envoy arrived, they made ready a great feast. But as they were going to present it, they showed great surprise on seeing who the envoy was.

"We thought it was Lord Fan Tseng's envoy," they explained. "But you come from Hsiang Yu!"

They removed the feast, and brought more common fare.

When the envoy went back and reported this, Hsiang Yu suspected Fan Tseng of being in league with Liu Pang, and little by little deprived him of his authority.

Fan Tseng was very angry.

"The empire is nearly won," he said. "Your Highness can manage alone. Allow me to retire to the ranks."

Hsiang Yu gave his consent. But before Fan Tseng reached Pengcheng, he developed an abscess in his back and died.

Then the Han general Chi Hsin said to Liu Pang: "The situation is desperate. Let me impersonate Your Majesty to deceive the Chu army, so that you can escape."

One night Liu Pang sent two thousand women in armour out through the east gate of Hsinyang, and the Chu troops attacked them from all sides. Chi Hsin, in the carriage with the yellow canopy and the feather pennant on the left, came out to declare: "There is no food left in the city. The King of Han surrenders."

While all the Chu soldiers cheered, Liu Pang slipped out through the west gate with a few dozen horsemen and fled to Chengkao. When Hsiang Yu saw Chi Hsin, he demanded:

"Where is your king?"

"Our king has already left," was the answer.

Hsiang Yu had Chi Hsin burnt to death.

Liu Pang had entrusted the defence of Hsinyang to his vice-minister Chou Ko, Lord Chung and Pao, once King of Wei. Chou Ko and Lord Chung took counsel together.

"A former king can hardly be trusted to defend the city," they said.

So they killed Pao.

Then the Chu army stormed the city and captured Chou Ko alive.

"If you will serve as my general, I will make you a chief marshal with a fief of thirty thousand families," said Hsiang Yu.

But Chou Ko swore at him: "Unless you surrender soon, Han will capture you. You are no match for Han!"

In a rage, Hsiang Yu boiled him in the cauldron, and killed Lord Chung as well.

After leaving Hsinyang, Liu Pang went south to Wan and Hsieh. He won over Ying Pu, King of Chiuchiang, and raised troops to defend Chengkao. In the fourth year of the Han dynasty, Hsiang Yu laid siege to Chengkao. Liu Pang fled alone with Lord Teng through the north gate, crossed the river and went to Hsiuwu to join the army of Chang Erh and Han Hsin. Gradually his generals left Chengkao and joined him. The Chu army took Chengkao and started westwards, but Liu Pang sent troops to hold Kung and check their advance.

At this point Peng Yueh crossed the river and attacked Tungngo, killing the Chu general Lord Hsueh. So Hsiang Yu turned east to fight Peng Yueh. Now that Liu Pang had Han Hsin's army, he wanted to cross the river and head south, but on Cheng Chung's advice he stayed on the north bank, sending Liu Chia with troops to aid Peng Yueh and burn the Chu supplies. In the east Hsiang Yu defeated Peng Yueh and put him to flight. Liu Pang led his troops across the river to reconquer Chengkao, and stationed his army on Kuangwu Mountain, getting supplies from Aotsang. Having conquered the land in the east, Hsiang Yu marched west again. He also stationed his army on Kuangwu Mountain, facing the forces of Han, and so they stayed for several months.

During this time, Peng Yueh recaptured a number of districts in Liang and kept intercepting the Chu army's

grain supply. Hsiang Yu was very disturbed. He had a high scaffold built, and set Liu Pang's father on it.

"Unless you surrender at once, I shall boil your father alive!" he announced.

Liu Pang replied: "Together we received orders from King Huai, and swore that we would be brothers. So my father is yours too. If you insist on boiling your old man, do send me a bowl of the soup."

In a great rage Hsiang Yu wanted to kill the old man, but Hsiang Po reasoned with him:

"It is not yet settled who will win the empire," he said. "And a man who aspires to be emperor will not trouble about his family. Killing him could serve no purpose, but only make for trouble."

Hsiang Yu listened to his advice.

For a long time Chu and Han had battled, yet neither side had won a decisive victory. The able-bodied men were weary of fighting, while the old and weak were exhausted by conscript labour. Hsiang Yu made a proposal to Liu Pang.

"Because of us, the empire has been in a tumult for years. Let us settle the issue by a fight between the two of us, why make the people suffer with us."

Liu Pang declined with a smile.

"I prefer to fight with my wits, not with brute force," he said.

Then Hsiang Yu ordered his champions to challenge the men of Han to single combat. In Liu Pang's army there was a skilled archer and horseman named Lou Fan, who with his arrows killed each Chu general who came out to fight. Hsiang Yu in a fury put on armour himself, and rode out with his halberd to do battle. As Lou Fan raised his bow, Hsiang Yu glared at him and bellowed. Then Lou Fan dared not meet his eyes or shoot, but fled back to the rampart, too terrified to take the field again. When Liu Pang sent to ask the reason and found out that this warrior was Hsiang Yu himself, he was amazed. Hsiang Yu called to Liu Pang across the lines on Kuangwu Mountain. Liu Pang enumerated Hsiang Yu's faults, and Hsiang Yu

in great anger challenged him to a fight, but Liu Pang would not accept his challenge. Then Hsiang Yu raised his crossbow and shot Liu Pang, who fled wounded to Chengkao.

When Hsiang Yu heard that Han Hsin had conquered the land north of the Yellow River, defeated the armies of Chi and Chao, and was about to invade Chu, he sent General Lung Chu to attack him. Han Hsin and Kuan Ying, the cavalry commander, struck back and utterly routed the men of Chu, killing General Lung Chu. Han Hsin then set himself up as King of Chi.

Hsiang Yu was alarmed to hear of General Lung Chu's defeat. He sent Wu Sheh, a native of Yutai, to win Han Hsin over, but with no success. At this time Peng Yueh reconquered Liang and cut the Chu army supplies. Hsiang Yu told his high marshal Tsao Chiu, Marquis of Haichun, and the other generals:

"See you defend Chengkao well. If the Han army challenges you, do not give battle. Simply stop them advancing eastwards. In fifteen days, when I have killed Peng Yueh and retaken Liang, I shall join you again."

He marched east to attack Chenliu and Waihuang, but Waihuang held out against him for several days. After it surrendered, he decided in his rage to take all men above fifteen to the east of the city and have them massacred. The thirteen-year-old son of the magistrate's steward went to him and said:

"Peng Yueh forced Waihuang to rebel, and the city was afraid. It meant to surrender, but was waiting for Your Highness to arrive. Now that you are here, though, you want to massacre our men. How can you win the people over like this? There are more than a dozen cities further east in Liang, but now they will all be afraid to surrender to you."

Hsiang Yu saw truth in what this lad said, and pardoned those who were to have been massacred. When this became known, all the cities east to Suiyang promptly surrendered.

The Han army challenged the Chu troops in Chengkao several times, but they would not be drawn. Then men

were sent to insult them, until after five or six days the high marshal Tsao Chiu lost his temper, and started leading his men across the River Ssu. When half the army was across, the men of Han attacked and routed them, capturing all the wealth of the kingdom of Chu. The high marshal Tsao Chiu, the secretary Tung Yi and Ssuma Hsin, King of Sai, all fell on their own swords at the river. Tsao Chiu had been gaoler of the Chi district, and Ssuma Hsin gaoler of the Yaoyang district. Because they had helped Hsiang Liang, Hsiang Yu had trusted them.

At this time, Hsiang Yu was at Suiyang. When he learned of his army's defeat, he led his troops back. The Han army was besieging Chungli Mo east of Hsinyang. At Hsiang Yu's approach, they withdrew in fear to the heights.

Now the Han army was strong and had ample supplies, while Hsiang Yu's troops were exhausted and had no food. Liu Pang dispatched Lu Chia to ask Hsiang Yu to send his father back, but Hsiang Yu refused. Then Liu Pang sent Lord Hou to persuade him. This time Hsiang Yu agreed to divide the empire into two. The land west of Hungkou should go to Han, that east of Hungkou to Chu. Hsiang Yu agreed to this and handed over Liu Pang's parents and wife; while all the soldiers cheered. Liu Pang called Lord Hou the arbiter of states, but used to keep him hidden.

"This man is the world's most eloquent orator," he explained. "Wherever he goes, he causes kingdoms to fall. That is why I call him the arbiter of states."

After making the agreement, Hsiang Yu led his army east. Liu Pang wanted to go west, but Chang Liang and Chen Ping advised him: "You now have the greater half of the empire and the support of all the states, while the Chu army is exhausted and has no food. Heaven has decreed their downfall. You should seize this chance to conquer them. To let Hsiang Yu go scot-free is like bringing up a tiger — it is simply asking for trouble."

Liu Pang took their advice.

In the fifth year of the Han dynasty, Liu Pang pursued Hsiang Yu south of Yangku and stationed his troops there, appointing a date to attack with Han Hsin and Peng Yueh.

But when he reached Kuling, the armies of Han Hsin and Peng Yueh had failed to come. Hsiang Yu attacked and routed the army of Han. The king retreated to his ramparts and dug defences.

"The other states have not kept their word; what shall I do?" he asked Chang Liang.

"Chu is about to be crushed, but Han Hsin and Peng Yueh have not been given fiefs," replied Chang Liang. "No wonder they did not come. If you will divide the empire with them, they will come at once. If not, the issue is by no means certain. Give all the land east of Chen to the coast to Han Hsin, and all the land north of Suiyang to Kucheng to Peng Yueh, and let them fight for themselves. Then Chu can easily be defeated."

"Very good," said the king.

He sent envoys to inform Han Hsin and Peng Yueh: "If you join us to attack Chu, when Chu is defeated all the land between Chen and the sea will be given to Han Hsin, all that between Suiyang and Kucheng to Peng Yueh."

After the envoys reached them, Han Hsin and Peng Yueh agreed to send troops. Han Hsin advanced from the land of Chi, while Liu Chia's army advanced from Shouchun, took Chengfu and wiped out its defenders. Then both forces reached Kaihsia. Marshal Chou Yin also rebelled against Hsiang Yu and advanced from Shu to take Liu and massacre its defenders. The army of Ying Pu, King of Chiuchiang, also followed the armies of Liu Chia and Peng Yueh. They converged upon Kaihsia against Hsiang Yu.

Hsiang Yu's army was at Kaihsia. His troops were decimated, his supplies exhausted, and the Han army wtih the forces of the other states had hemmed him in. At night he heard the besieging troops all around singing the songs of Chu.

"Has the King of Han conquered all Chu?" he asked in dismay. "How is it he has so many men of Chu?"

He got up at night to drink in his camp. He had a mistress named Yu, who usually accompanied him, and a swift steed named Chui which he generally rode. Now Hsiang Yu chanted a tragic air, setting words to it himself:

My strength uprooted mountains,
My ambition embraced the world;
But fortune is against me,
Chui cannot fly much farther.
Chui cannot fly much farther,
What shall I do?
And what is to become of Lady Yu?
What of Lady Yu?

He sang this several times, and his mistress joined in. Then Hsiang Yu shed tears, and all his followers wept and could not bear to look at him.

Then Hsiang Yu mounted his horse and rode off by night with little more than eight hundred staunch followers. They broke through the enemy line to the south and galloped away. By dawn the Han army knew that he had escaped, and the cavalry officer Kuan Ying was sent with five thousand horsemen in pursuit. By the time Hsiang Yu crossed the River Huai, there were only just over a hundred men with him. At Yinling he lost his way and asked an old man in the fields.

"Bear left," said the old man, deliberately deceiving him.

