

CHINESE LITERATURE

Monthly



August

8

1960

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No. 8, 1960

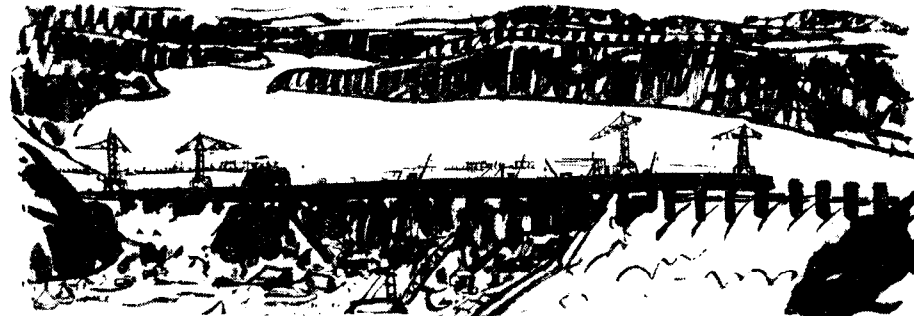
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HO CHING-CHIH

Sanmen Gorge

SEE Sanmen Gorge,* its three gates open wide —
“The Yellow River rushes down from heaven”**—
Dire Gate of Gods, gaunt Gate of Ghosts,
And the sheer precipice of the Gate of Men.
The Yellow River thunders at these gates,
Gales sweep a thousand leagues to the Eastern Sea.

Ho Ching-chih, born in 1924 in Shantung, is on the editorial board of *Juben* (The Drama Monthly). He is a poet and playwright, whose opera *The White-Haired Girl* won a Stalin prize for literature.

* Sanmen (Three Gates) is a most perilous gorge of the Yellow River, the turbulent stream widely known as “China’s Sorrow” which has caused so much death and destruction down the centuries. Since liberation, many steps have been taken to tame the river. In April 1957, work started on its first key project—the vast water conservancy scheme at the Sanmen Gorge in Honan. The huge dam built to regulate the flow of the river detains enormous amounts of water in the reservoir above it. The Sanmen Gorge project has ended the threat of serious floods on the lower Yellow River, and ensures the needs of irrigation and navigation.

** A line from a poem by Li Po.

See Sanmen Gorge, its three gates open wide;
East flows the Yellow River, ever east;
Kunlun is high, Mount Mang is low,
Where Great Yu's horse trod, green moss grows;*
The horse has gone, no house remains,
Only a dressing-table by the open gates.**

For centuries the dressing-table has stood,
But where is she who should use it?
Darkling clouds dim the bright mirror,
Muddy waters swallow up her golden head-dress;
Whole generations of boatmen die in despair,
The Yellow River's daughter neglects her toilet.

Come to your dressing-table, lady, come!
White is the hair of the Yellow River's daughter;
Leagues long, her white hair streams out in despair
Over the perennial floods of the Yellow River.
She climbs the gorge, she asks the Eastern Sea:
Will youth come back to me?

Will youth come back?
Pan Ku's*** new heirs are here!
Red flags are flying, a new world is born.
We trample on the tomes of all past history,
With a huge brush we write a brave new page—
Socialism—here we come!

* At the Gate of Ghosts there is a hollow in the rock shaped like a hoof print. Legend has it that this was made when Great Yu, the pacifier of floods in Chinese mythology, rode this way.

** Not far from the gorges stands a platform of rock known as the "dressing-table."

*** Man's earliest ancestor, the mythical figure who separated heaven and earth.

We come, we come!
Kunlun takes fright and Mount Mang is aghast.
We unfold the mighty plan to tame this torrent,
First grasp the Yellow River by the waist,
Raze the Gate of Gods, sweep off the Gate of Ghosts,
Three crashes and the Gate of Men is dust!

See Sanmen Gorge now that its gates are gone
Tomorrow a great dam will loom up there.
We must ask Li Po to revise that line,
"The Yellow River rushes from our hands."
A galaxy of stars will fall from heaven,
Clear water will follow the breeze to the Eastern Sea.

It will flow to the Eastern Sea and back again,
The river's age-old crimes must be redeemed;
The Yellow River's daughter grows young again,
Her dressing-table is set in order for her,
In blue sky a bright mirror hangs,
The water of the lake throws back its brightness,
Come, Yellow River's daughter, dress your hair!

Come, lady, dress your hair
And take your choice
Of all the hundred flowers of spring,
Of this far-flung countryside lovely as brocade.
The workers on the Sanmen Dam are young,
For them the Gate of Happiness is open;
Shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand they sing
Of youth that will endure for ever more!

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Sketch by Wu Tso-jen*

JU CHIH-CHUAN

The Maternity Home

The sunset glow deepened and then faded, till only faint smudges of cloud were left on the horizon like the brush-strokes of an ink painting. The little pink flowers on the fence round the maternity home blurred and were lost to sight. Evening had set in.

With a carrying-pole and two buckets, Aunt Tan filled the big water vat. Then, without pausing for breath, she bustled off to prepare supper for her two patients. Though getting on in years, she prided herself on being able to keep on the go all day. When supper was over, she went into the middle room. As she snapped on the electric light, this combined office and delivery room appeared more spacious. Every object in it seemed to glow: the smooth white sheet on the bed and the white screen round it, the white desk, white walls and ceiling. . . . It was wonderful the way the electric light made everything seem so much whiter and smarter. Half-closing her eyes, she looked round her before hurrying over to the stove to stir the fire and put the sterilizer on to boil, dumping all her used instruments into it.

Her patients were sleeping peacefully. The water in the sterilizer had not yet come to the boil. Aunt Tan turned off the light. In the darkness, distant noises seemed more distinct. The electric pump across the river was thudding away, from the club came the sound of the wireless, turned on full blast. Out on the

Ju Chih-chuan, born in 1925 in Chekiang, is editor of the monthly, *S Shanghai Literature*. Her short stories include *Lilies* and *Tall, Tall Poplars*.

sports ground the young fellows of the shock brigade were playing ball; she could hear their staccato whistle. These sounds gave Aunt Tan a feeling of satisfaction.

When the country was first liberated, who had heard of a maternity home, sterilizer, lying-in or electric lights in a village? In those days child-birth was a trip through the valley of death. Back in 1950, when Aunt Tan's daughter-in-law had her baby, the midwife expelled the afterbirth by stamping on the mother's abdomen. In 1956 when they had an agricultural co-operative, she was sent by Chairman Tu, now Party secretary of the commune, to learn the new scientific method of delivery at the town hospital. But popularizing the new method hadn't been easy! Expectant mothers and their families did not believe in her; she was given the cold shoulder. Old-style midwives spread lies about her. Lack of experience made her task doubly difficult. Once, a patient who was having a difficult labour was sent to the hospital too late, and the baby died. This slip caused a great deal of talk and trouble. One of the old-fashioned midwives, Granny Pan, accused Aunt Tan of killing the baby. That made the poor mother more indignant and the scandal grew. Angry and hurt, Aunt Tan hid her face at home. Many infants had died at the hands of the old midwives, but their families made no trouble, merely blaming fate. Yet now, for one little slip, they were tearing her apart. Unable to stand such accusations, she went with tears in her eyes to Chairman Tu. He was at the threshing-floor, seeing to the soaking of seeds before planting. Having heard her out, he rubbed his big calloused hands and said gravely but gently: "Our generation has a task that's far from simple, aunty. We're going to change society and keep on changing it! Things are developing at tremendous speed, but old ideas and old ways die hard. Our work is making a revolution and our study is making a revolution too. What we can't do we must learn; what we don't understand we must find out."

When the people's commune was founded, Secretary Tu announced that a maternity home was to be set up. The commune put aside three rooms for this purpose. And there Aunt Tan made a desk with her own hands, got hold of a high bed for



deliveries and five other beds for a ward. The three ordinary rooms had become a clean and peaceful maternity home.

"Why, it's nearly as good as a hospital!" The first night Aunt Tan was too excited to sleep. She thought back over the years since she was widowed at thirty-nine to her present post in this maternity home . . . as what? It was hard to find the right word to describe her position. At last she silently settled on "obstetrician."

Here in this maternity home which was "nearly as good as a hospital," Aunt Tan learned to give injections, make pre-natal examinations, take the blood

pressure, get specimens of blood, put in stitches and remove them. Whenever a doctor was fetched from town for minor operations, she served as his assistant, winning praise for her composure and skill. In fact one or two doctors went so far as to suggest that she could learn to do these simple operations herself. Aunt Tan smiled with amused pride at the thought that the doctors imagined her little maternity home able to cope with cases meant for the town hospitals.

The water bubbled merrily in the sterilizer, matching the contentment in the midwife's heart. Suddenly the door burst open. Turning on the light, Aunt Tan saw a dark, ruddy-faced girl at the door. She had a roll of bedding over one shoulder, an oxygen tank under one arm and looked hot and flushed.

"Remember me, aunt?" asked the girl with a smile.

"If it isn't Ho-mei!" Ho-mei, the daughter of Mrs. Chang at the pig farm, had just graduated from the obstetrician's course in town. Aunt Tan and Mrs. Chang had been friends since girlhood. With a glad cry, Aunt Tan relieved Ho-mei of the bedding, then made the girl sit down.

Ho-mei's dark oval face glowed pink under the electric lamp as her big shining eyes surveyed the room with interest. "I've been sent to work here, aunt," said she. Picking up her bedding roll, she hoisted it to her shoulder and then put it down in a far corner of the room. The bulky bedding must have weighed at least eighty catties, but it rested as lightly as paper on her strong young shoulders. Returning to her seat, Ho-mei begged to be told all about the maternity home.

"Very well, dear." Aunt Tan approved of this serious, grown-up approach. "I'm so glad you've come, child. You're going to be my right hand. I expect you know a good deal about us already. Our home takes care of all the pregnant women in the two work brigades round here. There's a Mrs. Chou who helps here too. In the two years since this home started, we've delivered three hundred and fifty-six babies, and every one of them safely." Aunt Tan warmed as she got on to the subject of babies. Three hundred and fifty-six babies. It hadn't been easy. It had meant much anxiety and worry, particularly since the maternity home was unable to cope with the slightest complications. In many cases, Aunt Tan had to make a prompt decision either to send for the doctor or to rush the patient to hospital. The least slip might well cost a life. That was why she had emphasized every word of the last sentence.

"Listen child, we've a risky and heavy burden on our shoulders. In our two years' history we've not let a single accident happen. No harm came to any mother or child. A woman comes in alone but leaves with a baby in her arms. . . ." Since words were not enough to express what she felt, Aunt Tan stood up to show Ho-mei the whole home. They went first into the ward, a large room with five beds of various types and sizes. Two only were occupied but all were neatly made and stood in their proper place.

From time to time Ho-mei nodded her approval. "Aunt Tan, have we ever had difficult births?" she asked suddenly.