Going left, he was bogged down in the marshes, and the Han army overtook him. Then Hsiang Yu led his men east. When he reached Tungcheng, only twenty-eight horsemen were left to him, while several thousand Han cavalry were after him. Hsiang Yu knew that he could not escape.

"It is eight years since I revolted," he told his men. "I have fought more than seventy battles, swept all obstacles from my path, conquered every foe I attacked, and never known defeat. So I won the empire. But now I am hemmed in here. Heaven is against me — it is not my generalship that is at fault. Today I shall perish here, but for your sake I shall fight gallantly and overcome the enemy three times. For you I shall break through their lines, kill their commander, and cut down their flag, so that you may see that Heaven is against me — it is not my generalship that is at fault."

He divided his horsemen into four groups, facing in four directions. The Han army had surrounded them on all sides.

"Now I'll kill one of their officers for you," said Hsiang Yu.

He ordered his men to break through on four sides, and reassemble in three groups east of the hill. Then with a mighty battle cry he charged. The Han troops scattered before him and he killed one of their officers. A cavalry officer named Yang Hsi pursued him. But when Hsiang Yu glared at him and bellowed, Yang Hsi and his horse were terrified and fled several *li*. Hsiang Yu's men reassembled in three groups, and as the Han forces did not know Hsiang Yu's whereabouts they divided into three to surround them again. Once more Hsiang Yu charged through their lines and killed another officer, as well as several dozen men. When he rallied his followers again, he had lost only two of them.

"How was that?" he asked.

They bowed and replied: "Even as Your Highness said."

Hsiang Yu had to cross the river at Wuchiang to go east. The station master there had a boat moored and waiting.

"There is not much land east of the Yangtse," he said to Hsiang Yu. "But a thousand square *li* and several hundred thousand men are enough for a kingdom. You must cross quickly, Your Highness! Mine is the only boat here. When the Han army comes, they will not be able to cross."

"Heaven is against me," replied Hsiang Yu with a laugh. "What use is it to cross the river? Besides, I crossed the Yangtse and went west with eight thousand young men from the east, and now I have come back alone. Even if the elders made me king out of pity, how could I face them again? Even if they said nothing, how could I hold up my head? I know you are a good man."— he said this to the station master — "I have ridden this horse for five years, sweeping all before me and galloping a thousand *li* in one day. I cannot bear to kill it. I give it to you."

He ordered his men to alight for hand-to-hand combat. Hsiang Yu alone killed several hundred men, and was wounded some dozen times. Then he turned and saw the cavalry officer Lu Ma-tung.

"Isn't that my old friend Lu?" he exclaimed.

Lu Ma-tung, facing him, pointed him out to Wang Yi.

"That is Hsiang Yu."

Hsiang Yu said: "I hear the King of Han has set a price on my head of a thousand gold pieces and a fief of ten thousand families. Let me do you a good turn!"

He cut his own throat.

Wang Yi seized his head, and other horsemen trampled and jostled each other for his body — several dozen men fought over him. Finally the knight cavalry officer Yang Hsi, the cavalry marshal Lu Ma-tung, and the knights Lu Sheng and Yang Wu secured one limb each. When the five of them put the limbs together, it was seen that they came from the same body, and the fief was divided among them. Lu Ma-tung was made Marquis of Chungshui, Wang Yi Marquis of Tuyen, Yang Hsi Marquis of Chih-chuan, Yang Wu Marquis of Wufang, and Lu Sheng Marquis of Niehyang.

After Hsiang Yu's death, all the districts in Chu surrendered except Lu. The king led his troops there, meaning to massacre the defenders. But because they had proved loyal and ready to die for their master, Hsiang Yu's head was displayed to them. Then the elders of Lu surrendered. As King Huai of Chu had made Hsiang Yu Lord of Lu, and

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Our Reservoir by Wu Jan→

Wu Jan, a young woodcut artist, is art editor of the Paihua Literary Publishing House in Tientsin.

this district was the last to surrender after his death, Hsiang Yu was buried at Kucheng as Lord of Lu. The king conducted the funeral in person, and shed tears.

The king instead of punishing Hsiang Yu's kinsmen, made Hsiang Po Marquis of Shehyang. The marquises of Tao, Pingkao and Hsuanwu, all of whom belonged to the Hsiang clan, were given the royal surname Liu.

The historian comments: I heard from the scholar Chou that King Shun had double pupils in his eyes, and they say Hsiang Yu was the same. Does this mean that he was a descendant of Shun? His rise was remarkably sudden. When the Chin government abused its power, Chen Sheh started a rebellion, and the gallant men who flocked to join him were too many to count. Hsiang Yu had no authority to rely on. He simply took this chance to rise in the countryside, yet within three years he commanded the five states and overthrew the Chin dynasty. He carved up the empire and presented land to kings and barons. He was supreme and styled himself the Overlord. Though he did not remain in power, his case was unique in recent times. He gave up the land within the Pass, wishing to return to Chu; he banished Emperor Yi and set himself up in his stead; and then he compláined that the kings and barons were rebelling against him — this was hardly intelligent. He boasted of his conquests, trusted only his personal judgement and did not follow ancient precedents. Considering himself the overlord, he tried to win the empire by military conquest; but in five years he lost his kingdom and perished at Tungcheng. Yet he never realized his mistake or blamed himself — this showed his stupidity. He was a fool to say that Heaven was against him and it was not his generalship that was at fault!

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

Two Stories by Wang Tung-chao

The Child at the Lakeside

I seldom cared to visit the famous lake although I lived in a city along its shore. Filled with reeds and large craft, it seemed exceptionally narrow and cramped and noisy. Sometimes I went rowing with a few friends in the evening, but every night it was the same bedlam. The clash of cymbals, the high-pitched squeal of fiddles, the unpleasant singing, the men's raucous shouts, the seductive laughter of painted women with sleekly oiled hair, the cries of the vendors on the little pedlar boats . . . swept the placid surface of the lake like a huge wave.

And so, whenever I went to the lake, I would close my eyes and ears to my surroundings and withdraw into my own thoughts. Occasionally, when the sunset colours were reflected on the water, I would stroll along a quiet sector of the lakeside to enjoy the breeze. I would listen to the

Wang Tung-chao was born in Shantung Province in 1897. His works first began to appear in print in 1917. One of the founders of the well-known "Literary Research Association" in the twenties, he wrote a great number of poems, short stories and novels. In the thirties, he was editor of *Literature*, an influential literary journal in Shanghai. After the liberation he became head of the Chinese literature department of Shantung University and in 1954 was elected a deputy to the First National People's Congress. He died in 1958.

frogs singing in the green grass after the rain and watch the twittering birds flit among the branches of the trees. I would feel rather stimulated, moved by a profound consciousness of nature and excited by innumerable far-reaching thoughts.

One day at sunset, violet and purple rays illuminated the emerald trailers of the weeping willows on the dyke. In a little pond beside a temple huge lotus leaves grew higher than a man. Although the lotus flowers, pure as carved white jade, had slowly closed their petals after noon, one or two bees, lured by their scent, still hovered, reluctant to depart. On the dark green water, scarlet clouds shimmered golden; the rapidly lowering rays in their midst were a remarkable variety of hues. Layer upon layer of colour, interweaving and interplaying, shone with a dazzling brilliance.

It had rained heavily for six or seven hours the night before. Today the sky was clear, and I walked alone along the west bank of the lake, enjoying the fresh-washed scene. My leather shoes left sharp prints on the moss-covered flagstones of the inclined path.

In the centre of the lake people were shouting, quarrelling violently. I walked slowly towards the far end of the stone-flagged path. Rustling willow trailers and the water-pepper shrubs that had just come into flower beside the trembling reeds danced in the west breeze at the edge of the water. This was perhaps the coolest and most secluded spot on the entire lake. Except for the steps of an infrequent passer-by or two, the only sound was the twittering of the little birds in the trees greeting the eventide. Frogs in the tangled grass croaked a rhythmic accompaniment.

Although this made me feel somewhat more cheerful than usual, I had no desire to retain the rapidly fading scene. For it reminded me of the words, "the yellow dusk of the dying sun" — a phrase I found rather depressing.

My head lowered in thought, I walked with heavy weary tread. The violet and purple sunset rays were growing dimmer, the light of the sun having already more than half sunk in the reflecting water. Although I knew it was get-

ting late, I did not wish to return home. I sat down on a large white rock by the lake's edge. Listening to the last of the cicadas droning in the late summer night, I was conscious of an air of autumn in the golden haze drifting on the water's surface. I sat alone beneath the willows and watched the yellow light fading in the distance and observed far off the tiny glow of the first lamps of evening. The weather was no longer very hot during the day; with evening came a certain soft coolness. At the same time, probably because of this coolness, I was vaguely stirred by an indefinable excitement.

As I sat wrapped in idle thought, suddenly I heard a rustling behind the willows. It came so unexpectedly in the quiet darkness, I was a bit startled. A moment later, I heard light footsteps threshing through a cove of reeds. I leaped up, circled the willows and emerged on the other side of the cove. It was quite dark by then. I couldn't see clearly. On a mud bank beside the reeds I seemed to perceive a small figure.

"Who's there?" I shouted.

But the shadow made no reply.

Ordinarily, this was a very quiet spot. At night, it was even more deserted. Now, it was growing darker and darker, and the reeds and the willows were rustling faintly. I felt a bit afraid. "Who's there?" I cried again. Just as I was turning to leave, the little dark figure on the mud bank replied in a small weak voice:

"It's me, Little Hsun . . . I'm here . . . fishing."

He practically swallowed the last word and his voice trembled slightly. He sounded like an eleven- or twelve-year-old little boy. I was very suspicious.

"How can you fish after dark?" I asked him. "How can you see?"

Again the small shadow did not reply.

"Where do you live?"

"In Horse Head Lane. . . ."

There was something about that weak voice that sounded familiar. I took a step closer and asked, "Have you always lived there?"

"No," the little boy replied quickly. "I used to live on Peace Street. . . ."

Suddenly I remembered. "Oh! You're the Chens' little boy. . . . Isn't your father a blacksmith?"

The child pulled in his bamboo fishing pole and ran to me, barefoot, down the mud bank. "Yes. . . . Papa is a blacksmith. But who are you?"

I drew nearer and peered at the child's face. I could barely recognize him. What had happened to the darling Little Hsun of five or six! His face was blackened — either by mud or soot. He wore a short homespun blue robe that was well up above his knees, and he reeked of mud and sweat. When he heard me call his name, he stared at me in astonishment. He didn't know who I was.

I remembered him when he was four or five — I was very fond of playing with children then. Whenever I passed his door I saw him sitting on his mother's lap beneath the big shady old elm tree. He always sang me his song about the little rooster.

More than six years had passed, and I was often away from home. People in my family told me that Little Hsun had moved, no one knew exactly where. When I passed his house and saw someone else's name on the door I felt sorry, as if I had lost a constant companion!

Meeting him today again in the cool dusk by the lakeside, how could I help but be surprised? Strangest of all, how could the rosy-cheeked Little Hsun with the clean white hands have become virtually the same as the dirty little beggar boys on the street? His father had been a respectable blacksmith, quite able to look after his child financially.

I led Little Hsun over to the rock and made him sit down beside me. I told him how I often saw him when he was very young, and how I had played with him and made him laugh. He looked at me, bewildered. I began to question him.

"Where is your papa now?"

"At home, you might say. . . ." Little Hsun replied hesitantly. From his expression I could see that he thought this old friend was rather peculiar.

"Is he still working?"

"What? . . . He goes out every day, but he never . . . brings home any money. . . . Working? . . . I don't know."

"What about your mother?"

"Dead," the boy retorted briefly.

I was shocked. But of course it had to be. Little Hsun's mother had been a frail little woman. People said she had borne seven children in thirteen years. Little Hsun was the only one that remained alive. But I hadn't thought her time would come so quickly!

"Who else do you have at home now?"

"I've got a ma, a new one. . . ."

"Oh, is your family poorer than before? You look. . . ."

Little Hsun had always been an intelligent child. At my blunt question, he stared off into the misty distance. Then he dropped his head. After a long time he said in a low voice:

"Sometimes we have nothing to eat. My papa is often away from home. . . ."

"Where does he go?"

"I don't know. . . . He doesn't come home till after breakfast. . . . I hear that he works in an opium den. . . . I don't know where."

His low voice spoke very slowly. I was beginning to understand. I felt compelled to go on.

"How . . . how old is your new ma? Is she good to you?"

"I hear she's only thirty. She comes from a family inside the East Gate. . . ." An uneasy expression stole over his face. I asked him:

"Does she beat you?"

"Her? No, she has no time." He said this decisively.

If the young woman was the sole support of a family like his, she obviously couldn't have much time to spare!

"And what sort of work does she do?"

"Work? She doesn't work. But she gets very busy late every afternoon. That's why I can't stay home. . . . Every evening I come out to this cove of reeds; only here . . . just here. . . ."

"What? . . ."

Little Hsun had learned to take a **grown-up attitude. He** wrinkled his small nose and snorted: **"There are always** guests in our house! Sometimes two or **three in one night.** Sometimes not a single one shows up. . . ."

I was rather shaken. But he continued:

". . . My ma can earn money to buy us food. . . . **When** they come, she chases me out. She never lets me **go back** till very late. My papa knows. He doesn't come **home at** night either. . . ."

By now I knew quite well what kind of environment Little Hsun came from. It was like something in a novel: A tousle-headed child, sallow, thin, with sunken eyes, every night had to wander among the reeds, barefoot. When he grew hungry, he could talk to his friends — the birds and the frogs, or listen to the music of the wind blowing through the reeds.

His father was a waiter in an opium den. His mother — rather his stepmother — in order to keep alive did the bitterest of all things — she sold her flesh.

Only the stars kept Little Hsun company when he returned home in the still, deserted night. But the following day, it was the same all over again. It was too much like a piece of fiction. I couldn't believe it. I remembered him so well as a clean, lovable child. How could he have come to this?

"What kind of people are they," I asked him, "these men who come to your house every night?"

"I don't see them very often," said Little Hsun, "and then only for a moment. Some wear grey military tunics, with army caps cocked over one eye. Some smell of kerosene oil and wear thick silver watch chains on their vests. A few are dressed in long scholars' gowns. Usually we have three or four visitors a night. But sometimes not even one comes to our door."

"Why is that?"

I felt my persistent questioning was very unkind to the child. But I couldn't stop.

Little Hsun laughed. "Don't you know? All the houses in Horse Head Lane are open to visitors every night! . . ."

He laughed again, as if amused that I, an educated person, should understand so little.

There didn't seem to be anything else to ask him. I couldn't bring myself to make this innocent child tell any more of his tragic history. He appeared to have something on his mind; he gazed abstractedly at the stars shining palely through the dusk.

If his own mother were still alive, perhaps things would be different, I mused. The life this poor woman who is his present mother leads is no better than hell!

Ah, the family! The family organization and the pressure of the times, the urgent need to make a living! I had come for an idle stroll along the lakeside after the rain. But instead of finding relaxation, I ended with many troublesome problems knotted in my breast.

Just think of it. Suffering hunger and discomfort, a child must come to a cove of reeds at dusk and remain half the night. His mother, because the burden of supporting the whole family rests on her, must endure endlessly the worst of all humiliations. Such a life is less than human! The poor in our present society can take only this hopeless, dead-end road!

I was consumed with doubts. I felt agitated, unable to sit still. And the lakeside scene which had given me such fresh, soothing impression had long since been swallowed up by the darkness.

Knowing that Little Hsun did not dare to return home yet, I didn't have the heart to leave him to watching the starlight alone by the shore. I sat down beside him beneath the willows. Though I wanted to question him further, I felt that it would be too cruel. In silence, I reflected on the fact that a child is moulded by his environment . . . and I trembled for Little Hsun and all other children like him!

Suddenly an agitated call drifted over from the opposite bank. "Little Hsun. . . . Where are you? . . ." I jumped to my feet. The child was so frightened that he dropped his fishing pole into the water and began hurrying along a small path. I was completely bewildered; I didn't know

what had happened. Just then a middle-aged man burst through the reeds, took Little Hsun by the hand, and rushed off with him. I heard the man say:

"Your father was arrested by the police tonight. . . . They raided the opium den. . . . We couldn't tell your mother. Master Wu is calling on her. Who would dare to disturb him! . . . Child, you were the only one we neighbours could notify. . . ."

Their shadows gradually disappeared into the night, and the man's voice faded away.

Slowly, I trudged home. Few people walked abroad in the dense night mists. There was a weight on my chest, as if the atmospheric pressure that evening was exceptionally heavy. The stars that guided me were very pale, not nearly so bright as usual.

August 1922

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

Fifty Yuan

He left the group of people in the field and walked listlessly along the poplar-lined ditch. The afternoon July sun was like a fiery umbrella overhead. Beads of sweat rolled from his brow, soaking even the white towel slung across his left shoulder. But he was too abstracted to mop his face.

As a matter of fact, the scorching weather didn't bother him in the least. But inside him, something was crushing his heart like a smouldering grenade, making it difficult for him to breathe.

Nearly sixty, he had always been a simple obedient man who knew his place. He might have an occasional argument with a neighbour over how big the coming wheat harvest would be, or how many eggs a chicken could lay in a week. But to the long-robed gentry, he never said a contrary word. His soft voice and lowered eyes when addressing them won the approval of many.

"Never gets above himself . . . quite respectable . . . very steady . . . a fine servant!" For dozens of years this was the praise he won from masters everywhere as he stood with head bowed.

At the meeting which the ward leader had called in the field, the old man had been dealt a sudden blow. Now, no matter how he pondered, he could see no way out of the dilemma.

"Hey, Old Pu, where've you been? Just look at you — all perspiring. . . ."

A young man was crossing a half-collapsed old stone bridge at the far end of the ditch. Wearing a rough straw hat, a white homespun tunic and blue shorts, he advanced cheerfully towards Old Pu on bare feet.

"Ah, ah . . . from Little Mou's field. We had a meeting. Hai! They said we need guns. . . ."

"Guns? You're not bandits; what do you want guns for?" the young man asked breezily.

"Wu Teh, don't pretend you don't know. You're wandering around town all day, there isn't anything you haven't heard. . . . I'm worried. What are we going to do? The ward chief says the county magistrate came to town the day before yesterday and ordered that every one join the Agricultural Association; whoever owns five *mou* of land or more has to buy a rifle. They'll be made locally. . . ." His brow furrowed unhappily, Old Pu halted beneath a tree.

The young man pulled a fan of woven rushes from his belt and plied it vigorously. His screwed up ruddy face relaxed, and he laughed mockingly. "Of course. The Agricultural Association is a watchdog for its members' property. It's no use without a lot of weapons. A splendid

organization! . . . And unless they put the pressure on, who would be willing to spend money for rifles? . . ."

"Tell me, Wu Teh, are our local guns any good?"

"Why not? A few villages chip in and build a forge. We have excellent craftsmen. . . . I've fired some of our locally made rifles. They shoot quite straight. . . . I hear they're fifty yuan each. Is that right?"

"Yes. A forge has already been set up in the courtyard of the temple in town. They've got three blacksmiths working there now. For fifty yuan you get a rifle and a few dozen rounds of bullets. . . . It's not a bad idea, Wu Teh, but where can families like ours raise the money? . . ."

"Leave me out of this, dear Old Pu. I'm not in your class. You've land of your own and you're doing nicely. Fifty yuan for a gun shouldn't mean a thing to you. Naturally the ward chief couldn't ask me to attend that meeting." His laugh sounded tinged with both satisfaction and envy. Wu Teh knocked some ants off a poplar leaf with his fan. He seemed entirely unconcerned with Old Pu's worries.

"It's not fair. We've got less than four and a half *mou*, including the land we've rented. Only two *mou* are our own. What are they worth? Where will I get fifty yuan? This spring we had a big hailstorm; I may not even harvest enough to cover the rent this autumn. . . . I don't know who the ward chief's been listening to. He's put me down for a gun and given me ten days to pay! I've nothing to say. How can we refuse to obey the order of the county magistrate? . . ." Old Pu was extremely agitated. He was hoping Wu Teh would at least give him a little sympathy.

"Dear Master Pu, really . . . we're all old neighbours. No one can conceal his wealth," the young man teased. "If I went for a gun, they wouldn't give it to me. But you've been doing quite well on your land. All those years you've been earning money as a servant too — everybody knows. And nobody in your family spends any money. Of course the ward chief must have got wind of it."

He knocked a leaf down with his fan and ground it to a pulp in the hot soil with the rough sole of his bare foot.

Only now did Old Pu take his towel and wipe the sweat from his face. His eyes staring dully, he said nothing.

"Respectful words aren't enough; official edicts must be obeyed!" Wu Teh cried sarcastically. "They're pushing very hard to get people into the Agricultural Association. Three or four are being held down at the district. I hear if they don't pay up soon they'll be paraded through the streets in disgrace. It's much better to buy a gun to guard your property. If I had fifty yuan, I'd certainly buy one of those playthings. The trouble is I don't have any property to guard. Take a broad view, Master Pu. Surely you want to be ready in case the bandits call! . . ."

"If they broke into my home, what could they find of any value?" Old Pu's sweat, running from his cheeks and neck, dripped faster.

"Of any value? Let's look at it this way. . . . If I were a bandit, I'd definitely put you on my list. Who cares whether a family is rich or poor? Anything you can get your hands on is sure to be worth a little money. You think we're still back a few years ago when the bandits only raided families rich enough to pay ransom?"

These words from the irreverent young drifter made Old Pu most unhappy, but he was unable to refute them. He didn't know where he was going to raise the fifty yuan, and if the bandits thought the same way as this young fellow and really put him on their list, what was he to do? Another smouldering grenade was added to his heart.

"Why worry? Just live from day to day. What are you trying to do — make rich men out of those two sons of yours? . . ."

Wu Teh tucked his fan back in his belt and airily strolled off along the ditch.

The old man looked after him, unable to summon the courage to call him back. His feet seemed rooted to the spot; he breathed with difficulty. He could see the harsh visage of the ward chief before his eyes. Old Pu had known him for years. Originally he came from a run-

down family that wasn't even as well off as Old Pu's; he had been a worthless idler who floated about the teahouses, carrying a pretty thrush in a cage, learnedly examining and discussing the merits of various imported bicycles. As soon as he became ward chief he began to put on airs; he was even more pompous than the county magistrate on a tour of the villages.

At the meeting in the field just now the ward chief had been ruthlessly inflexible. "Fifty yuan, ten days to pay. If you don't produce the money you'd better not count on our being old neighbours. Official business must be done in an official manner. I can't be responsible for the consequences. . . ." His voice had been loud and he made a chopping motion with his hand — like an executioner's axe. . . .

Recalling the ward chief's behaviour, Old Pu momentarily forgot about his worries over raising the money and the danger of the bandits putting him on their list. The ward chief's high and mighty airs, his overbearing manner, truly had exceeded the old man's expectations.

He raised his head and glanced towards the west. The sun was nearly set. It was covered by blood-red clouds. Their grisly colour startled the old man.