"Have we! That's where the worry comes in. As soon as there's any sign of complications, I have to go and telephone for the ambulance."

"Suppose there's no time?"

"Get on the phone and ask for a doctor."

"Where do we wash our hands?" asked Ho-mei presently.

"Wash our hands?" Aunt Tan was puzzled by the question. "In the wash basin of course." She felt slightly put out by all these questions. Still, she drew out all three drawers in her desk to exhibit their contents. But Ho-mei did not understand her pride in them. Cocking her head, her short plaits sticking out, she cast her eyes round the room, paying no attention to the medical instruments in the drawers.

"Of course, child, we can't compare with the big hospitals in town." Aunt Tan spoke more sharply now, rather annoyed.

"Of course not," said Ho-mei, unaware of the implied reproach, as she pushed open a window to peer out into the darkness. The next moment she slipped out of the door, as if in search of something.

Slowly Aunt Tan closed the drawers one by one. She no longer had any desire to tell the girl anything or show off her treasures. "I'm wasting my breath on her," she thought with a sinking heart. "I may as well pack her off to bed early."

"I've found a way, aunt!" Ho-mei rushed in, her eyes dancing. "Listen, aunt, we can rig up a home-made running-water system. You know the commune nursery's already got running water for the kiddies. Our maternity home needs it even more. I've looked things over. The well's near enough, all we have to do is make a hole in the wall. . . ."

Aunt Tan had been staring at Ho-mei without a word. Now she interposed with, "Come and let me show you your bed." She went to the room on the east end and pointed to an empty bed. You can sleep on Mrs. Chou's bed while she's away."

Aunt Tan's impression of Ho-mei during this first meeting as colleagues was not so good, though she could not put her finger on what was wrong. There was just something about the girl that disturbed her. All those questions about difficult births and complications. . . . Still, it was silly to let herself be annoyed by a mere child like Ho-mei.

"These youngsters!" thought Aunt Tan with a sigh. "They've had white rice in their bowls ever since they can remember. To have land to till and food to eat, to go to school or attend training courses are all things they take for granted. So are this maternity home, the electric light, tractors and everything. What do they

know about hard times, bitterness or suffering? . . ." It would be wrong, though, to neglect the girl. She had better have a good talk with her. By the time she had banked up the stove, she discovered that Ho-mei was already in bed and her things tidied out of the way.

"Your mother must be pleased now you're back from training," said Aunt Tan sitting down by the girl's bed.

"She is!" Under her warm quilt Ho-mei smiled with delight.

"It hasn't been easy, child. Now we've got everything: midwives, maternity homes . . . but in the old days having a baby was a real trial. You can't imagine what women then went through. Yet nowadays you young people sometimes find fault with this or that. It seems nothing's good enough for you. In our younger days we never dreamed of such a happy life. If not for the people's commune, how could we have all this? Young people should understand that life isn't all fun."

"You're right, aunt." There was a serious look on Ho-mei's glowing young face. Aunt Tan was reassured to see her words producing their desired effect. As she began to prepare for bed, she realized that the light in the outer room was still on. Ho-mei's question about running water had made her forget to turn it off. Aunt Tan hurried out, looked the room over again and put a few things in order before she turned off the light.

"Now we've got electric light, our life is getting better and better. . . ." Going back, she found Ho-mei already asleep, her short plaits sticking out at an angle from her head and one hand thrust under the pillow.

"They were born at the right time," Aunt Tan told herself as she watched the girl's guileless face so peaceful in sleep. Suddenly Ho-mei turned over and muttered, "Let's fix up the running water tomorrow, aunt. . . ." The next moment she was fast asleep again.

"She's even dreaming about the running water! These youngsters are all alike." Aunt Tan shook her head, turned off the light and got into bed.

There was a pale white ring round the bright full moon. Though the shadows cast by the trees were motionless and not even a leaf was stirring, it looked as if there would be wind the next day.

Early the next morning, Aunt Tan felt irritated the moment she stepped out of her room. It seemed Ho-mei had got the two patients out of bed and was teaching them exercises. The three of them were very merry, laughing and giggling as they bent their backs and swung their legs.

There was nothing extraordinary about post-natal exercises, in fact Aunt Tan had seen them done in the town hospital some time back. But she had no intention of introducing exercises into her maternity home. She didn't care to see a woman, particularly a new mother, stamping her feet and swinging her arms like that; she for one would never be able to learn such undignified motions. Besides, the villagers had always believed in sleep, rest and good food to help a woman recover after childbirth. Exercises had never been considered of the slightest importance. But here was Ho-mei, just after her arrival, introducing hospital ways without even a by your leave. Aunt Tan was very put out. She marched in to stop them.

"This is better for them than any medicine, aunt," said Ho-mei, smiling unperturbed.

"This is fun!" cried one of the patients. "It's better than lying flat all day." The other patient also voted for exercises. Aunt Tan felt more put out to find both of them in favour of this new-fangled idea. "If you're all for it, go ahead," she concluded with a forced smile.

Usually Aunt Tan kept on the move from morning till night. But today she could not settle down to work. She'd pick up a task in the office but before it was done find herself walking into the kitchen. The three younger women were having a gay time in the ward. She could hear Ho-mei's "one, two, three and four!" and the two patients laughing and moving about.

A fresh wind seemed to have blown into the quiet maternity home, disturbing its order and peace. Aunt Tan picked up a bamboo basket and walked quickly out. Wanting an excuse to go out, she had decided to collect the eggs for the home from the commune poultry farm.

She walked slowly. There were only two *li* to go. Her head felt empty, yet something was weighing on her mind. She could not tell the reason for her depression. "Ah, the older I get the

more discontented I grow. What is there for me to feel unhappy about?" she asked herself sternly.

The sun would soon be appearing at the horizon, the cotton field was a stretch of green. A few belated flowers dotted the green cotton plants with white; before long it would be time to pick the cotton. People were out working already. All the women knew Aunt Tan and hailed her from a distance. One called out that baby had been weaned, another that Ah-fang had learned to walk. Their friendly greetings were balm to Aunt Tan's heart. She kept nodding and smiling, calling or waving back. Pride and happiness dispelled all her discontent.

Outside the poultry farm, a pond covered by duckweed made a patch of luscious green. As Aunt Tan drew near, she saw Granny Pan, who had started working here after the commune was formed, tiptoeing round the pond.

"Whatever is she doing?" Aunt Tan wondered. When she called out, Granny Pan was too intent on something at the edge of the pond even to turn her head. Suddenly she pounced. At the same time a frog landed with a splash in the water.

"You frightened it off." Granny Pan turned reproachfully.

"Trying to get a few frogs to fry, Granny Pan?"

"It's for our hens." She walked with Aunt Tan to the poultry farm, carrying a jar in which frogs were croaking lustily.

"Your hens are spoiled, granny. Eating frogs, indeed!" Amused as Aunt Tan was by the sight of the white-haired old woman holding a jar of frogs, she respected her determination to do her work well.

"Do you know we are having a competition?" Granny Pan spoke as if she were sharing a delightful secret. "Each of us takes care of two hundred and fifty hens and we see whose are the best fed and lay the most eggs. You must give the hens proper food if you want them to lay well. The best thing for them is caterpillars. But with the commune's campaign to protect the trees and insecticide sprayed over every single leaf, there aren't any caterpillars left. I have to make do by boiling a few mussels from the creek and these. At least that gives them meat of a sort." Granny Pan chuckled.

Aunt Tan was struck by the kindly, shrewd expression on the old woman's wrinkled face. She marvelled at the difference made

by a change in her way of thinking. Granny Pan, as an old-fashioned midwife, had looked hard and miserable. By popularizing the new method of midwifery, Aunt Tan had called Granny Pan's wrath down on her head. The old woman had often come to her door cursing wildly or weeping. Now she was transformed. Her eyes were shining, her face gentle . . . she had changed into a lovable person.

"The revolution works wonders. Society's changed and so have the people in it." Aunt Tan called to mind the Party secretary's words.

In the yard of the poultry farm was a huge chart showing the progress of the emulation campaign. When Aunt Tan came out with her eggs she stood looking at the chart for quite a while. The red arrow under Granny Pan's name had soared proudly to the top. "Changed? Yes, Granny Pan has changed." Something disturbed Aunt Tan's peace of mind again. She was both glad and upset at the same time.

All the way back, she kept turning over in her mind the way things were changing. This friend's son was learning to drive a truck, that one's daughter was training to be a tractor-driver. Maybe tomorrow Granny Pan would become an advanced worker, and what would happen the day after there was no telling. . . . Now the fields were irrigated by a network of channels and ditches, the pumps thudded day and night, electric light had been installed — what would come next? . . . It dawned on her with absolute clarity that one day was no longer like another, changes were occurring with every passing day.

Yes, all around her was undergoing a rapid, tremendous change.

When Aunt Tan reached the maternity home she stood transfixed on the threshold. The office which she had so carefully swept and dusted that very morning was littered with sawdust and bits of bamboo. The benches were upturned, and her wooden rice barrel had a hole in it near the bottom. Several newly cut bamboos lay across the floor. A fire just outside the door was still smouldering. What was more, a big opening had been made in one of the lovely white walls and there stood Ho-mei trying to connect two bamboo pipes. Aunt Tan's two patients, instead of resting in bed, were busy passing Ho-mei all that she wanted.

Ho-mei had discovered that the well from which Aunt Tan fetched water with her pole and buckets was on higher ground than the maternity home. She had therefore brought the water directly into the room with bamboo pipes. The three young women cried out at sight of Aunt Tan: "Come and look at our running water!"

"Running water? . . ." Aunt Tan righted a bench and sat down heavily. She was tired out. All this was too much for her. Ho-mei, who had worked feverishly on the new device, had expected Aunt Tan to be surprised and pleased with the running water. Now, wiping her perspiring face she waited, but Aunt Tan said not a word. Ho-mei was bewildered.

"My dear child," Aunt Tan spoke at last. "The villages don't have all the comforts of the towns. Don't let us get so soft that we can't stand the weight of the carrying-pole. I don't think that's right."

"I agree," said Ho-mei seriously. "But, aunt, the villages won't always be back-country. If we can rig up a running water system but don't, sticking to our carrying-pole, that's nothing to be proud of. It's backward. . . ."

"Ho-mei's said it, Aunt Tan," chimed in one of the patients bluntly. "It's backward not to make improvements when we can. This new arrangement is more convenient, sanitary and scientific. I mean to popularize it when I go back."

"Of course!" answered Aunt Tan, struck by the familiar words. She had used the same words herself three years ago of the new midwifery methods. How many people had she told, "This is sanitary and scientific!" She had said it to the women, their husbands and mothers-in-law — most of all to Granny Pan. Now she eyed the new water pipes, the oxygen tank Ho-mei had brought, and the girl's shining eyes. Her gaze came to rest on the electric lamp. . . .