On the road back to his home, which was half a mile from the town, he kept looking at those blood-red clouds. A bad omen! The smouldering grenades in his heart knocked against each other uneasily.

Old Pu's home in the outskirts of town was not in a village but beside a grove of pines which enclosed a cemetery. Pu's father had settled there as a squatter and was permitted to remain by the owner on condition that he and his descendants take care of the cemetery for ever.

But the original owner's family had gone down financially, and now the cemetery was shared by others. Except for a few old cedars with hollow centres, most of the trees had been cut down and replaced by white poplars. Several of the grave mounds had long since been levelled and their gravestones demolished. Weeds and wild grass grew everywhere. Although Old Pu lived there techni-

cally as a care-taker, little remained of either the graves or the trees that he could care for.

His house consisted of a few rooms in a thatched shack with mud walls, surrounded by a bramble fence. Inside the few slats that formed his compound gate was a hamper of grain. Because the courtyard was so small, the brushwood they used for fuel had to be piled outside the gate. In summer and autumn evenings he and his family would sit on large stones and chat, soothed by the rustle of the cedars and poplars.

Townsfolk claimed the cemetery was haunted, and some people urged him to move. But Old Pu hated to give up land he used rent free, and he certainly couldn't take the house with him. So he remained. As to the ghosts, not only didn't Old Pu believe in them, even the children frequently passed the cemetery after dark without the slightest fear.

That night at supper, Old Pu ate very little, and he said nothing. His elder son knew he had been to a meeting in town and, observing his distressed manner, was able to guess pretty well what was wrong. There was no need to ask. He would wait patiently till the old man was ready to talk. Something troublesome had surely occurred. But the younger son, after having finished off two bowls of millet, couldn't restrain his curiosity.

"What's wrong, *tieh*,* tell us. What happened? They're squeezing us farmers again, aren't they!"

Old Pu knocked the ashes out of his long black pipe against the stool he was sitting on and shook his head.

"It's strange. What have people like us got to protect? And there are no marauding soldiers passing through this part of the country," he muttered. He looked at his two sons, sitting bare-torsoed in the pale moonlight, and sighed.

"Young Chu," he said, "you're still immature. Your brother knows much more than you. You're always so rash. It won't do nowadays. It's too easy to get into trouble.

*Tieh — father.

. . . Your grandfather and I worked as servants all our lives. . . . Two generations. . . . By humbly serving others our family reached its present status. But we can lose it through one little blunder. We'd have to leave here. . . ."

The old man's mind had wandered far from the problem of having to raise money to buy a gun. He was taking this opportunity to give his younger son a lecture on social proprieties.

"How am I rash, *tieh*? I've been sticking to the fields, planting, pulling weeds. I haven't provoked anyone." Twenty years old, tall and strong, Young Chu was quick to resent injustice. He wasn't at all docile like his father and elder brother.

"Don't think just because you're sticking to the fields that nothing can go wrong. The way the world is today, anything can happen! At my age I can pretty well guarantee that I won't make any slips. But you, Young Chu . . . I'm always worried about you! . . ."

The brothers had rarely heard their father speak so gloomily. It made them feel uneasy.

Young Chu's brother was called Pu Kuei. Although past forty, he knew little except tilling the soil. He seldom even went into town. Old Pu was the servant of a prominent family in town and he gave the running of his farm over to this obedient elder son.

Young Chu was a primary school graduate. Of course he was much better informed than Pu Kuei. But the family had been unable to afford any further schooling and at the age of sixteen he had joined his elder brother in the fields. Always a boy of spirit, Young Chu had some idea of the concept of country and citizenship. Although he toiled honestly as a farmer, he was not timid like his *tieh* and Big Brother.

This boldness disturbed Old Pu. He was sorry he had ever let the boy go to school. Old Pu placed a strict control on Young Chu and forbade him to have dealings with anyone outside the family. The boy spoke too freely — that was the easiest way to get into trouble. Old Pu had

learned this while serving two generations of masters. Conditions in the countryside had become especially unsettled in the last few years. There was a lot of seizing of conscripts and executing of suspected bandits. If you were the least bit implicated, you and your entire family could be wiped out in a flash.

The gentry in town were proudly overweening; it was even more dangerous to cross the touchy young squires in the countryside. Young Chu's rash manner and bold way of speaking at a time like this was therefore a source of considerable concern to his honest old father. Today it had started a long train of thought in Old Pu, and he had felt constrained to speak to the boy about it.

Young Chu sat in the tree shadow cast by the pale moonlight, one leg resting on a protruding root.

"I can't help it if you're worried about me! Three years ago when I wanted to go beyond the Great Wall to the Northeast, you wouldn't let me. . . ."

"Young Chu." Big Brother, afraid their *tieh* would get angry, interrupted. But after calling him by name, he said nothing further.

"Big Brother, you, of course, are a paragon! Even if *tieh* doesn't say it, the neighbours will. . . . As for me, though I'm not a thief and I don't run with the bandits, everyone's worried about me. It seems I say disagreeable things. How shall I be agreeable — by speaking softly and always remembering to address the gentry as Elder Master this or Younger Master that? I haven't got that kind of mouth. I just won't do it! Is that a crime?"

The young man's voice kept rising, and with it his easily excited temper.

Ordinarily Old Pu would have brought his hands down sharply on his knees and scolded Young Chu. But today he only puffed hard on his pipe, the embers glowing and fading in the darkness.

The female members of the family were sitting in the doorway of the house. One was Big Brother's wife, another was the brothers' nineteen-year-old sister, the third was Big Brother's little daughter. Pu Kuei also had a

three-year-old infant son, who had long since gone to sleep on the bed.

"Young Chu, . . ." began his sister-in-law. She was an intelligent alert country woman who had been the mistress of the household ever since Old Pu's wife died several years before. She addressed the younger brother in a conciliatory tone.

"*Tieh* is only trying to do his best for you," she said. "A clod like your Big Brother — *tieh* never bothers to say anything to him. But you're educated. Some day you'll prosper and support the whole family. *Tieh* has worked hard all his life and he's learned a thing or two. You're still young. What's wrong with knowing how to get along with people? These are difficult times. *Tieh*'s got a lot of experience. You ought to listen to him."

"Daughter-in-law, I've always said you're a very bright woman. She's right, Young Chu. Do you think I'm scolding you just for amusement? . . . The troubled times are starting all over again; don't you think I can see it? After all, I've lived a few dozen more years than you. I'm not so useless as you think! . . . About the Northeast, just think what would happen if you left. I'm old, and have to work in town every day. Your brother and sister-in-law are here at home. For generations we've relied on the land for our food. Do you think in two or three years you could come back from the Northeast laden with gold? It's not that easy! You shouldn't take such a simple view of things. Labour is expensive. At harvest time we'd have to pay a hired hand about a yuan a day if you weren't here. Where would I get the money? . . . But you're so impetuous. All you can think of is action . . . action! Hai! . . ."

Old Pu rapped his pipe out against a rock while Young Chu looked sulkily up at the moon, saying nothing. His elder brother said even less.

A breeze blew through the branches of the old cedars. It was pleasantly cool out in the country.

"I'm not looking for an argument, Young Chu, you must understand that. I'm so upset, I couldn't even eat supper

tonight. You're young. You don't let me say two words before you jam them back down my throat. And you won't talk sense; you just argue for the sake of arguing. Is it any wonder I'm upset?"

Daughter-in-law ladled out three bowls of cool millet gruel. She handed the first one to Old Pu.

"*Tieh*, don't be like younger brother; talk about something important. Tell us what you learned in town today."

"Hai," the old man sighed, "they want us to pay out fifty yuan!" He sounded completely dispirited.

"Fifty yuan? What for? We don't have to contribute to a ransom; the bandits haven't kidnapped anybody. . . ." Daughter-in-law stood beside a small date tree.

"It's a new rule. The ward chief gave us only ten days to pay. That's even less time than we get from the magistrate's office to pay the grain tax."

Starting with the meeting in the field, Old Pu slowly related everything that had occurred that day. Finally, he filled his pipe and lit it, as if seeking consolation in the smoke.

"What a world! No one will listen to reason!" Young Chu cried. "It's bad enough we don't have enough land, to say nothing of money . . . but suppose we take that gun, *tieh* — you say I'm not practical — suppose our family has such a gun, with us living alone out here in the country, if the bandits come, do you think one rifle can stop them? Actually all we'd be doing was getting it ready to make them a present of it! . . ."

"Keep your voice down. You never know who's listening outside the fence." Big Brother was always cautious.

Old Pu could think of nothing to say in refutation of his younger son; he was too dizzy with the prospect of being paraded through the streets in disgrace for not being able to raise the fifty yuan within the ten-day limit. His family had lived beside this cemetery undisturbed for years. Even though, a few years before, the bandits were much more active than now, they had never bothered him. What was the use of arming? Every one knew that his family owned only two *mou* and that the other few *mou* were

rented. Under the circumstances, wouldn't buying a gun stir up trouble? He had no money, but the bandits might very well come for the rifle. A new weapon was worth more to them than ten men. Spending those fifty yuan would be the equivalent of hanging a placard on his bramble fence inviting disaster to descend from the heavens! He recalled the ward chief's parting words:

"Every gun will be stamped with the seal of the town government. The weapons may not be transferred. When a man is sent out on military service, he must bring his rifle with him. If you lose it . . . beware of the law against dealing with the bandits! Even if you're not convicted, you'll certainly be under suspicion!"

At the time every one had been so worried about having to raise fifty yuan, that few paid any attention to the rule on care of the gun after you got it. But now Old Pu remembered.

Beset with this additional headache, the old man smoked pipe after pipe. He had nothing to say to his rash young offspring.

"*Tieh*, you know the town well after being a servant there so many years. Isn't there anyone you can speak to? How about the head of the Agricultural Association? Why not say we're willing to pay ten yuan or so if we don't have to take the gun?" This was clever Daughter-in-law's proposition.

"Mmm . . . not a bad idea! Every one says I'm honest, and an old man always gets some respect. But I've already had one refusal. . . ."

"You spoke to the Association head?" asked Big Brother.

"Yes. He's a whole generation younger than my present master, and a very nice-spoken young man. I've known him since he was a babe in arms. Of course I went to see him. He was very reasonable."

Young Chu, who took quite a different view of the matter, brusquely demanded, "What do you mean, reasonable? What did he say?"

"He said the question of who has to buy a rifle and who doesn't is decided by the various ward chiefs. He's head

of the Agricultural Association; he can't interfere. . . . The county magistrate is going to enforce the rule strictly. No one dares to do any private favours. . . . That's what he said."

"Humph, so he can't interfere! And what about the fact that we have less than five *mou*? Why aren't they strict about that part of the rule?"

"I asked the ward chief about that at the meeting. It didn't do any good. The ward chief said he had made a careful investigation. Everybody told him we had enjoyed several good years. We need protection, he says, our money won't be spent in vain. Even though we've less than five *mou*, we still have to buy the gun."

Old Pu's torn black tobacco pouch was empty, but he mechanically dipped his pipe bowl into it.

"An old neighbour . . . how could he be so unreasonable!" Daughter-in-law sighed.

Her husband, seated on a stone, also sighed deeply. The old man continued:

"It's the same for every family — not just for ours alone. Whoever violates the law will be punished according to law. Several have been arrested in town already. I never dreamed anyone would be so cruel as to put us on such a list. I've been careful all my life, never saying a cross word, and this is my retribution! Naturally, if I had been a rash blundering youngster like you, Young Chu, we'd have met with worse disaster long ago. . . ."

"Well, since there's no way out, we'd better start thinking of how to raise the money," said Daughter-in-law. "You shouldn't keep criticizing younger brother. I'm sure he feels just as badly as you do."

Young Chu jumped to his feet. "We can't harvest enough to eat, but we've got to buy a gun, do we? Good! It's no damn use running around begging for favours. Anybody can fire a gun. When we get ours, I'll be responsible. Military service, killing — great fun! We'll go broke this year whether we buy the gun or not. What do you say, *tieh*?"

"And the money?" Big Brother asked dejectedly.

Young Chu only laughed scornfully, but made no reply. Dark clouds concealed the moon and the wind began to blow. A storm was brewing.

It was pitch dark. Dully, Old Pu sat tapping his bronze pipe bowl against a stone.

No one said a word.

Old Pu borrowed some money and bought the rifle. A month passed.

It was the night of the second day after the Autumn Festival.

With the build-up of the Agricultural Association and the issuance of many guns, it was possible to set up a regular rotation system of guard watches. The heads of the Association were commended by the county magistrate; there had been no disturbances during the past month and they were very happy. In the light of the Autumn Festival moon, they threw a big outdoor banquet where they drank large quantities of potent sorghum whisky. Then they repaired to a club in town for an all-night session of gambling and carousing. Their guards were also treated to food and drink, and every one was extremely pleased.

Now, two nights later, a small local personage invited the head of the Agricultural Association and the chief of his ward to a drinking party, continuing the holiday atmosphere of the Autumn Festival. The place where the party was held was a hundred odd paces from the house in which Old Pu worked as a servant. Only a low wall separated the two residences.

Even before darkness fell, a dozen or more armed guards patrolled the lane. Their masters had already joined the host; they were inside playing boisterous drinking games. All this was a rare and exciting event for the quiet little lane. The housewives came out and stood in their doorways, discussing the fine clothes of the officials; children raced to and fro; several large dogs frolicked among the crowd. Old Pu, who was spending the night in town, saw all that occurred very clearly.

Not far beyond, two turns down the lane, was the town wall, topped here by a cannon tower in which a few soldiers always kept a vigil through the night. The bodyguards of the celebrating officials, having no place else to go, congregated in the stone tower, some thirty feet above the ground. They played cards and drank tea to while away the time.

The party evidently was going to last all night. From the wide-open doors came sounds of music and wild laughter. The revelry was clearly audible to the men in the cannon tower.

It must have been some time after ten that Old Pu blew out the lamp in his small servant's room and prepared to retire. Ever since the previous month, he had begun suffering from insomnia, an ailment he had never known before. Conscious of the increasing debility of old age, he was filled with gloomy forebodings. Although he had borrowed the fifty yuan interest free on the strength of being an old and respectable servant of the community, the debt had to be repaid by the end of the month.

But the autumn harvest had been poor. After deducting a portion to pay the hired hand and something for the coming winter, there might not be enough grain left for the rent. Although Big Brother and his wife worked hard day and night, what was the use? Where would Old Pu get the money to clear the debt and pay the rent? That Young Chu had learned to fire the rifle merely added to the old man's disquiet. All sorts of reasons now kept him from sleeping peacefully. In a few score days he acquired many new white hairs.

Moonlight shining through the lattice-work paper window illuminated the old man's woven grass sleeping mat, increasing his irritation. The merry-making of the gentry a few walls away grated on his ears. Opening his shirt, Old Pu massaged his protruding ribs and gazed at the centre of the earthen floor. A dizzy spell nearly sent him rolling from the bed. About to lie down and rest, suddenly from the south he heard a succession of shots. Dogs

in the lane began to bark and people ran. Old Pu leaped from the bed and rushed outside.

"To the cannon tower! To the cannon tower! The shots were from the south!" Several bodyguards raced down the lane towards the town wall.

Most people were still awake. They hurried out to see what was wrong.

Dozens of men peered from the battlements of the tower. More timid individuals gathered at the foot of the wall to listen for news. The firing, due south, could be heard clearly. It was not very heavy, only a shot or two every few minutes. Those high in the tower could even hear shouts and curses.

The residents of the lane knew the trouble was outside the town wall. No one had been caught napping. The town had armed guards and the bandits didn't dare to attack the town directly. So people were not particularly frightened.

Only Old Pu was upset. The two grenades in his heart seemed to explode! He had no time to think. An unexpected surge of strength brought him to the cannon tower on the town wall. Young guardsmen were squatting behind the battlements, aiming their rifles. Old Pu stood and watched a few paces to their rear.

The moon emerged, bathing the fields and scattered trees in light. Then a white layer of clouds covered the silvery orb and dimmed its radiance. Dogs barked, and to the southwest a flame glowed and bullets cut red streaks in the night. No question about it — the firing was near his home beside the old cemetery! The bullets flew from more than one direction. There was a lot of shouting, though he couldn't distinguish the words, as if many attackers had encircled the place.

Stupified, Old Pu leaned half-way out of the battlement. Luckily one of the guardsmen pulled him back.

"It's you, old uncle! Pretty risky. Squat down, quickly, quickly! Bullets have no eyes. What's the use of looking? It's your family that's in trouble, isn't it? I knew it the moment I heard the first shot. . . ."

Old Pu seemed not to have heard him. He shouted: "Save them. . . . Save them! Brothers, masters, I'm ruined! . . . Two small children at home . . . save them! . . ."

"Quit yelling. They're liable to shoot in this direction."

The well-meaning guard insisted on dragging Old Pu down to a lower platform.

"Are you only here to watch the show? Your guns, why don't you fire your guns? Send a few dozen rounds into the bandits . . . scare them off!" Old Pu cried in a strange voice.

"How can we do that, Uncle Pu? Hurry and find the head of the Agricultural Association. We can't act without his orders. What's actually happening out there? Who knows how many men they've got?"

"Quick. . . . Bring the officials up here for a look. They'll surely know what to do. The party isn't over yet. They must be still there."

This forceful suggestion sobered the old man, wounded and dazed by the exploded grenades in his heart. Without a word, he turned and hurried down the ramp. There was surprising vigour in his legs. Ordinarily he would have had to stop and rest several times to mount and descend the wall. Now, even if he tumbled he probably would be unaware of it.

It proved unnecessary for Old Pu to seek out the officials. A number of them, plus the chief of the local ward, came running towards Old Pu, cocked pistols in their hands.

Their whisky-induced bravado had long since been dispelled by the sound of the shooting. Followed by several armed guards, they hastened to the cannon tower, Old Pu panting in their wake.

They agreed it was Old Pu's house that was under fire. Streaks of flame and flashlight beams gleamed among the surrounding old cedars and white poplars.

Someone suggested that a dozen or so guards rush out and give battle and save Old Pu's family. But one of the officials said:

"It's nearly midnight. Do you know how many men they've got? Maybe it's just a trick to lure us out and leave the town undefended."

"Would they dare act so boldly," said another hesitant voice, "if they didn't have all the roads blocked?"

Hearing this colloquy by the officials, the guards looked at one another, bewildered.

Old Pu dropped to his knees.

"Masters . . . brothers . . . save them! . . . Think of my two little grandchildren! I'm just an old bag of bones. What use is letting them die and keeping me alive?" He sounded as if he wanted to cry but couldn't.

"This is no time for personal sympathies. Can you guarantee that if we open the town gate the bandits won't come swarming in? Don't you realize how many lives, how many weapons, we can lose here? Save them, sure, you're frightened witless. But who will dare to take the responsibility? All right . . . go see the head of the Association. He's still in the parlour. See what he has to say."

A thirty-year-old town official gave Old Pu this advice. He was the chief of Old Pu's ward. "Come on," he said. "We'll go together. This is no joking matter!"

"Chief, when we formed the Agricultural Association didn't you say that whenever any of us gets in trouble . . . every one will turn out to help? My family's sole protection is that one locally made rifle! . . ." Only because Old Pu was hopping with anxiety did he dare speak so boldly.

"Hurry. Take him down to see the Association head. . . . Who can argue with you about the rules at a time like this! . . ." Someone pushed Old Pu from the rear, then quickly squatted down again behind the battlements.

Just then several torches appeared at the edge of the grove and the firing became very heavy, bullets whistling madly from all directions.

The flames grew larger as the brush and firewood stacked outside Old Pu's gate burst into blaze.

"How awful! They're finished! The bandits have set the place on fire! That's the end of Old Pu's family! . . ." Some of the guards were very agitated. But without orders they dared not sally forth, nor even fire from the wall.

The shooting continued. Flames were now leaping on Old Pu's thatched roof, their glow reflecting redly on the faces of the men in the tower.

By the time Old Pu and the ward chief brought the order of the Association head up to the tower, the fire diagonally opposite was erupting like a small volcano, accompanied by the crash of collapsing beams and the crackle of rifle shots.

The ward chief relayed the order of the head of the Agricultural Association, "Fire a few dozen rounds from here, but the town gate is to remain closed. . . ."

At this, the impatient guards opened fire with a will, pouring rifle and pistol shots into the perimeter of the volcano.

It was already nearly one o'clock in the morning.

While the men in the tower were firing so excitedly, and so blindly, Old Pu suddenly collapsed at their feet. This was his third trip up the wall; he was exhausted. Now, seeing his home go up in smoke, he fainted.

After two intense volleys, one of the guards blew the bugle call to assemble. The mournful notes aroused the entire town. Immediately, the shooting around the grove stopped. The bandits, perhaps afraid that the guards and the armed members of Agricultural Association would all turn out, abandoned the attack and fled.

Fortunately, the flames of the volcano did not spread. Before long, the blaze gradually died.

It was still dark when Old Pu revived. He pleaded that the town gate be opened so that he could go and see the charred remains of his home. At last his request was granted. The first to go with him was the town's famed drifter, Wu Teh.

They were followed, of course, by armed officials, leading their troops.

Except for what had been destroyed in the fire, Old Pu had lost no property. His bramble fence and wooden gate had been reduced to ashes; the roof and the ox pen were gone; the mud wall of the house had collapsed in two places. Inside, Old Pu found his elder son lying dead on the earthen floor with a bullet hole in his left temple. Young Chu sat leaning at an angle on the brick platform bed. A bullet had gone through his left leg and he was unable to move. Luckily neither bone nor ligament had been hit. The locally made rifle rested across his thighs, its bullets completely expended.

The women were in another room, dazed with fear. They had not been hurt, but Old Pu's grandson, who was lying on the bed, had been hit by a bullet in the buttocks. His face yellow, the child was so terrified he was unable to cry.

In addition, a small hamper of grain and a haystack had also been consumed by the flames.

The incident provoked considerable discussion in town. Some said that Old Pu, although he pretended to be poor, had hidden wealth which attracted the bandits. Others said it had nothing to do with wealth; it was definitely an act of vengeance. Most people felt the bandits had come to capture the rifle! As to the members of the family itself, none of them was able to say why they should be made to suffer such grievous losses, with dead and wounded.

The head of the Agricultural Association and the young men who strutted around town with their guns all day had nothing but admiration for Young Chu. With less than a hundred bullets, and aided only slightly by Big Brother and his crude home-made fowling piece, he had held the bandits at bay; they had set fire because they were unable to enter the house. Who said the Agricultural Association was no use? Old Pu had been unwilling to buy the rifle at first, but hadn't it saved his family from complete annihilation? . . . What if the bandits had captured one of the family and demanded ransom? Wouldn't Old Pu's loss have been much greater?

To the town officials the incident afforded conclusive proof of the excellence of the locally manufactured rifles.

Young Chu's weapon had fired dozens of rounds without going bad. The products of the local gunsmiths were plainly in no way inferior to those of the army arsenal. The officials called a meeting the same day and framed a report to the county, then discussed what steps to take against the bandits and how to intensify self-defence measures. Finally, they passed a resolution to give Old Pu a few score yuan as a condolence award.