Inwardly shaken as by some invisible storm, Aunt Tan suddenly understood the feelings of Granny Pan three years ago: why the older woman had raged and pleaded, had appeared hard and yet pathetic. Granny Pan had been frightened by the fact — yet refused to admit it — that she was behind the times.

"Am I now like Granny Pan three years ago?"

The sky darkened. The trees danced in the wind predicted by the white ring round the moon the previous night. Aunt Tan stood up wanting something to do and mechanically picked up her carrying-pole. Just then Ho-mei came back cheering happily, having completed joining the pipes. Aunt Tan silently abandoned the carrying-pole.

"Aunt Tan!" a breathless voice called from the door. A man stood there supporting a woman big with child. "My wife's very near her time now."

Aunt Tan jumped up, all energy. Ho-mei abandoned her pipes to lend a hand. The new patient, Tsai-ti, was quickly settled in bed while the other two went back to their ward. The maternity home was its old self again.

"Reckless scamp!" Aunt Tan turned, beaming, to Tsai-ti's husband. "Letting her come here on foot!"

He smiled foolishly, then solemnly told Aunt Tan that he was now a lorry driver and had brought his wife in the lorry, parked outside. He was on his way to fetch mats as the commune had been alerted for a storm that was brewing. After a few more words of thanks he left.

Now, Tsai-ti and her husband had played a memorable part in Aunt Tan's career. Late one night, soon after Aunt Tan came back from her midwifery course, Tsai-ti's husband had come for her on his bicycle. In those days she was inexperienced and her heart had thumped when she remembered that it was Tsai-ti's first baby. The night was cold and it was drizzling. Sitting on the carrier, Aunt Tan started shivering. The young husband pedalled like one possessed at the thought of his impending fatherhood. What with him too impatient to look where he was going and Aunt Tan behind him shaking like a leaf, the bicycle crashed and both riders were thrown quite a distance. Aunt Tan's leg was badly scratched. Now, that firstborn was four but Aunt Tan still called his father "reckless scamp."

"You're driving a lorry now, remember! If you're still reckless you'll land in real trouble." Aunt Tan delivered this parting shot at the retreating back of the young husband, while Tsai-ti smiled behind the screen. Aunt Tan was tempted to tell Ho-mei the story so that she would know how the new midwifery had been introduced four years ago. Ho-mei, however, merely

smiled but asked no questions. She put on a white smock, turned on the newly installed running water to wash her hands and then sat down beside Tsai-ti to massage her back, teach her the breathing exercises and prepare her for a painless childbirth.

Aunt Tan watched all this with a new feeling of peace, annoyed neither by the running water nor by Ho-mei's professional movements. The young couple's arrival had reminded her of achievements of which she could be proud, and of her hard work in popularizing the new method. She carefully sterilized her hands with alcohol and was soon telling Ho-mei about Tsai-ti's first-born, even showing her the scar on her leg. Ho-mei doubled up with laughter.

The sky darkened. Outside, the wind rose. Loudspeakers in the fields and on the village roads burst out together with a message from Party Secretary Tu. He urged the commune members to cover the vegetable patches as quickly as possible and to shield the cotton plants properly from the wind. They must not lose a single boll of cotton. All the commune's men and machines started a battle against the wind. Lorries tooted, excited voices were heard and the loudspeaker poured forth words of encouragement: these sounds were carried into the maternity home by gusts of strong wind at one moment but in the next the wind veered and all was silent. It was warm and cozy in the delivery room. The electric lamp shed a steady light over the delivery table, the two midwives, young and old, standing beside it and the mother waiting patiently to give birth.

Like a veteran of a hundred battles, Aunt Tan stood by, confident and strong. The woman in labour trusted her completely. And Aunt Tan responded to this trust like a real soldier, like the midwives in big hospitals, waiting at her post for the exciting and happy moment of delivery.

Resting peacefully between her labour pains, Tsai-ti opened her eyes to glance at the bright electric light. She smiled as she thought of the difference between her present surroundings and that time her firstborn came into the world. She also dreamed of her children's future.

"There's only four years between them. But don't you think, aunt, this new baby will be much luckier than its brother?"

"The old folk would say it is born in a lucky hour. If we'd had a people's commune a few years earlier, your firstborn might have come into the world under electric light too."

The wind whirled and howled. By contrast, the room seemed particularly quiet. Ho-mei kept on massaging the patient's back. Tsai-ti began to show signs of fatigue. She yawned and seemed to be falling asleep. Her contractions were tapering off.

Both old-fashioned and new-style midwives know that when a woman starts to yawn towards the end of her labour, it spells trouble. If the labour is unduly prolonged, the baby has to be delivered with forceps, otherwise it may stifle and the mother's life may be endangered. Delivery by forceps is a simple operation, requiring not more than ten minutes at the most. But Aunt Tan stood up abruptly at this juncture. "I'll go to the phone," she announced, making for the door. Ho-mei ran after her, but she had vanished into the darkness and the howling wind.

Aunt Tan ran towards the brigade office as fast as she could. The wind tore at her clothes and shrieked into her ears. This was not the first time she had rushed to the telephone, she had always felt that it was the right thing to do. The electric light was shining on the white bed on which the patient lay. Yes, everything was as it should be, except poor Aunt Tan, who couldn't do anything but rush to the telephone. It had been like this from the beginning. The commune now had electricity, lorries and tractors, yet she still rushed for the telephone when all the patient needed was a ten-minute operation. For the first time Aunt Tan felt almost ashamed to call up the hospital.

The sky was black. The wind roared through the deep, dark night. Secretary Tu's voice carried distinctly across the fields, over the roof-tops and along the country roads. "Comrades, the wind wants to rob us of our cotton, but we won't let it! We'll safeguard every single plant. We mustn't let a single boll be blown off. . . ." To Aunt Tan, he seemed to be whispering: "Our generation has a task that's far from simple, aunty. We're going to change society and keep on changing it. Things are developing at tremendous speed, but old ideas and old ways die hard. . . ." Aunt Tan wiped the sweat from her forehead and slowed down.

Two columns of light pierced the black road in front. A lorry loaded with mats flashed past. The first batch of lorry drivers trained by the people's commune were at their post. The first tractor drivers were at their post, the first trained obstetrician. . . . A young ruddy face was suddenly before her mind's eye, a smiling face with short plaits sticking out at angles. "Ho-mei!" Aunt Tan stopped. When she left the maternity home, Ho-mei's young face had been calm and composed. Yes, the first obstetrician trained by the people's commune was at her post too. She had not rushed into the night for the telephone. Aunt Tan turned and ran back to the maternity home, which now had its own doctor, had entered a new stage. Aunt Tan saw clearly now.

The wind pushed her along with such force that her feet barely touched the ground. When she reached the home, Ho-mei was putting on a sterilized gown. She was not as calm as Aunt Tan had imagined, but somewhat tense, although not really nervous. Tsai-ti was still dozing.

"I don't think we should wait any longer, aunt," said Ho-mei in a worried tone.

"Hurry then, child." There was infinite warmth in Aunt Tan's voice.

"I'm a little nervous. I've only done this twice and both times another doctor was with me."

"Don't you worry, child. I'm with you now. The first time is always a little frightening, but don't we always get over it all right?" Aunt Tan washed and sterilized her hands, took the rubber gloves from the drawer and helped Ho-mei put them on.

All kinds of emotion had welled up in her heart: excitement, happiness, a touch of envy and considerable self-reproach. Watching Ho-mei, a mask over her mouth, pacing back and forth getting things ready, clanking the forceps, Aunt Tan felt this was in keeping with the bright electric light overhead.

"Tsai-ti hit on the truth just now. Her firstborn is not as lucky as this second one, and Ho-mei is luckier than I. All that talk about lucky hours and horoscopes is nonsense but it's much better to be born now, to begin life today."

The wind raged outside but Secretary Tu's clear voice still sounded in her ears: ". . . Our work is making a revolution and our study is making a revolution too."



"No, we older folk should take the lead. I want to give a lead. I can learn, Secretary Tu, and I want to learn. I mean to work for the revolution. . . ." Straightening her back, Aunt Tan walked towards Ho-mei. Her legs felt as shaky as when she delivered her first baby.

"Ho-mei, let me learn to do this."

Ho-mei noticed the timid appeal in Aunt Tan's face as she stood firmly before her. In that instant she understood the whole history of the maternity home, the struggle involved to introduce scientific midwifery. She pictured Aunt Tan on a bicycle carrier at midnight on her way to deliver a baby; she remembered how

proudly Aunt Tan turned on the electric light. . . .

Ho-mei felt like hugging the older woman who was so young and strong. But there was no time to say more than, "You're right, aunt, this is not a bit difficult. We'll do it together this time. You'll be able to do it alone next time."

Aunt Tan turned on the running water, washed her hands again carefully, and rubbed them with alcohol before going to the delivery table.

Everything went smoothly though Aunt Tan ceased to be aware of the whiteness of the bed, the brightness of the lamp and the howling of the wind. She saw only Ho-mei's skilful hands moving rapidly but with assurance and heard only her requests for this instrument or that. Suddenly, a newborn infant's cry pierced the air. It was a boy, another little "reckless scamp."

When Aunt Tan straightened up, Ho-mei's strong young arms held her close. "Aunt!" Her eyes were bright with tears of joy.

"Good work, aunt!" said the two patients coming out of the ward. Aunt Tan sat down with a smile. She looked up at the

lamp, which was so bright. This light hanging there so serenely was not merely a means of illumination, there was invisible force in its radiance. Aunt Tan seemed to hear again Secretary Tu's voice: "Our generation has a task that's far from simple. We're going to change society and keep on changing it. . . ."

"Don't you worry, Party secretary," Aunt Tan reassured him silently. "I know our work is making a revolution and our study too. So let's go ahead and learn."

The wind, as if conquered by that firm strong voice, began to withdraw. The night became quiet again. The hands of the clock showed midnight. This quiet maternity home, together with all the villages and towns of China, moved forward into a new day — a glorious day never known before.

*Translated by Tang Sheng
Illustrations by Shu Lan*



Encounter on the Road

At the western end of the village not far from the road was a small compound surrounded by pear trees. Passers-by looking over the low fence could see plastered above the house door such laudatory stickers as "Model Family of the Commune," "First in Cleanliness," "Models of Thrift." The newer strips were bright red; wind and rain had faded the others to a pale pink. In any event, you needed only a glance to know that here lived one of the most active families in the Second Production Brigade of the Red Flag Commune, southern Sinkiang.