Everything proceeded smoothly. Two days later, people seemed to have forgotten the tragedy. It was hardly ever mentioned.

The house which Old Pu's family had occupied for three generations was no longer livable. They couldn't afford to erect a new one, nor did they have the courage to face another possible raid by the bandits. His heart shattered by the grenades which had burst in his chest, after much seeking and pleading, the old man was finally permitted to use a shack in town as a temporary dwelling.

A month later, Young Chu's leg had healed. But the wound in the child's backside became infected. Only after three probings in the foreign-style drug store was the bullet recovered. The child was very young, and he lost a lot of blood. Exactly thirty-five days after the bandit attack, the innocent child followed his simple honest father into the earth.

Medical expenses came to several score yuan.

Old Pu had acquired a new debt before the original one had been paid. By selling his two *mou* of land, he managed to pull through the disaster. Although his clever daughter-in-law was so ill she couldn't rise from her bed, the doctor assured him he needn't worry — there would be no third death in the family.

Nothing further was heard of the condolence award promised by the Agricultural Association. People urged Old Pu to go to the officials and make an earnest plea that they carry out their resolution. But the old man was never one to question the conduct of his superiors.

"Never mind," he said. "I can afford it. The two of them . . . they're dead already. To take the money . . . would go against my conscience! . . ."

His anger was directed against the gun. He became furious whenever he saw it standing behind the door. One day he ordered Young Chu to take the accursed weapon and go with him to the ward chief. Old Pu told the ward chief he didn't care about the money, but he couldn't keep the rifle any longer. Now that he was living in town, he had less use for it than ever.

But the ward chief wouldn't hear of it.

"We can't let you set such an example. Everybody would be turning their guns in, the next thing you know! That would be the end of our Association. Even though you're living in town, someone in your family will still have to shoulder that rifle in military service when the time comes. You're all muddled, old man. If it weren't for that gun, Young Chu wouldn't be alive today. . . ."

In the end, Young Chu had to carry the root of their troubles back to the dilapidated old shack.

Autumn.

Old Pu could no longer work as a servant. His appetite was poor. All day he stared up at the sky with blurry eyes, mumbling incomprehensibly to himself. He was also much deafer.

Young Chu had not much to do after his leg healed. They had sold their two *mou* of land to pay off their debts. Although they still cultivated some rented land, there was little work in the fields this season of the year anyway. Young Chu was seldom at home. The townspeople had praised him for his marksmanship, his courage. But what was the use of fine words? The family was in difficult straits. Some days they had only one meal, in the morning. A healthy young fellow like Young Chu — how could he stand going around half starved?

He spent a lot of time wandering about with Wu Teh. The old man didn't seem to have the energy to interfere.

Ever since Wu Teh had carried him out of the burning building on his back, Young Chu realized that he was not just a propertyless unemployed drifter. Although many people said Wu Teh talked too much, Young Chu got along with him very well. Besides, Young Chu found his home unbearable. Here was only idleness and an atmosphere of hardship and tragedy.

One dark frosty night, while the town was still asleep, there was a low whistle outside the shack. Young Chu immediately bounded through the door.

"Wu Teh, did you arrange everything? . . ." he asked excitedly.

"Idiot, of course! There isn't one of those birds who I don't know well enough to punch on the arm or slap his backside. How could I fail? Take a look at this!" From his tattered jacket he drew out a gleaming metal object with a barrel a foot long.

"I've got bullets, too," he added. "Go get your gun. We've a place to go. I made all the contacts. . . ."

Young Chu went inside and brought out the ill-fated rifle.

"It's just that . . . the old man. . . ." He looked through the window with tear-dimmed eyes.

"Can you support him? No, you can't. . . . It's better to leave. . . . Maybe some day you'll come back and they'll make you chief of the guards! . . ." Wu Teh was always joking.

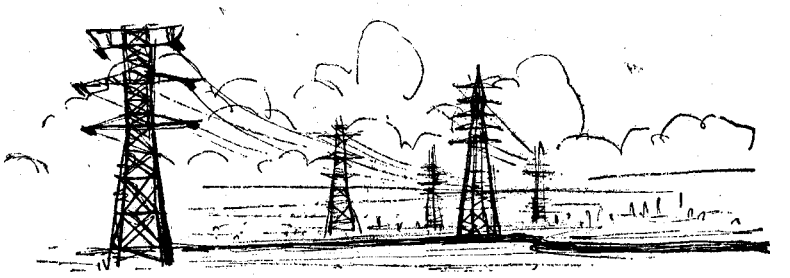
"Hurry," he said. "I've tied the rope in place. If we wait too long, we're liable to run into someone and not be able to get off the town wall. . . ."

Young Chu said nothing, but followed his guide to a new life into the dense mist.

The following morning it was discovered that the guards in the cannon tower had lost an automatic pistol and a bandolier of bullets. Also gone were the disaster-inducing rifle for which Old Pu had paid fifty yuan and his son Young Chu.

July 15, 1933

Translated by Sidney Shapiro



LI YU-YUNG

The Electrician's Song

Strumming on my guitar,
I sing my song.
Yellow River, Yellow River,
Look up at me here!

The hills are high, but the hills lie at my feet;
The river is wide, but my wires have crossed the river;
My fingers, plucking telegraph wires,
Broadcast my cheerful song to distant parts.

Let the wind blow, let rain pelt,
They wash the dust from my shoulders;
Let the sun blaze fierce as fire,
My bronze skin is a present from the sun.

To make a mighty symphony for the work-site,
Time flies through my pliers as I make fast the lines;
My time-table is not the calendar
But the number of new telegraph poles on the hills.

Often I strum my guitar,
Sending my song to the heart of this great land:
Now spring has come to the plains,
Boatloads of telegraph poles have crossed the river!

Translated by Gladys Yang

Poetry can arouse men, open their eyes, draw them together and voice their complaints.

Confucius

Lu Hsun on Literature and Art

On Using Old Forms

To my mind, provided we can discuss it dispassionately, this question of "using old forms" is well worth studying today; yet right at the outset Mr. Erh-ya has attacked it.* According to him, the results of the last ten years' "experiments in new forms" constitute "virtual surrender" and "opportunism" — this is chanting an incantation to overcome your enemy, or at the very least bespattering him with mud. But Mr. Erh-ya is an honest man for at the same time he is translating *The Form and Content of Art*,** and once that is published it will refute all his heated accusations. Besides, some of his statements are correct, as when he says that we should not mechanically separate experiments in new forms from the adaptation of old forms.

Of course this remark is no more than common sense, as it is to state that content and form cannot be mechanically separated, and as it should be to state that writing cannot be mechanically separated from the people. We "adapt" old forms — though Mr. Erh-ya calls this "applauding the whole of past art" — merely because we must experiment with new forms. The adoption of certain features is not the same as applauding the whole, for no progressive artist

* Referring to an article by Nieh Kan-nu published on April 24, 1934 in a newspaper supplement, *Trends*.

**A monograph by the Japanese writer Koreto Kurahara.

could use the same concepts (contents). He might consider adopting certain features, however, because he knows that writing cannot be mechanically separated from the public. The time has passed when art was considered a sudden eruption of the artist's "inspiration," like a sneeze which relieves a man whose nose has been itching. Artists today keep the general public in mind and feel concern for it. This is a new concept (content). From this they go on to experiment with new forms, the first step being to adapt some old form as a base for the new. And this transformation of the old, to my mind, does not involve a mechanical separation of form and content, nor can it be condemned as opportunistic, on a par with imitating the form of *The Two Sisters** because that has good box-office value.

Of course, the adaptation of old forms, or rather the experiments with new, demand hard work on the part of the practitioners of art, but theoreticians and critics are responsible too for guiding and commenting on their work as well as discussing it with them. And one cannot discharge this responsibility merely by criticizing others for failing to give clear expositions. Since we have our cultural tradition and we live in China, we should look through the history of Chinese art. What can we adapt? It seems to me that although we cannot see genuine pre-Tang paintings, we know that most of these illustrated stories, and there is a lesson for us here. We can take from Tang paintings the magnificence of Buddhist frescos, the simplicity and clarity of line drawings; we should reject the languor and effeminacy of the Sung paintings of the Imperial Academy, but adopt their precision and remarkable finish; while as for Mi Fei's** school of landscape painting, that is utterly useless. Whether the later ink sketches (the scholars' paintings) are of any use or not I cannot yet tell: no doubt some useful features may be found in them too. It goes without saying that adaptations must not be like a display of miscellaneous fragments of antiques, but the old must

*A film produced in Shanghai.

**A Sung dynasty landscape painter (1051-1107).

be absorbed by the new. It is like eating beef or mutton: we set aside hooves and hide, keeping only the best to nourish and develop new organisms. Eating beef or mutton does not make us "virtually" oxen or sheep.

The examples just mentioned and all still to be seen today are consumers' art which, favoured by those in power, has survived in considerable bulk. Where there are consumers there must be producers, and therefore there must be producers' art alongside consumers' art. But because nobody cared for this ancient art practically none of it is left apart from the illustrations in old romances. In the modern age we still have coloured New-Year pictures in the markets and the picture-books mentioned by Mr. Meng-keh.* Though these may not be genuine producers' art, undoubtedly they were opposed to the art of the leisured class. Even so, however, they were much influenced by consumers' art. Thus in literature the folk songs still kept to the traditional seven-word line; in art the themes illustrated were generally stories about the gentry, but processed into something more concise and clear. This transformation is usually known as "vulgarization." It could do no harm, I think, for artists who are concerned with the general public to pay attention to these things; but of course it goes without saying that they should be improved upon also.

These two kinds of art in China sometimes look alike when in fact they are different. For instance, the clouds and mist filling an entire Buddhist painting are nothing but a magnificent decoration, whereas when every inch of a New-Year picture is utilized that is to economize on paper. The beauties with slender waists and tapering fingers painted by Tang Ying** were desired by men of his sort; but though New-Year pictures also have girls like this, they are drawn merely as one social type, for the record or to

*In an article "Adaptation and Imitation" published on April 19, 1934, in *Trends*.

**A Ming dynasty artist famous for his paintings of beautiful women.

satisfy curiosity. Those artists who paint for the people need not avoid such subjects either.

As for the statement that picture-books are simply one form of pictorial art, just as literature includes poetry, drama, stories and other different forms, this is of course correct. The rise of different forms is none the less connected with social conditions, however, as is clear if we consider the fact that at one time poetry flourishes, at another many novels appear, while at others only short stories are written. Thus we know that the rise of these forms is connected with their content. In present-day society picture-books are popular because the conditions for their popularity and the need for them exist. The true task of a progressive artist is to pay due heed to this trend and guide its direction, as well as try to make art intelligible to ordinary people. When old forms are adapted, certain things must be removed while others must be added, resulting in a new form, a change. And this work is by no means as easy as bystanders think.

But even after the establishment of new forms, these will not constitute art of the highest level. The progress of art requires the help of other fields of culture, other branches of art. To call on some single expert to raise the standard alone is unrealistic, and therefore to put the blame on a few individuals is just as biased as to attribute everything to circumstances.

May 2, 1934

A Reply to the Editor of "The Theatre"

Dear Mr. Lu Hsun,

The first act of *Ah Q** has now been published, and though the play cannot be staged immediately we must start preparing for its production. We hope you will give us your comments now that the first act has appeared: this will help us to prepare for a public performance, and when our plan for publication in book form is realized your views can be printed as a preface to the play. This request comes from the editor, the playwright, the readers and the actors.

Yours faithfully,
The Editor

November 14, 1934

Dear Sir,

I read the open letter addressed to me in *The Theatre* some time ago, after which I received a copy of the weekly by post, intended no doubt to expedite my reply. Since I have made no study of the drama, my safest answer would be silence. However, if you and your readers will bear in mind that these are the casual remarks of an amateur, I can, of course, express some personal opinions.

Not much of *Ah Q* was published in each of your numbers, and since there was always an interval of six days and I read the play off and on, by degrees I have forgotten it. Thinking back, all that I can recall is that characters from others of my stories were included to give a fuller picture of Weichuang or Luchen, and that is all to the good. But I could not understand many of the Shaohsing expressions used by Ah Q.

*The play based on one of Lu Hsun's stories of the same name by Yuan Mu-chih, editor of *The Theatre*, a weekly supplement of the *Chung Hua Daily* published in Shanghai.

Now there are two points I want to make.

First, where is Weichuang? *Ah Q's* playwright has decided: In Shaohsing. Since I come from Shaohsing and most of the background was drawn from Shaohsing, no doubt we shall all agree to this. But in very few of my stories are the settings clearly indicated. Nearly all Chinese like to defend their home town and poke fun at other places, and Ah Q is no exception. I thought at the time that if I wrote a story of exposure and described events happening in a specific place, the people of that district would hate me with a deadly hatred, while those of other districts would look on, unconcerned, at troubles elsewhere, neither group relating the story to themselves, the first grinding their teeth in rage, the second remaining unruffled. Then not only would the story lose all significance and effectiveness, but there might even be futile complications involving every one in ridiculous quarrels. *Idle Talk on Yangchow** is a recent example of this. A physician may prescribe ginseng to cure a disease, but if the patient does not take it properly he will grow bloated and have to take turnip seeds as an antidote till the swelling goes down; in which case the ginseng has been wasted and he has to spend money on turnip seeds as well. It is the same with names. Writers of literary gossip past and present nearly all believe that certain stories were written for personal vengeance, hence they go to great pains to discover the real individuals involved. In order to save such scholars trouble and to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, I used the first two characters in the *Hundred Names*,** Chao and Chien; as for Ah Q's surname, no one is sure where that came from. Yet even so, rumours arose. Regarding position in the family, because I am the eldest son and have two younger brothers, to forestall the poisonous tongues of

*Anecdotes by Yi Chun-tso published in March 1934. Citizens of Yangchow were so indignant over his descriptions of Yangchow life that the book was finally banned.

**A rhymed primer made up of a hundred names.

rumour-mongers the villains of my stories are always the eldest brother or the fourth or fifth.

I take these aforementioned precautions not because I am afraid of giving offence but to avoid ridiculous complications so that the impact of the work may be more concentrated and powerful. Gogol in his *Inspector General* makes the actor say outright to the audience: "You are laughing at yourselves!" (Strange to say, in the Chinese translation this crucial sentence is omitted.) But my method is to make the reader unable to tell who this character can be apart from himself, so that he cannot back away to become a bystander but is bound to suspect that this may be a portrait of himself if not of every man, and that may start him thinking. Not one of my critics has spotted this, however. This playwright's reckless fabrication of Shaohsing expressions for his chief character — Ah Q — makes me suspect that he too has been influenced by the vulgar taste.

It is just as well, though, to fix on Shaohsing as the setting. So we come to the second question.

What dialect should Ah Q speak? This seems an unnecessary question, for since all Ah Q's life is spent in Shaohsing he should naturally speak the Shaohsing dialect. But that brings us to a third question.

What audience have we in mind for this play? If this is for Shaohsing audiences, Ah Q should naturally speak the Shaohsing dialect. In Shaohsing opera the tradition is that officials and scholars speak Mandarin, while waiters and gaolers use the local dialect. I think this is not merely to differentiate between the upper and lower classes, noble and vulgar, good and bad; another important reason is that since colloquial witticisms and sarcastic remarks come mainly from the lips of the lower orders, the actors must use colloquial expressions to enable local audiences to understand them thoroughly. We can see the importance of this. Actually, if the play is staged for natives of Shaohsing, there is no reason why other characters should not speak in the Shaohsing dialect too. Though it is all one dialect, the upper-class language is different from the lower,

having shorter sentences with fewer exclamations and interjections — a lower-class sentence with the same meaning may be twice the length. Still, if such a play is performed elsewhere, its effect must be weakened if not completely lost. I have made careful investigations and found that most men from other districts who pride themselves on their excellent knowledge of the Shaohsing dialect are like those eminent scholars now editing Ming dynasty *belles-lettres*: they don't know much really. As for northerners, Fukienese or Cantonese, to them the Shaohsing dialect is as incomprehensible as jokes in a foreign circus.

I suppose it is very important for literature to have universality, permanent value and comprehensiveness, but these may also prove nails in an author's coffin and his doom. For example, if in China today we want to write a play that can be put on anywhere, we are setting ourselves an impossible task and must fail in the attempt. So I think the thing to do now is to write plays in which the dialogue is fairly easy to understand. Then when they are performed in schools, no alterations will be needed; when they are performed in other provinces or villages, the script can be used as a base but the language changed into the local dialect, while even the background and names can be changed to make them more familiar to the audience. For instance, if the play is performed in a place where there are no rivers and canals, the boats can be changed to carts, and a character named Seven-pounder can be renamed Little Pig-tail.

These then are my views. In a word, the best thing is not to make the play too particularized but capable of rather free adaptation.

Last of all I want to add one small "tail" to my letter not as interesting, of course, as the tail of those pug dogs.* I apologize for this, but speak I must. Several months ago, I remember, I replied to some questions from a friend about the popularization of language; this letter was published in

*Probably referring to those bourgeois critics who attacked Lu Hsun.

the *Social Monthly* and followed by an article by Mr. Yang Chun-jen.* Then a Mr. Shao-po said in the *Torch* that I had patched up my previous quarrel with Mr. Yang, commenting at length on the Chinese love of compromise. I suppose this letter will be published too. I remember though that *The Theatre* has already published articles by Mr. Tseng Chin-ko and Mr. Yeh Ling-feng;** and since Mr. Yeh even drew a portrait of Ah Q, I presume he can hardly have finished the whole of that volume of *Call to Arms* in the lavatory*** — he must either have been constipated for years or bought another copy! If I had been overwhelmed by Mr. Shao-po's verdict, I should not have dared write this, but I did not feel I need remain silent. Provided that I state here that I have no authority to prevent my letters from being published and no way of knowing in advance what other articles there will be, I am not compromising with any other writer in the same number. On the other hand, if someone from the same camp assumes a disguise to stab me in the back, I detest and despise such a man even more than an open enemy.

This is not a personal matter, for the time has come when Mr. Shao-po can try his old tricks again; and unless I make a statement, what I have said will be considered as evidence of a compradore mentality or opportunism, and what is the use of that?

Yours faithfully,
Lu Hsun

*A reactionary writer with whom Lu Hsun had some arguments.
**Both these men were Shanghai reactionary writers at that time.
***Yeh Ling-feng had said that Lu Hsun's *Call to Arms* was good for nothing but toilet paper.

What Is Satire?

A Reply to the "Literature Monthly"

I believe that when a writer uses concise or even rather exaggerated language — of course this must be done artistically — to tell the truth about some aspect of life or some group of people, those written about call the work a "satire."

Truth is the life of satire: not necessarily true happenings that have occurred, but at least things that could happen. So satire is neither "fabrications" nor "slander," neither "revealing secrets" nor simply recording "sensational news" and "strange phenomena." The events described take place publicly and frequently, but since they are usually considered quite commonplace they are naturally passed over. Yet these events are already irrational, ridiculous, disgusting or even detestable. It is only because they have gone on till men are accustomed to them that even in public and among the masses they occasion no surprise, yet specially pointed out they create a sensation. For example, it is very common for a young man in a Western suit to worship Buddha, it is even more common for a moralist to lose his temper. These things require a few minutes only and are over without a trace. But if Satire takes photographs at this juncture of the young man kowtowing with his bottom in the air and the moralist scowling, these not only offend the eyes of those who see them but their own eyes as well, and such pictures when circulated are detrimental to their lofty schemes to advocate science or Confucian morality. It is no use saying these photographs are not genuine, for every one can recognize them and is convinced that such things really happened; but the men concerned will not admit this, for that would make them lose face. So resorting to cunning they describe these works as "satire." In other words: writing which is worthless since it concerns itself deliberately with such matters.

But it is the art of satire to concern itself deliberately with such matters, bringing out their essence, even with exaggeration. The same incident carelessly and unartistically recorded would not be satire, nor would anyone be affected by it. For example, I remember two news items this year. One concerned a young man who passed himself off as an army officer to go about cheating people; when exposed he wrote a confession, saying that he had done this solely as a means of livelihood and for no other reason. The second concerned a thief who took in pupils and taught them how to steal; when the parents discovered this and locked their sons up, the thief went to threaten them. The papers often publish special comments on matters of relative significance, but no comments have been made so far on these incidents: apparently they are considered too commonplace to merit attention. Yet if such material fell into the hands of Swift or Gogol, I am sure it would become an excellent satire. In certain societies the more common an incident, the more prevalent, the more suited it is for satire.

Although the satirist is generally hated by those whom he satirizes, his intentions are often good, he writes hoping that these men will change for the better, not to push some group under water. By the time a satirist appears in a group, however, that group is already doomed, certainly writing cannot save it; hence his efforts are generally vain or may even have an opposite effect, for while he merely exposes shortcomings or iniquities, this is utilized by another group hostile to his. I fancy this other group must look on matters rather differently from those satirized, regarding this as "exposure" instead of "satire."

If a work looks satirical but lacks a positive aim and genuine passion, simply convincing its readers that there is nothing good in the world, nothing worth doing, this is not satire but "cynicism."

May 3, 1935

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

Interview

YANG SHIH-HUI

Ivory Carving

I was apprenticed to an ivory carver when I was twelve. At first, I remember, the work-bench was too high for me and I had to stand on two bricks to reach the table. Our master was a stern man who stood over us watching our work. An older boy, my master's other apprentice, taught me how to use the more than forty tools needed for our trade; then he gave me a small piece of ivory and told me to carve a little vase with reliefs of Monkey and Pigsy from the popular novel *Pilgrimage to the West.* From stories heard in childhood I knew these two legendary figures well. I stared and stared at the vase, trying to visualize Monkey and Pigsy on it, and finally I succeeded in producing my first childish carving. My master examined it and nodded — I was formally accepted as his apprentice.

My master never joked or laughed, but he taught me some tips he had learned from his teacher many years ago. When I was carving human figures, he told me the seven chief emotions I must learn to convey: "Joy, anger, care, reflection, sadness, fear, surprise." When I started working on animals and birds, he taught me the motto: "Fierce dragon, joyful phoenix and laughing lion." When I began to carve flowers and plants, he taught me this maxim: "Intertwine the branches, cross the stems, make them turn and twist and fold." I remember another of his precepts: "Never make a mountain with a flat top, water without waves, weeping beauties or laughing ghosts." For years these mottoes have stood me in good stead. They also show the careful study of their work made by the old craftsmen who aimed not merely at truthfulness to life but also at capturing the spirit of the subject.

As I began to progress, I was told to try to express "Stillness in motion and motion in stillness." This may sound rather mystic, but here is an example. When a man is running, a bird flying or a horse galloping, there must be a sense of aim or purpose which it is up to the artist to convey by the pose in which he catches his moving creature. Again, there may be much inner activity in an object seemingly still. The artist needs a deep understanding of men's minds in order to make his work moving. The maxims I mentioned show that earlier ivory carvers had a very serious attitude towards their work. A skilled craftsman had to be able to make good use of the special properties of his medium, showing to advantage the whiteness, smoothness and fine grain of ivory; he must also be able to bring out the spirit of his sculptured landscapes, figures, flowers or birds.