The man of the house was known to his neighbours as Uncle Turak. His wife was named Anrherh. Like most of the people in this region, they were of Uighur nationality. At the age of fifteen, Anrherh had been sold in marriage by an avaricious father to a small merchant in another county. She saw her husband for the first time only after she entered his door, when she discovered that he was an ugly one-eyed brute nearing forty. Day and night he drank and caroused with a gang of disreputable cronies. As to his treatment of the young Anrherh, when he was in a good mood he only tormented her; in a bad mood, he beat her. Anrherh's body was a perpetual mass of bruises.

One spring evening two years after her marriage, the one-eyed brute and a few of his rascally cohorts guzzled till they were roaring drunk and went staggering out of the house. They never returned. Glad of the opportunity to escape from the fiery pit, Anrherh ran home to her family.

When she was thirty, she finally found the husband of her choice. Anrherh married a hired hand in the same village, a man three years older than herself called Turak. A year or so later, she gave birth to a daughter. They named her Zaenaphan. After Sinkiang was liberated, the progressive stages of land reform, mutual-aid teams, agricultural co-ops and — starting in the winter of '58 — people's communes, brought tremendous changes to the countryside. A growing prosperity was clearly reflected in the life of the people and in their manner. Uncle Turak now smiled constantly. At social gatherings he even cracked an occasional joke. A hard worker who always put the interests of the commune first, Turak's prestige rose steadily. Not long after the commune was formed, he was chosen leader of one of the production teams. Turak enjoyed the respect of everyone in the village.

By then Zaenaphan was eighteen. She was as lovely as a budding rose and lively as a lark. In the village women's group, Zaenaphan ranked with the best both in character and as a worker.

As the girl approached maturity, her mother gave constant thought to Zaenaphan's marriage, for who knew better than Anrherh what misery a bad husband could bring? Anrherh was more concerned than a hundred ordinary mothers put together.

From the day Zaenaphan was old enough to understand the meaning of love, Anrherh watched her vigilantly. On several occasions she questioned the girl indirectly, to see if there was any boy she particularly favoured. Each time Zaenaphan blushed as red as a pomegranate flower and fled laughing embarrassedly.

But, as the old Uighur saying goes, "diligent efforts are never in vain," Anrherh soon learned her daughter's secret. It seemed that the previous winter at a meeting of model commune members Zaenaphan had met a young fellow named Ahmat, of the Fifth Production Brigade, which was in another village, and the two fell in love. The leader of Second Brigade told this to Anrherh personally. Young Ahmat was related to him. Anrherh invited the brigade leader to her house one day on the sly when her husband and daughter were out. She asked him everything about the young man — his family background, how many were living at home, his parents' temperament, and many questions concerning Ahmat himself, even including such matters as what

he liked to eat, whether he drank or not, and whether he snored at night.

Anrhern blurted out her queries in virtually one breath. The brigade leader laughed.

"Tell me everything, the more in detail the better," Anrhern urged. "If we make a match, I'll stand treat to four drams of wine and a plump broiled chicken."

The brigade leader answered her questions one by one, like a child taking an oral exam. He lauded the young man to the skies, pouring the praise on so thick that Anrhern's heart beat faster. Actually, the brigade leader wasn't exaggerating. Ahmat was after all the head of a production team, a model Communist, and secretary of a Communist Youth League branch. You don't come by these honours easily!

Feeling much better, Anrhern saw the brigade leader to the gate. Suddenly a new thought struck her. "Tell me, brother. Would it be possible for me to get a look at the young man? If all goes well, I'll treat you to four drams of wine and a plump broiled chicken!"

The brigade leader laughed. "Remember! That's a total of eight drams of wine and two broiled chickens!"

That day was Friday—the Moslem sabbath. At eight in the morning Anrhern was already out in her courtyard sifting faulty grain from some rice. March sunlight, filtering through the sparse leaves of the ginkgo tree, was pleasantly warm on her bent back. As her robust body swayed from left to right in motion with the swinging of her horsehair sieve, the little stool beneath her creaked protestingly. Several fat hens, spread out before her like a line of skirmishers, were alertly watching every movement of her hand. She had only to toss out a few faulty grains and they charged forward *en masse* and gobbled them up with rapid pecks. Anrhern shooed them away. The impetuous woman was seething with anger.

Young Ahmat had promised to come today. This, to her, was an event of enormous importance. Anrhern had picked up two catties of rice at the community dining room, plus half a catty of cooking oil. She hadn't had time to go into town for

meat, but she had killed one of her hens. Anrhern was going to cook a delicious *pilau* of chicken and rice.

All these preparations had been made secretly, for she feared that her husband and daughter might object. "Let them," she had said to herself the night before. "Stick a horse's muzzle in the water and it has to drink willy-nilly. We'll do this my way." And she started to work on the *pilau*.

But what a nasty surprise she got when she told her husband what she was up to. Uncle Turak had blinked his eyes and said mildly, "I'm afraid you and Zaenaphan will have to receive our guest without me. The tractor is coming to our brigade the day after tomorrow to plough and sow. Some of our fields haven't been properly levelled yet. Everyone has volunteered to give up his rest day and get them done. I can't very well stay home and leave all the work to the others, can I now?"

Zaenaphan had shaken her head violently. "Papa is right. I won't be home tomorrow either. My women's group is challenging the men to see who finishes first. We're going to repair the bridge over the irrigation ditch east of the village. I've been named a model worker. Can I stay home just because we're having company?"

The news that her husband and daughter would both be away struck a chill to Anrhern's heart. She must be getting dotty in her old age! How could she have forgotten such an important thing? The commune had bought seven new tractors and one of them had been assigned to their village's brigade. It was coming to work their fields the day after tomorrow. She had forgotten completely. Anrhern, nearly fifty, hung her head like a child who knows that she's been wrong. Whatever was she going to do?

The next morning her husband went off with his baskets and carrying-pole; her daughter left shouldering a spade. Out of force of habit, Anrhern also took up a farm implement and started for the door when she saw the chicken and rice waiting on the stove. She set the implement down with a sigh. Despondently, she occupied herself with picking faulty grain from the rice.

There was no getting out of it. She couldn't leave no matter how much she wanted to. She would have to remain and welcome the guest cordially. Anrhern was a strict observer of the social

amenities. She wasn't going to let it be said that the Turak family was anything but courteous.

By the time Anrhern had finished picking over the rice, the sun had already risen above the tree-tops and was gradually moving towards its zenith. The smell of cooking wafted to her through the cool fresh air. That meant the community dining room next door was starting to prepare lunch. But this village of over a hundred families was strangely quiet today. There wasn't even a sound from the neighbouring kindergarten, where the children usually played noisily and laughed from morning till night.

Everyone was in the fields. Carrying their spades, they cheerfully dashed about smoothing out the rough spots for the morrow's tractor ploughing. Call that labour? By heaven, it was more like readying a soft warm cradle for a baby that was expected at any minute! People were so enthused they were ready to bring out their family carpets and spread them on the fields to provide the tractor with a smooth run.

Anrhern lit the fire under the *pilau* and added a few big sticks of kindling. She went out and stood in the courtyard for a while. In spite of herself, she walked to the compound gate. What could be keeping the young fellow? Didn't he know their address? Suddenly she thought — he must have gone to the brigade leader's house first. Hadn't they arranged to come together? Anrhern hastily crossed the street and walked rapidly towards another section of the village.

But Anrhern was disappointed. Needless to say the brigade leader wasn't home. She could only start back. But instead of going home Anrhern followed the street to the village outskirts. Endless fields greeted her eyes, and irrigation ditches straight as an arrow. Row upon row of fruit trees fringed the village; on the reddish branches of the peach and apricot trees — which are sensitive to the first breath of spring — soft little green buds had already appeared and were about to burst into tender leaf. A spell of enchantment spread through the stillness. Even the flaming red sun, the bright blue sky, the white fleecy clouds, and the flocks of grey doves that occasionally swept by overhead, seemed different than ordinarily. One felt a freshness. A happy sweetness seemed to well up from the heart.

Anrhern walked and walked. It was along this road that tomorrow the tractor would come. Recently the road had been repaired and widened. Saplings had been planted along both sides. Anrhern continued to walk. Why? To meet her future son-in-law? To seek the brigade leader in the fields? Perhaps for neither of these reasons. Maybe she was only trying to walk off her feeling of irritation.

Not far ahead Anrhern saw a big hole. Dark brown earth was splashed all around. The hole spread straight across the road, cutting it in half like a belt. Anrhern remembered: Yesterday at noon, water was released into a newly dug irrigation canal near the road for the first time. A side of the canal sprang a leak and water went roaring into the field of green winter wheat. The break was growing wider by the minute. There was no time to go to the relatively distant desert for earth; everyone dug into the dirt road, which was close at hand, intending to repair it later. Heavens! In all the excitement of challenges and competitions, they must have forgotten! Anrhern hastened towards the hole.

"Hey, old aunt, not so fast. Watch where you're going!" A young fellow hailed her sharply from a raised path in a field to the north of the road.

Anrhern halted abruptly and looked. Spread neatly on the road were several cakes of dried cow manure. She had nearly stepped on them. By then the young fellow had come nearer. A handsome lad with large eyes, long lashes and well-formed smiling lips, he appeared to be about twenty-two or three. He was dressed in a somewhat worn knee-length black robe bound at the waist by a red sash. On his shoulder was a big carrying-pole from the ends of which hung two large baskets filled with earth. He walked up to the hole and with a deft twist emptied the two baskets into it. Not even pausing to wipe the sweat from his brow or catch his breath, he strode off again smartly.

Gazing after him, Anrhern couldn't help hoping — maybe that's the boy. . . . But of course it couldn't be! What young man coming to visit his prospective in-laws for the first time would wear his old clothes? Even if he didn't change, he surely wouldn't come calling with a pair of manure baskets! Anrhern had never seen this boy before. He's not from any of the villages around here,

she decided. But who is he? And why is he repairing our brigade's road? Let me ask. . . .

Before she could open her mouth, the boy spoke up.

"Are you from this village, aunt?"

"What if I am?"

"Your production brigade does a pretty poor job of things, I must say. You know the old saying: 'No need to ask if a woman's a good housekeeper. Just see if her front doorstep is clean.' Look at this road, will you? The commune notified every brigade long ago to get the roads levelled for the tractors, but here you are with a great big hole!"

Anrhern was annoyed by his positive tone. How dare he criticize her brigade for a little thing like this?

"Any person with eyes in his head can see whether our road is well-tended or not," she said sarcastically. "As to the hole, it's obvious that earth was taken from here yesterday for an emergency repair of the irrigation ditch."

The young fellow grinned, disregarding her sharp retort. "Maybe so. But why is it still in this condition today? The commune's notice said the tractors will arrive the first thing tomorrow morning. Why hasn't anyone repaired it?"

Under the circumstances, Anrhern naturally couldn't admit that the brigade had forgotten about the hole, but she couldn't think of a suitable retort. Evidently guessing her secret, the boy looked at her, smiling. His manner infuriated Anrhern. Words leaped from her mouth.

"Aren't I anyone? I've come to repair the road! That's exactly why I'm here!"

"All alone?" the boy asked sceptically.

"All alone! What about it?"

The young fellow shoved his hand under his leather hat and scratched his head. "This hole is going to take an awful lot of filling." He gave Anrhern another look. Now he saw through her sham. "My dear aunt," he said banteringly, "you've come empty-handed. What are you going to carry the earth in?"

"I'm just making an inspection first — to see how much of a job it is. You have to calculate these things in advance. Don't you even understand that? Now I'm going back for my tools!"

Anrhern did indeed rush back to the village where she picked up her spade. Reaching for her baskets, she hesitated, then set them down again. They were very pretty. Her daughter Zaenaphan had woven them for her only two weeks before. But they were a trifle small. To impress that boastful young man she needed bigger ones. Otherwise he'd laugh at her again.

Shouldering her spade, she left the compound. But though she searched the village from one end to the other, she couldn't find any baskets that were big enough. In the yard of the community dining room she saw the old carpenter, Abdulla, perspiring mightily as he laboured over a couple of wheel-barrows. Anrhern's eyes lit up. Hurrying over to him, she cried, "Nearly finished, Brother Abdulla?"

"That one's finished," he said without raising his head. "This one won't take long either." Abdulla was a gabby old man. He sighed as he wielded his hammer. "Ah! Youngsters are crazy nowadays. They work like they're on fire. Take this barrow, now. Strong, sturdy. But how they piled on the loads! Said they wanted to double their quota. Of course the barrow broke. Just a lot more trouble for me. . . ."

Hearing a wheel creak, Abdulla looked up. Anrhern was running off with the repaired barrow. He flung down his hammer and chased after her, yelling, "Where are you going with my wheelbarrow, you crazy old woman!"

Anrhern shouted back over her shoulder, "Don't be so petty, you crazy old man! I'm putting it to work for the brigade. What are you making such a fuss about!"

The young fellow in the black robe and red sash was, of course, Zaenaphan's Ahmat. He was a team leader in the Fifth Brigade. This brigade also was busy levelling ground for the tractors, and at first Ahmat decided not to call on Zaenaphan's family today. But by ten in the morning his team's job was done. Since he had promised, Ahmat thought, he'd better go, or else the old folks would be displeased. Taking up his spade and his carrying-pole, he set off for Zaenaphan's village. On the way he picked manure, intending to leave it and his implements at the house of his relative, who lived in the same village as Zaenaphan and was the leader



of the Second Production Brigade. After freshening up there, he would call on Zaenaphan's parents.

When he came to the big hole, Ahmat became worried and rather angry. At this late hour, Second Brigade still hadn't made its repairs! But then he thought — perhaps they're too busy to spare anyone from the fields. He emptied his baskets of cow manure onto the road and set off to fetch earth from the desert's edge, more than a *li* away. The road was for the public good. His appointment with his prospective in-laws was only his personal affair. It didn't matter if he arrived a little late.

Ahmat was hauling his third load of earth when he met Anrherh. Never having seen each other before, neither knew who the other one was. . . .

Now, Anrherh returned with the wheel-barrow. Ahmat examined it critically. Mulberrywood frame, pearwood axle, a glistening wheel — the barrow was solid and beautifully balanced. Even with a load of two or three hundred catties it could sail along like the breeze. His heart filled with admiration, Ahmat rushed over the shafts. But Anrherh agilely twisted out of his way.

"No need to ask if a woman's a good housekeeper. Just see if her front doorstep is clean." Anrherh recited mockingly, imitating the young man's tone of voice. "Isn't that what you said? I don't know where you're from. We don't have that saying around here. In these parts we say, 'You can slice meat with the edge of a hard-working farmer's spade, but the knife of a lazy man is rusty and dull.' Hah! Just take a look at this barrow. That'll show you what kind of a brigade we are!" She



shook the handles and asked with a proud laugh, "Well, young fellow, how do you like it?"

Ahmat was very embarrassed. Had he known the lady was so sharp he wouldn't have provoked her. It didn't do to stick your neck out blindly!

Satisfied that she had retrieved the honour of her brigade from this brash young stranger, Anrherh triumphantly trundled off with her barrow along the bank of the irrigation ditch north of the road. Not far ahead, she crossed a small bridge over the gurgling stream and marched on through the fields of green wheat in the direction of a grove. Ahmat followed with his carrying-pole and baskets. After a while, he halted and asked doubtfully:

"Why not go south of the road, aunt? The desert is only a *li* away. We can get all the earth we want."

"Just stay with me," Anrherh laughed. "Don't forget I live here. I won't take you on any wild-goose chase."

In the centre of the grove was a clearing about two *mou* wide, grown over with weeds. Beneath the weeds were many earthen mounds. Here and there dry branches had been stuck into the ground. Anrherh rested her barrow, rolled up her sleeves and picked up her spade.

"But these are ancient grave mounds!" cried Ahmat.

"What's the matter?" Anrherh twitted him. "Scared? And you have the nerve to criticize others! If the girls find out that you're still superstitious, how will you ever get a wife? Let me tell you, my boy — we've wiped out superstition in our brigade long ago. Not only are we taking earth from these old grave mounds, in a couple of days we're going to move the graves themselves. There's no use having this ancient cemetery sticking up in the middle of our fields. Besides being an obstacle to the tractors, it's an awful eyesore!"

Anrherh's raillery hurt Ahmat's pride. He took his spade and walked to one side. "You shouldn't belittle people," he mumbled. "Of course these mounds ought to be levelled. When I saw them still here I thought it was you people who were superstitious!"

Anrherh laughed heartily. Vigorously wielding her spade, she quickly filled the barrow, then walked off with it. Guided by her firm strong steps, the barrow moved swiftly down the path and soon returned for another load. Ahmat, with his carrying-pole

and baskets, followed doggedly. Thanks to his recent lesson, he didn't dare open his mouth. But his mind was working fast. To tell the truth, he was enchanted by the pretty barrow. How effortlessly its wheel turned! Even its creaks were music to his ear! And although that sharp-tongued old aunt was at least fifty — he could see strands of grey hair pecking out from beneath her coffee-coloured kerchief — she pushed the barrow rapidly along without even panting. Ahmat was itching to get his hands on it. Only a couple of hundred trips with that little beauty would satisfy his craving. But how could he get hold of it without risking another rebuff? Finally he hit upon a plan.

"I say, aunt," he called a few minutes later. "Your brigade's doing quite well in putting wheels on its transport. That barrow is nice looking and it handles easily. It must have been made by an expert."

Anrhern, seeing that he had halted, sat down on one of the shafts of the barrow and wiped the sweat from her face with a sleeve. She laughed. "You're not mad any more?"

Ahmat stuck to his point. "Our brigade is doing all right in that direction too, but frankly we're not up to you."

"Now you're talking, young fellow. It pays to be a little modest!"

"The question in my mind is this: Sometimes it's not convenient to use a wheel-barrow. For instance, what good is a barrow when the wheat is tall and you want to spread fertilizer? What do you do then? Carry it in a sack, like in the old days?" He stole a glance at Anrhern out of the corner of his eye. "In other words, when you come down to it, my brigade is better than yours after all. While we've put wheels on our transport, sometimes we also use carrying-poles. Often they're more useful than barrows, to say nothing of being better than those clumsy dirty old sacks. But maybe your brigade isn't so good with carrying-poles? Maybe your shoulders are too tender? . . ."

"Very interesting," Anrhern said loudly. "I don't know who your brigade leader is, but he ought to teach you young fellows not to be so vain. Those fragile little birds' nests you're using for baskets on your carrying-pole, any three-year-old child in our brigade could handle with ease! We carry real loads!"

Ahmat shrugged. "Perhaps."

"Don't believe me, eh? I'll show you fuzzy-cheeked boy! I'll teach you to have respect for your elders!" She picked up the pole with a nimble flick of her toe, grasped it in mid-air, lifted it on to her shoulder, and started off with large strides.

Ahmat couldn't restrain a chuckle as he took over the shafts of the barrow.

"What's funny now!" Anrhern demanded angrily.

"I'm laughing because this barrow moves so light and fast," he responded mischievously.

"Ah!" Anrhern understood. The boy was after the barrow, so he tricked her into losing her temper. She laughed in spite of herself. "What a devil!"

Ahmat tore along with that barrow like a winged tiger. After rapidly filling it with large clods of earth and patting down the load with his spade till it was firm as a small mountain, he stooped, grasped the handles, straightened up, and sped off with his feet barely touching the ground. Before you knew it, he was back again.

Following along with the carrying-pole, Anrhern felt her heart grow warm within her. In these few hours, she had formed a great affection for the boy. He was young and handsome, and he worked like a whirlwind. Even his mischievousness was likeable! Now if Zaenaphan could find a boy like him. . . . As her thoughts wandered, Anrhern automatically slowed down.

"Tired, aunt? Take a rest. With this barrow I'll finish the job in no time." Suddenly, the young fellow's voice sang out beside her. Anrhern turned with a start. Hadn't she been right behind him? How could he have dumped the earth and come back so soon? Anrhern took a grip on herself and quickened her pace.

Without anyone noticing it, the sun had sunk to the top of the western hills. Scarlet clouds of sunset spread over half the sky. Flocks of doves and cawing ravens beat strong wings through the golden air, skimming low as they returned to their nests. Anrhern and Ahmat finally got the hole filled, and now they were tamping it flat with their feet and spades, to make this place as hard as the rest of the road.

A crowd of people approached across the field. The brigade chief was at their head, closely followed by Uncle Turak and

Zaenaphan. They had just finished a rush job and were coming to repair the hole.

When the brigade leader saw Ahmat and Anrhern, he hailed them gaily. "Ahmat," he shouted, "you come to our village as a guest. It's bad enough that I haven't had time to keep you company. To make matters worse, we've put you to work!" And to Anrhern he said jocularly, "This is very wrong of you, aunt. This young fellow is a prospective son-in-law and it's only the first time you've ever set eyes on him. No matter how busy our brigade is, you shouldn't make him labour for us!"

"Oh!" cried Anrhern, shooting Ahmat a flurried glance. "You mean he. . . ." She had forgotten all about Zaenaphan's intended. And that reminded her of the pot of *pilau*. It had been simmering on the stove for half a day with no one to watch it. It must be burnt to a crisp. She turned to dash towards the village.

The brigade leader caught her by the arm. "Not so fast. Not only have you seen the boy, but he's given you an exhibition of the way he works. That ought to satisfy you! What do you say? Do I get those two chickens and those eight drams of wine?"

"You certainly do," replied Anrhern. "Let me go. The hole is filled. Now all of you can help me entertain our guest. Zae-naphan, you and I'd better go home first. There's a whole mess of things we have to put in order!"