Ivory carving covers a wide range of domestic and decorative objects. It is hard to say how long a history this art has in China. Carved ivory vases have been discovered in Shang dynasty tombs about three thousand years old, and the designs on these are similar to those on bronze vessels. Since ivory is not produced in China, it has always been something of a luxury used through the centuries for emperors and nobles, for whom most craftsmen worked. Three or four hundred years ago foreign traders started bringing more ivory to China's coastal cities and so the trade developed. The ivory carving in Canton was especially famous. Delicate and skilful, sometimes representing the life of the coastal dwellers, it became one distinct school of ivory carving in China. When the Ching dynasty fell and there was no monarchy left to support them, the Peking craftsmen also turned to the people. Ivory workshops were set up and this became one distinct handicraft profession. After this some famous ivory carvers

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Yang Shih-hui, vice-director of the Peking Institute of Applied Arts, has carved ivory for thirty-five years. This account of his craft is taken from an interview he gave recently to one of our editors. The ivory carving *Ying-ying Listens to the Lyre* in this number is one of his recent works.

appeared. One was Wang Ping who learned from sculptors in wood and with his rough, spirited style specialized in Buddhas and arhats. Li San-pao was noted for his warriors and men in armour, Keng Yun-tien for his women. On the whole, the northern school of ivory carving with Peking as its centre was spirited and strong, simple rather than ornate.

Four or five working processes are required for all ivory carving whether simple or complex: designing, blocking out, carving, polishing and sometimes colouring. This art has close affinities with sculpture and painting. All workers in ivory must start by learning painting and studying traditional art. As an apprentice I greatly admired the classical grace of the flowers and birds painted by Emperor Hui-tsung of the Sung dynasty, and I tried to convey the same spirit in my carving. Later I studied the landscapes of those twelfth and thirteenth century masters, Hsia Kuei and Ma Yuan, whose compositions are so profoundly evocative, and this helped me with the composition of my own work. Subsequently I was privileged to see a copy of a lost painting by the fourth century artist Ku Kai-chih, and felt the keenest admiration for the spirit of his work, especially the lines of drapery, which I have tried to express in the medium of ivory. Similarly, from all great works of art we can draw help and inspiration. I have recently seen a magnificent carving by the young Cantonese artist Kuo Kang, who on a piece of ivory more than one metre long has

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Ying-ying Listens to the Lyre →
Ivory carving by Yang Shih-hui
Photographed by Ao En-hung

Ying-ying, heroine of the classical Chinese drama *The Western Chamber*, is shown here with her maid Hung-niang secretly listening to her lover Chang Sheng playing on the lyre.

depicted the crossing of the Yangtse during the War of Liberation: the turbulent river and the troops in sailing boats are superbly conceived and executed. A Peking craftsman, Yang Shih-chun, makes fine flower carvings. His recent *Flower Basket* is a striking composition and one evidently inspired by the work of Yu Fei-an, the great modern flower painter whose recent death was keenly felt by the many ivory carvers who have learned from him.

Ivory carving is akin to sculpture, and in carving human figures we have much to learn from ancient Buddhist sculpture. Not long ago I made a statuette of Kuan-yin, the Bodhisattva beloved in folk legend. Though Kuan-yin is depicted in various forms, hers is always a serene, kindly beauty. After careful thought I decided that the beauty of this goddess must be quite different from ordinary feminine loveliness and more profound. Hence in my work I tried to convey her saintliness and simplicity so that my statuette should arouse reverence as well as delight.

The happy state of ivory carving today is something we never dreamed of in my boyhood. When I first learned my trade over thirty years ago there were only about thirty men working at it, but today there are more like five hundred. My family is an example. We have been ivory carvers for four generations, but in the past there was one craftsman only in each generation and the family could hardly make ends meet. During the last ten years, though, about a dozen of my family, including my younger brothers and children, have joined the profession. My eldest son, who heads a workshop in the Peking Ivory Manufactory, is engaged at present on an important work: he and his fellow craftsmen are carving the great parade past Tien An Men Square on two and a half tusks. None of us ever attempted anything on this magnificent scale before. Two years ago, when my youngest daughter graduated from junior middle school, I sent her to learn this art. At first she did not study very hard, so I told her a story about my apprenticeship. Once I had to carve water-chestnut leaves on an ivory case for holding Chinese brushes. Since there was a pot of water-chestnuts in our courtyard, I kept slipping out to study them. As a result I produced quite a good design, but I took so long over it that when we handed in our work that evening our master gave me a beating for my slowness. My daughter is studying under

totally different conditions. The old craftsmen teach her very patiently, and she makes a systematic study of general subjects and the theory of art as well, for the state is training artists with a good all-round education. I have assured her that, provided they work hard, with their advantages they will certainly do better than all the ivory carvers of my generation.

In talk, men speak most of the events of the day; in reading, they seek most for right principles. So essays are written to serve the needs of the age, poems to serve a particular purpose.

Po Chu-yi
(8th century poet)

Chronicle

Literature of the National Minorities in Yunnan

There are several national minorities in the province of Yunnan; all of them have rich literary traditions. In the later half of 1958 a team of writers and poets, organized in Yunnan to study folk literature, collected and edited literature from the Tai, Yi, Hani, Pai, Nasi, Chuang and Miao peoples. This team has now produced general surveys of the literature of these seven nationalities as well as collections of their folk songs, folk tales and plays. These include *Ngo-ping and Sang-lo,* a long Tai narrative poem about a youth named Sang-lo who opposes the old feudal marriage system, refuses to marry the cousin chosen for him by his mother, and travelling far in search of true happiness meets lovely Ngo-ping. After their marriage she comes home with him but is murdered by his family, Sang-lo dies of a broken heart and they are transformed into stars that shine in the evening. This poem is a blend of lyric and narrative poetry, the language is fresh and distinctive and the lovers are vividly drawn. Another long Yi poem *Meiko,* has been popular for centuries among the Yi people on the south bank of Golden Sand River. Improved upon from generation to generation, it pays tribute to labouring folk in simple, fluent language of a hauntingly musical quality.

The Fifth Exhibition of Traditional Painting in Peking

The Fifth Exhibition of Traditional Painting in Peking was opened on June 22 in Peihai Park. The two hundred-odd exhibits include paintings of many different schools and styles: landscapes, portraits, flowers and birds. There are works by famous artists as well as by amateurs. *Peony and Plantain* by the old painter Chen Pan-ting has exciting colouring; Hu Pei-heng's *Kweilin Scenery* has an old world charm and an artless simplicity; *Peony and Doves* by Yu Fei-an, who died not long ago, is exquisitely executed. Other works which have attracted considerable attention are Chen Tung-hu's flower

paintings and the portraits and sketches by Yeh Chien-yu and Chiang Chao-ho. But the most notable exhibit is the 138 feet scroll, *Spring in Peking* by six artists. With Tien An Men in the centre, it shows all the chief sights for several hundred kilometres as far as Tungchow in the east and the Kuanting Reservoir in the west. This is a new attempt to present modern architecture, modern transport and modern people in the traditional style, and the harmony of the whole composition is impressive.

Uruguay Soloist in Peking

In July, the Uruguay soloist Virginia Castro gave a concert in Peking. She rendered Uruguayan songs by Hector Tosar and Fabini and Spanish songs by De Falla and Granados. Her brilliant performance was most warmly received. This is the first time that works by modern Uruguayan composers have been introduced in China.

Wood-Block Prints of Early Peking Opera

Recently the Peking Publishing House published a collection of over one hundred wood-block prints of Peking opera scenes dating from the Ching dynasty. Most of these were made by well-known artists from Yangliuching, famous for this craft, who watched operas in the capital during the heyday of Peking opera in the reigns of Chien Lung, Chia Ching and Hsien Feng (the end of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries). Here are exponents of opera in many roles, in singing, fighting or acrobatic scenes, some with one or two actors only, others with many. These meticulously drawn pictures, which show these opera characters vividly, possess the characteristic simplicity of Yangliuching wood-cuts. This collection is not merely an album of art but also of interest to students of early Peking opera.

Yiyang Opera Performed in Peking

In June, the Kiangsi Classical Drama Theatre performed some well-known Yiyang operas in Peking. Yiyang opera is one of the oldest forms of local opera in China, originating in Yiyang,

Kiangsi, early in the sixteenth century, to spread to Nanking, Peking, Hunan, Fukien and Kwangtung. For a time not even Kunchu opera enjoyed such popularity. Yiyang opera grew out of the Southern Drama of the Sung and Yuan dynasties based on ancient folk traditions. Two of the traditional plays performed this year in Peking, *The Pearl* and *Yuchih Kung*, are four hundred years old. *The Peony Pavilion*, adapted from the masterpiece of the famous Ming dramatist Tang Hsien-tsu, is a beautiful love story. In the first part of the eighteenth century there were many connoisseurs of Yiyang opera in Peking, who exercised a considerable influence on the development of various forms of local opera. Yiyang and Kunchu opera also influenced each other. For some decades before liberation this ancient dramatic form was virtually forgotten, but during the last ten years it has gained a new lease of life. The performances recently given in Peking were considered an important event in the annals of the traditional Chinese theatre.

Performance of "Aesop"

Aesop, by the distinguished Brazilian poet and dramatist Guillermo Figuereido, had its premiere in Peking on July 1. This is the first Latin American play to be staged in China, produced by the Peking People's Art Theatre. The fables of Aesop, translated into Chinese in the nineteenth century, are well known in China. This play is based on the legend of Aesop, and Guillermo Figuereido's story about the slaves' fight for freedom is full of passionate sympathy for the enslaved. The noble message: "Better to die for freedom than to live as slaves" deeply moved the audience. The actors succeeded admirably in conveying the spirit of this play.

Remains of Han Dynasty Temples Excavated

The team sent by the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to the site of the Han dynasty city of Changan recently excavated the remains of some Han temples in the northwestern suburb of Sian, the southern suburb of the Han capital. These temples, standing in a row from east to west, were built in the same shape but differed in size.

They were square, surrounded by walls with four gates. The central building had a hall with four inner-chambers at the four corners and additional chambers on each side. The walls were painted white, the ground vermilion; there were closely grouped stone pillars as well as corridors and partitions. In front of each chamber at the side stood square towers with brick paths leading to them. On the base of the stone pillars are inscribed the builders' names. The Institute of Archaeology believes that these are the remains of the Nine Temples constructed during the reign of Wang Mang at the beginning of the Christian era, where Han emperors sacrificed to Heaven.

Ancient Buddhist Sutras Discovered in Shanghai

The Shanghai Committee for the Preservation of Cultural Relics has recently collected a number of priceless old Buddhist sutras. Among these are seven complete scrolls of the *Saddharma-Pundarika Sutra* written on green paper in characters of gold, probably dating from the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127). Though about a thousand years old, this manuscript is still complete, the gold writing is bright and clear and the calligraphy neat and distinguished, while the illustrations of Buddhist legends at the beginning of each scroll are exquisite works of art. There are also sutras copied by Monk Tan-luan of the Northern Wei dynasty (424-532) in superb calligraphy, valuable not only as relics of an eminent Buddhist but also as important specimens of the art of writing one thousand five hundred years ago. A complete set of Buddhist sutras printed in the Northern Sung dynasty is another precious relic. These sutras are of great value for students of Buddhism and fine examples of ancient calligraphy, painting and printing.

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