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Shu Lan*



Japanese Writers' Delegation in China

Chinese Writers Stand Together with the Fighting Japanese Writers

MAO TUN

We warmly welcome the Japanese Writers' Delegation, headed by Mr. Hiroshi Noma, now visiting our country. In the struggle against U.S. imperialism and its lackey Kishi, Japanese writers and artists have taken their stand with the heroic and united Japanese people and launched a powerful anti-U.S. imperialist patriotic movement. This movement has great world significance: it proves that the strength of the people is irresistible. The Chinese people, including Chinese writers and artists, have the greatest admiration for the heroic Japanese people and the Japanese writers and artists who are resolutely waging this just and patriotic struggle. In this struggle you have always been standing at the forefront. Now you have come specially to visit our country in your capacity as the cultural emissary of the heroic, fighting Japanese people for the purpose of consolidating and developing the fighting friendship between the writers and artists of China and Japan in the struggle against the common enemy, U.S. imperialism, at a time when the Japanese people's just and patriotic struggle against U.S. imperialism is surging towards greater heights. We would like to express our deepest appreciation here.

U.S. imperialism is the common enemy of the Chinese and Japanese peoples, the common enemy of peace-loving peoples

The Japanese Writers' Delegation arrived in Peking on June 4, 1960. This text is based on a speech at a great rally held in Peking to welcome the delegation with slight alterations by the author. See the report on page 42 on the visit of the Japanese writers in Peking up to June 15 when this issue goes to press.

throughout the world. The Kishi government is simply a lackey reared and brought up by U.S. imperialism. Recently this traitorous premier, ignoring the strong opposition of the Japanese people, the repeated warnings of China and the Soviet Union, used fascist methods to force through the Japan-U.S. treaty of military alliance, a treaty which, as Chairman Mao Tse-tung said on May 14 to some Japanese friends, is intended to suppress the masses of the Japanese people, is an aggressive military alliance treaty hostile to China and the Soviet Union and to the Asian peoples, is a serious menace to Asian and world peace, and at the same time would inevitably bring grave calamities to the Japanese people. The facts prove this statement correct. The forced "passage" of the Japan-U.S. military alliance treaty by Kishi thoroughly exposes his government's reactionary nature and ambitions to speed up militarist expansion. The late U.S. Secretary of State, Dulles, once openly declared that the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty" was not a philanthropic affair and of course not intended for the security of Japan, but a part of the arrangements to protect the safety of America. The former commander of the U.S. Eighth Army in Japan, Eickelberger, also said that if America keep a grip on Japan America will have industrial potential and manpower in the Far East. These two inveterate U.S. warmongers have blatantly exposed the nature of the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty." What is the nature of the new Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty"? It is in fact a Japan-U.S. military alliance aiming at forcing the Japanese people to serve as cannon-fodder for the aggressive wars of U.S. imperialism. It is indeed a great insult to the Japanese people and will also bring them grave calamities. To fawn upon his American masters, Kishi, lackey of U.S. imperialism, violating the will of the Japanese people, is now openly active in extending armaments and reviving Japanese militarism. Frantically hostile to China, he takes part in the plot to create "two Chinas," has drawn up a second long term plan for military expansion and is rushing to arm Japan with nuclear weapons. The Kishi government also drew up a "Plan for the Development of Southeast Asia." This is a plan of Japanese monopoly capitalists who following the will of U.S. imperialists, are trying to carry out economic expansion towards Southeast Asia, Latin America and

Africa while at the same time ruthlessly exploiting the Japanese people.

The Japanese people, fighting against the Japan-U.S. treaty of military alliance, have launched eighteen united actions one after another in little more than a year. The movement is gathering greater and greater momentum. Japanese people in all walks of life are taking part in the struggle against the new Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty" through strikes, meetings, demonstrations and parades, so that more and more people recognize the aggressive nature of this military alliance. The slogan, "Down with Kishi!" which the Japanese people put out at first, soon develops into "Down with U.S. imperialism!" "Yanks, get out!" This clearly indicates the advance in the Japanese people's political understanding.

At present, conditions are extremely favourable for the Japanese people's struggle. Just as Mr. Hiroshi Noma has said in his poem *All Cocks Are Crowing*, "We must at once take back our land, take back our grass and our bread, take back our mist-breathing woods, take back the clouds hanging quietly from our tree-tops. . . . Cock-crow ushers in the dawn; our people must wrest back from the reactionaries the rights that belong to them." We can further declare that the dawn-heralding cock-crow can be heard all over the world: from Asia to Africa and to Latin America, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, volcanoes are erupting on all sides. Wherever there is imperialist aggression, there the people are rising against it. Indeed, dawn appears as soon as the cocks sing their first song; the days when demons can bare their fangs are numbered. Supported by the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union and by all peace-loving people of the world, provided the Japanese people strengthen their solidarity and persist in their fight, they will certainly be able to win the final victory.

In the struggle for independence, peace, democracy and neutrality and against U.S. imperialism and its lackey Kishi, Mr. Hiroshi Noma, head of the Japanese Writers' Delegation, and other members of the delegation have raised pens like burning torches and have joined in the struggle with the whole Japanese people, have voiced what is in the hearts of the Japanese people, have sounded the battle drums of the advancing Japanese people. Chinese

writers and artists, with the entire Chinese people, resolutely and most fervently support your cause. The six hundred and fifty million people of China will always firmly support your fight for an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral Japan. The important thing is to unite all possible forces to form a broad united front, and to fully recognize the arduous and protracted nature of the struggle. We are confident that the heroic Japanese people will undoubtedly be able to strengthen their solidarity, enlarge their united front, persist in their struggle and, refusing to be harnessed any longer to the war chariot of U.S. imperialism, will bring about a fundamental change in their fate. On behalf of the Chinese literary and art circles, I extend our sincere feelings of friendship and deep respects to the Japanese writers and artists and the Japanese people. May you win more brilliant and greater victories in your struggle.

Impressions of Our Visit to China

—On the eve of departure from Peking

HIROSHI NOMA

On the friendly invitation of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and the Union of Chinese Writers, our Japanese Writers' Delegation has paid a visit to China. We came to Peking via Canton. Ever since setting foot in Canton we have received the warmest welcome from Chinese cultural circles and the Chinese people. This welcome has conveyed to us the deep friendship of the Chinese people and brought home to us their warm support for the Japanese people's struggle against the Japan-U.S. treaty of military alliance. We were greeted at Peking Station by more than two hundred Chinese writers and artists. Since then, at the receptions given to welcome us every evening, we have had the pleasure of meeting Liao Cheng-chih, Kuo Mo-jo, Mao Tun, Chu Tu-nan, Lao Sheh and other noted men of letters and cultural figures of Peking. We have been most inspired and learned much that will help us to carry on our struggle against the new Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty." At the same time, we have picked up ideas and ways which will prove extremely valuable in enabling us further to develop Japan's national culture in this struggle. Our hearts are overflowing with gratitude.

Each time we attend one of these splendid receptions, as we enter the meeting hall or leave a banquet, we invariably find our minds enriched, our heads filled with new ideas. We have seen the Chinese people's Big Leap Forward in socialist construction, and the blossoms of Chinese culture in full bloom, with such wide-eyed wonder as we gazed for the first time on the dazzling

red gates of China. In Peking we are conscious of being surrounded by great strength, the strength of a culture steeled and tempered in protracted struggles against imperialism; we are surrounded by gay laughter too. And a heartfelt ardour underlies this strength and this laughter. All this springs from China's age-old cultural tradition.

We were privileged to take part in the magnificent meeting of outstanding workers and groups in culture and education held to usher in a new upsurge in the cultural revolution, which, led by the great Chinese Communist Party and Chinese cultural circles, turn peasants and workers into intellectuals, and enable intellectuals to become a part of the labouring people. At this great meeting, attended by more than ten thousand delegates from different nationalities, it was clear that Chinese culture has entered upon a new stage of development. We are confident that in the near future, countless lovely flowers of culture will bloom in splendour to add fresh glory to the Big Leap of China's socialist construction. We shall look forward to their blossoming.

With the support of the cultural circles in Peking and the Chinese people, we took part, here in Peking, in the struggle of the Japanese people against the Japan-U.S. treaty of military alliance during the seventeenth and eighteenth united actions of the whole country, to prevent the revision of the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty" and the resolute opposition to Eisenhower's visit to Japan. In our fight we made prompt use of what we learned here from Peking writers and artists.

We conveyed to Chinese writers and artists and to the Chinese people the remorse felt by the Japanese people for the sufferings and calamities caused to China by the war. This remorse has been the source of immense strength in our struggle against American imperialism and Kishi, against the new Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty." Furthermore, this remorseful feeling will deepen with the development of the Japanese people's struggle. But the following moving answer has been made to our expression of penitence: China will not remember what has passed. Let what was done pass away like flowing water. The great struggle of the Japanese people today has changed China's view of Japan. The Chinese people support and will support the Japanese peo-

ple's struggle to the very end. Japanese writers and artists and their people are not alone in this struggle.

These, the words we have always longed to hear, we heard at last during this visit to China. My reply has been that we do not consider that the crimes perpetrated by Japan can be so easily forgotten. The aftermath of these crimes can be removed only by gradual degrees through the struggle waged jointly by the Chinese and Japanese peoples in their united front against a common enemy—the Japan-U.S. treaty of military alliance. I say this from the bottom of my heart.

We came to China with the support of the Japanese people now fighting against the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty." Daily contact with the Chinese people and their writers and artists has not only taught us much but enabled us to give them a true picture of how the Japanese people are preventing the Diet from revising the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty." I am more convinced than ever that thanks to this visit the solidarity between the Japanese and Chinese peoples has been further strengthened. We extend our thanks to the Chinese people who are so resolutely supporting the Japanese people's struggle.

On our return to Japan we shall convey to our compatriots the lasting friendship of the Chinese people and the deep sympathy of Chinese writers and artists for their Japanese counterparts, so that they, too, can share in our happiness.

By endeavouring for the resumption of diplomatic relations between Japan and China we shall do our best to consolidate and carry forward the solidarity between our two countries and make cultural interchange between Japan and China a torrent that will break any force trying to check it.

Finally, I hope it will soon be possible to invite Chinese writers and artists to visit Japan. We shall work to create the conditions for a reunion in our country. Once more let me express our deep gratitude to the Chinese Writers' Union and the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

Peking, June 15, 1960

A Great Welcome for the Japanese Writers' Delegation

As the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America and indeed the whole world were launching a series of mighty struggles against U.S. imperialism, a Japanese Writers' Delegation visited China from the front of the Japanese people's just and patriotic struggle. The seven delegates, headed by Hiroshi Noma and including the well-known critic Katsuichiro Kamei and the celebrated woman critic Yoko Matsuoka, came at the invitation of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and the Union of Chinese Writers. They met with a most cordial welcome from Chinese writers and artists as well as the general public.

Among the crowd to welcome them at Peking Station on June 4 were Liao Cheng-chih, chairman of the Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, Mao Tun, chairman of the Chinese Writers' Union, Chu Tu-nan, president of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and such noted Chinese writers and critics as Yang Han-sheng, Lao Sheh, Shao Chuan-ling, Chou Erh-fu, Yen Wen-ching, Yang Shuo, Ko Pao-chuan, Hsieh Ping-hsin, Yuan Chang-ching, Kuo Hsiao-chuan and Chi Hsien-lin. In his speech at the station on behalf of the delegation, Hiroshi Noma pointed out that he and his fellow writers had come to China at a time when the Japanese people were waging a fight against the new "Security Treaty." He said, "We want to convey to all of you in China the spirit and strength of the struggle, to let you feel the pulse of the Japanese people which is beating faster and faster every minute in this fight against U.S. imperialism and the Kishi government. And we want to absorb great strength from China to carry on our struggle."

The Japanese Writers' Delegation entered China on May 31. Starting from the first Chinese city they visited — Canton — they were given rousing receptions everywhere as the cultural representatives of the courageous, militant Japanese people. On June 1, the day before they came to Peking, a rally of more than a thousand members of cultural circles in Canton was held to greet the Japanese writers, who have

made a tremendous contribution to the just and patriotic struggle of their people. At this meeting, Hiroshi Noma gave a vivid account of the heroic actions of his compatriots in their campaign against the Japan-U.S. treaty of military alliance.

On June 7, more than four hundred writers and artists in Peking attended a reception to welcome the Japanese delegation, hail the great victories of the Japanese people in their present struggle, and encourage them to persist until the final victory is won. Mao Tun, chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers affirmed that the Chinese people are whole-heartedly behind their Japanese brothers and the final victory will undoubtedly go to the people of Japan. Hiroshi Noma, head of the delegation, said that the Japanese people would take even stronger action in opposition to Eisenhower's projected visit. Poets and artists at this reception recited poems and sang songs to express their respect for the Japanese people now in the forefront of the struggle against U.S. imperialism.



Mao Tun, chairman of the Chinese Writers' Union, speaks at the Peking writers and artists' reception to welcome the Japanese Writers' Delegation



Vice-Premier Chen Yi (right) receives Hiroshi Noma, head of the Delegation

in the eyes of the Chinese people and those of the world. The Japanese are a fine people, whose struggle for independence, democracy and freedom is a tide that cannot be stemmed. The final victory will certainly be theirs.

Kuo Mo-jo, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, gave a banquet to welcome the dele-



Kuo Mo-jo, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress receives members of the Japanese Writers' Delegation. (left to right)

Kuo Mo-jo, Hiroshi Noma, Katsuichiro Kamei and Yoko Matsuoka

In Peking, Vice-Premier Chen Yi also received the entire delegation and had a friendly conversation with them. The vice-premier said that the struggle against the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty" had already gained great victories. The Japanese people by their actions had changed the view of Japan



Hiroshi Noma, head of the Delegation, speaks at the Peking rally to welcome the Japanese writers

gation. Kuo Mo-jo pointed out that for a year now the Japanese people's just and patriotic struggle against U.S. imperialism has been going from strength to strength. Provided the Japanese people become even more united and persist in the struggle, they are bound to advance from one great victory to still greater victory.

On June 8, more than one thousand and five hundred people of all walks of life in Peking attended a great rally to welcome the delegation. Chu Tu-nan, president of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, made the opening speech. He said, that the six hundred and fifty million people of China have always considered it their sacred duty to support the just struggle of the Japanese people, that they look upon the Japanese people's struggle as their own and have always given it consistent, resolute support. Mao Tun also spoke at the meeting.

Amid warm applause, Hiroshi Noma gave a detailed account of the anti-U.S. imperialist patriotic struggle of the Japanese people. One year of this struggle, he said, "makes us feel that Japan has been born anew. This is the first step in a period of funda-

mental changes in Japan, a new starting-point. . . . The Japanese people and the Chinese people must form a united front to oppose their common enemy, Eisenhower, and overthrow him in this struggle."

Katsuichiro Kamei spoke to disclose the evil consequences of the domination of U.S. imperialism in all fields of Japanese life. Yoko Matsuoka vividly described the patriotic struggle of her countrymen, concluding her speech with these words, "We will fight to the end, till all this rubbish is swept clean from Japan!" These speeches deeply stirred the Peking audience.

The visit of the Japanese Writers' Delegation to China during this historic period has further strengthened the friendship and solidarity between the writers of our two countries, enabling us to blow the bugle of the East still more loudly, to inspire the peoples of Asia and of the world to advance in their struggle against the common enemy, American imperialism.

Peking, June 15, 1960

Spring in Northern Shensi

→
by Hsiu Chun

Hsiu Chun was born in 1926 in Shantung Province. In 1948 he joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army where he learned wood engraving in his spare time. His woodcuts have the distinctly local flavour of northern Shensi as he has absorbed much of the best traditions of northern Shensi folk art.



Writings of the Last Generation

HSIA YEN

Contract Labour

Hsia Yen, born in 1900 in Hangchow, Chekiang, is a leading playwright of the older generation. A revolutionary writer since 1927, he was one of the founders of the China League of Left-Wing Writers in 1930. His plays include *Under the Eaves of Shanghai*, *The Germ of Fascism* and *The Test* which appeared in *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1935. He has also published many volumes of essays.

Contract Labour, published below, is reportage — a literary form which was popular in the early thirties when at the call of the China League of Left-Wing Writers many revolutionaries wrote reportage to give a speedy reflection of reality. *Contract Labour* is representative of this genre for the period between 1931 and 1937.

It is quarter past four on a May morning. The last stars have just faded behind faint drifting clouds. The contractor's house is seething like a swarming hive.

"Turn out, now! Get up!" bellows a man incongruously dressed in a dark silk suit. "Light the fire, Spindle-shanks! Are you going to lie there all day, confound it, you sow!"

Sixteen or seventeen "sows" lie packed like sardines in the lower loft of this house, seven feet by twelve. In that steamy den, stinking of sweat and urine, the voice of authority galvanizes them into life. Yawning, groaning or screaming, they snatch up their clothes, shuffle into the wrong slippers by mistake and trample over their

neighbours to urinate noisily into a pot not a foot from one girl's head. Among these so-called "sows" the delicacy we associate with teen-age girls has evidently been blunted. They scramble up half-naked to open the door, fight with their trousers down for their turn at the pot, and don't scruple to strip themselves in front of a man, simply turning slightly away.

The man aims vicious kicks at some girls who are slow in getting up, then turns and steps on to the stairs, not two feet wide, to shout to the loft above:

"Do you want a beating? Still not up? Lazy sluts! Are you waiting for sunrise?"

Tousled and barefoot, blinking sleepily, some "lazy sluts" troop downstairs fastening their clothes. They crowd round the tap and splash water over their faces. Spindle-shanks is anxiously watching a pan of congee, till the smoke makes her start coughing violently. She is fifteen or sixteen, but few people know her name except the boss. Because she is literally nothing but skin and bone, all call her Spindle-shanks.

These are the workers' quarters of the Japanese cotton mill in Fulin Road, Yangshupu District, Shanghai. The compound is oblong, enclosed by a high red brick wall and intersected into two long narrow strips by a cement road. It is split up as neatly as a dove-cot: eight rows on each side with five buildings in each, making altogether eighty two-storeyed buildings. And each of these houses average about thirty-three "lazy sluts" or "sows" as the bosses call them. So apart from the labour contractors and their wives and children, well-clothed "cleaners" and guards . . . within the brick walls of this compound live about two thousand "sows" who, clad in rags themselves, work from dawn to dusk to make fabrics for others to wear.

The correct term for them, however, is "contract labour." As the result of an extraordinary transaction, they are under contract to the bosses or recruiting agents, who own them bodily. Every year — especially in time of flood or drought — the contractors who are well connected with Japanese mills go themselves or send their agents to their homes in the country or to the famine areas. With glib tongues which can make a straw sound like a gold bar, they work on the feelings of the country folk unable to support their children but unwilling to see them starve.

"She'll live in the company's foreign-style hostel, eating nothing but meat and fish. She'll have two days free a month, when I'll take her out to see the sights: skyscrapers, double-deck buses. I tell you, folks, Shanghai's full of strange, amusing foreign sights. You ought to have a look yourselves before you die.

"After three years, her earnings will be her own. Over a dollar a day isn't to be sniffed at! I wouldn't give anyone else a chance like this, not even if she kowtowed to me! It's because we're fellow villagers that I'm doing you this favour.

"Trust her to me. What can go wrong? I wouldn't trick one of our own folk, would I?"

A girl who has been eating roots and bark is naturally in no two minds about going, while even her parents envy her this wonderful chance. So they make a cross on the "contract" ready drawn up. The fee is usually twenty silver dollars and the period of the contract three years, during which time the recruiting agent will provide food, lodgings and work in return for the girl's wages. He is not responsible for death or illness. Ten dollars is generally paid when the contract is signed.

The two thousand or so girls in the houses at Fulin Road "belong" to over fifty contractors of this type. Since they are "machines" which meekly make money for their owners, the number each boss has is an indication of his ability and wealth, and ranges from thirty to anything over a hundred and fifty. Contractors who are big operators also practise usury, deal in real estate or run tea-houses, bath-houses or hairdressing establishments.

The manager of the Japanese textile mill rents these houses to the contractors for five dollars a month, and into each of these "foreign-style" cages they crowd over thirty living and moving machines. These loft-houses have no front entrance. Their front door is like an ordinary back door. Over each is a wooden slip three inches long on which are written in Japanese-style Chinese characters the name and place of origin of the contractor, like "Chen Tung-tien, Taichow" or "Hsu Fu-ta, Yangchow." Pasted on the doors are lucky tokens cut out of red paper, woodcuts to keep away ghosts and evil spirits, or mottoes on faded red paper expressing such pious sentiments as "Virtue is its own reward," "Honesty pays." These inscriptions, in this setting, strike a self-righteous yet ironic note.

By half past four, in the pallid light of dawn which casts no shadows, the cement paths and corridors are thronged by these village girls, some of them barefoot. The fresh, moist morning wind is probably the only boon nature grants them to ease the fetid stagnation of their lives. They brighten up a little. Some take water from the common tap, others try with broken wooden combs to remove the fluff which clings stubbornly to their hair. A file of girls with carrying-poles, two by two, take out the brimming wooden night-pots, shouting as they jostle past. The contractors or their toughs, with a pile of "work-cards," straddle in front of the main entrance like the ticket-collectors at the barrier of a railway station. After the mats and tattered bedding downstairs have been bundled out of the way, the girls take down two tables which have been hooked to the wall during the night. A dozen or more bowls and a handful of bamboo chopsticks are slapped down on these tables, and the girl doing duty as cook puts a tin bucket of thin, watery congee in the middle. Their rations are two meals of congee and one of rice — congee for breakfast and supper, rice in the middle of the day. Their midday meal and supper are sent to the mill by the boss. The congee they eat is not what usually goes by that description, being made of a little poor-quality or left-over rice mixed with a large proportion of the soya-bean dregs which peasants usually feed to the pigs. Of course there are no vegetables to go with it. If a "kind-hearted" boss buys some spoiled lettuces in the market, this, dipped in salt, is a rare treat for them.

There are two benches only. But even if there were more, there is not enough space in there for thirty girls to eat together. They make a wild rush to fill their bowls, licking off the congee slopped over the side, then scatter to eat in the road or in the doorway, either squatting or standing. Second helpings are unheard of, except on such special occasions as the birthday of the boss and his wife, or pay day. And the girls whose turn it is to sweep the floor or empty the slops often get no first helping either. When the tin bucket is empty and those who have had nothing are left holding empty bowls, the boss' wife scrapes some burnt rice or left-over congee from the bottom of the pan, adds cold water from the tap, stirs this with greasy fingers which have just finished comb-

ing her hair, and angrily slaps the mess down in front of these cheap "machines" who need no additional "maintenance."

"Damn the lazy bitch! Serves you right for refusing to get up on time."

After the murder of Ku Cheng-hung* in the Naigai cotton mill in 1925, and even more after the Japanese attack on Shanghai in 1932, the Japanese mill-owners have come to need more and more of these special, cheap "machines." According to them, this method of labour recruitment is strictly in accordance with the principles of management and economy. But since these so-called machines are made of flesh and blood, after they have put up with more than flesh and blood can stand they tend to remember their long-forgotten strength. Sometimes these "stupid slaves" get the idea that there is strength in unity. Or they may at least choose to starve to death rather than work. Another troublesome feature of modern industrial management is the fact that workers are constantly changing their jobs, though the bosses refuse to open their eyes to the root cause of this. A self-styled "humanitarian" Japanese with experience of workers in a colony wrote this of the May 30 Massacre: "During this clash, the police force lost all its authority. Confronted with the combined strength of the people, all authority was powerless!" What, then, was his conclusion? Practise a little humanitarianism? Certainly not! The bosses took to using the cheap "contract labour" which has no "combined strength" in place of the ordinary free workers.

In the first place, the girls under contract are chattels of the boss who has contracted for them, hence they have no say as to whether they will work or not. Since their daily wages belong to their contractor, even when they are ill he can be relied on to serve the mill-owner faithfully by forcing them to work — by the use

* A Communist and workers' leader, killed by the Japanese capitalists who attempted to suppress a strike led by him in the mill. His death evoked the general indignation of the Chinese people. On May 30, Shanghai students marched to Nanking Road, shopping centre of the "International Concession," to distribute leaflets and many of them were arrested on the spot by the British police. Enraged by this outrageous act, thousands of workers and Shanghai inhabitants held a demonstration on Nanking Road. The British police fired into the crowds, drenching the street in blood. This came to be known as the "May 30 Massacre."

of his fists, a stick or cold water. Let us take the case of Spindle-shanks, though actually each girl is in a similar position. One very cold morning, she was lying "in bed" with flu. The floor on which they sleep has to be cleared by a certain time to make room for breakfast; but on this particular morning Spindle-shanks was genuinely incapable of getting up and contrived to roll to one corner, where she curled up in as small a space as possible. In loft-houses like this, however, you can't be allowed to establish a precedent for resting when you are ill. Very soon a "cleaner" marched over. Men in this job are usually related to the contractor, or thugs with a certain local pull, so that they wield virtual power of life and death. Spindle-shanks, too hoarse to speak, signed that she was unable to move and begged to be let off.

"You're shamming! I'll soon cure you!"

He dragged her up by her hair to throw her heavily down, then kicked her on the leg as she lay sprawling. Normally, that kick would have been the first of many, but not in this case. Later, the rough let it be known that he had stopped because Spindle-shanks' bones stuck out so far that they hurt his foot. In a rage, he snatched a basin of cold water which another girl had brought in to wash down the table, and poured this over Spindle-shanks' head. It was winter and an icy wind was blowing. The shock made her stagger to her feet. The boss' wife, who was brushing her teeth in the doorway, said with a snigger:

"She was shamming all along! She can get up all right. A basin of cold water has cured the slut."

That is only one example of many.

In the second place, the fact that these girls are all fresh from the country and most of them from the same village as the recruiting agent makes them easy to "manage." The factory owner, apart from building a high wall round the workers' quarters, putting a guard at the gate and nailing up a placard "No Admittance," so that these "country girls" are cut off from the outside world leaves them entirely in the hands of the labour-contractors. Since they are escorted to the mill by the toughs or contractor himself at five in the morning and brought back again at six in the evening, they have no chance to meet anyone from outside. In other words, these girls are a "tinned labour force," which can be "safely" kept

to be used as required, with no danger of going bad through exposure to the air.

In the third place, of course, their wages are very low. Once they have been brought to the mill by the labour contractor their name is changed. In the mill they are called "learners" or "apprentices." The period of learning is for the mill to see whether they are capable of working or not, and the period of apprenticeship indicates that a "new hand" is being trained to become an "old hand." The pay to begin with is ten to fifteen cents for a 12-hour day, and the work with which they start is completely unskilled, consisting of jobs like sweeping the floor, breaking the bale fastening, carrying bales of raw cotton, and so on. After a few weeks a girl is transferred to work in the card room, to tend the carding, drawing and roving frames. In textile mills run in the colonialists' own country, the work in the card room and blowing room is usually done by men. But in Shanghai, where they do not have to fear public opinion or state inspection, work too heavy for women is given to these girls who receive less than one third of a man's pay.

At five the first hooter sounds. The iron gate in the red brick wall swings open and out rushes pell-mell a flock of slaves without chains but each with a work-card in her hand. There is little talking, and what there is lacks spirit. Out of the gate, the stream of girls divides up. Those going to the No. 1 mill head east, those going to the No. 2, 3, 5 or 6 mill head west. After less than a hundred yards they mingle with another stream, the mill hands from "outside." It is very easy, however, for anyone in this neighbourhood to distinguish between the two elements in the stream. Those from outside are cleaner, and a number of them wear long gowns and brown or light blue plimsolls, while some of the girls in their later teens use powder and even wave their hair. Not so the "contract" girls. Without exception they wear trousers and jackets, black or striped trousers and faded green or drab blue jackets. They have long hair, often plaited. Their cloth slippers are worn and in holes, and some of them hobble a little. These two groups seldom speak to each other on the road. Perhaps the workers from outside hold aloof because of the dirt, country ways and queer accents of the village girls, whom they despise. They pride themselves on possessing a freedom and right that the others lack —

the freedom to choose starvation and the right to go to another mill or to stop work.

The mouth of the red brick monster is gaping now for its nourishment. A Sikh guard at the gate hands out passes permitting them to come in and labour. The "contract" girls simply hand over their work-cards, while those from outside in addition to work-cards have an identity card with their photograph on it. This dates from eleven years earlier. After the murder of Ku Cheng-hung, the workers in the Naigai mills went on strike but some other Japanese mills went on working. Then a number of mill-hands from Naigai slipped in to the Toyoda Mill in West Shanghai at considerable personal risk, to do liaison work there. After that, on the recommendation of the Toyoda Mill, workers had to have identity cards with photographs to gain admittance. This system is peculiar to Japanese mills. It is not in force, naturally, in Chinese mills, while in some British mills like "Ewo" mill-hands can take in their relatives or children to learn — for no pay, of course. Anywhere in that mill you can see little workers of seven or eight, sometimes no more than five. This child labour is naturally a "gift" not paid for.

Bale after bale of cotton, hank after hank of yarn are smooth and pleasant when made up into clothes or socks. But the process of turning the raw cotton into textiles is not so pleasant as wearing the finished products. Textile workers suffer from three scourges — noise, dust and humidity.

Pass Tsitsihar Road in the tram and you can hear a roar as of violent thunder and rain combined. Yet the moment you set foot inside the mill, you hardly notice the terrible din for it has paralysed your sense of hearing. The bellow of motors, the slapping of the belts, the whirr of spindles and the clacking of wheels . . . every hideous noise in the world seems to have converged in this building. You can't tell what causes this bedlam or differentiate between its component parts. The skilled workers in charge of doffing and the supervisors who go from one loom to another issue instructions not by words or signs but by the whistles which they keep in their mouths. For only the shrill blast of a whistle can be heard above the din.

The dust and the discomfort it causes are almost incredible. In the roving and spinning rooms, countless wisps of cotton fluff

in the air are visible to the naked eye, and the girls who sweep the floor push piles of fluff before them. Though sweepers go up and down, up and down between two rows of roving machines, the cotton fluff still drifts on the floor like snowflakes. In the blowing and card rooms it is of course even worse. When the bales of raw cotton are opened up, they are loosened by hand and the impurities removed. In the Japanese mills this work is done almost entirely by "contract labour," for these "obedient" girls will do tasks scorned by the others. In these rooms, no matter what you are wearing, in a very short time you will be covered with white. Cotton fluff flies about as if some devil were in it, getting into your eyes, nose, mouth, ears and every pore of your body, sticking to your hair and eyebrows. To get some idea of what this feels like, imagine that you have worked yourself into a sweat and someone shakes out a pillow stuffed with kapok over you! Not a single girl in the mill has a healthy colour. In a 12-hour working day it is estimated that on the average they breathe in .15 grammes of cotton fluff.

Humidity is another threat to the health of textile workers — especially those in the weaving room. The whole year is one long rainy season to them. Every day they are exposed to steamy heat. There is a definite ratio between the tensile strength of cotton and its degree of humidity. In other words, cotton breaks less easily in a damp atmosphere; hence the mills are fitted with humidifiers. In the weaving room, over every loom there is a humidifier which all day long sprays out so much steam that you cannot see your fingers before you. If you have been bitten by a mosquito or scratched yourself on your machine, you will soon develop an ugly festering sore. Outsiders can hardly conceive what it means to work in a temperature of 115° Fahrenheit.

It is only to be expected that a human being toiling in this noise, dust and humidity should tire rapidly, especially during night shifts. But there is no chance to doze off, because pitiless eyes are watching all you do. Neglect to join up a break, to adjust your ring-frame, to keep the roller belt in place or to keep your loom clean, will call down the wrath of the foremen or thugs. In recent years, by and large, there have been fewer cases of corporal punishment, but this good fortune is confined to the outside workers. If the foreman beats one of these, he may easily provoke

all the others in that room and, though they may do nothing at the time, when the shift is over they are likely to retaliate by enlisting the support of their own people. "Contract labour" has no such backing. Anyone can ill-treat these girls with impunity. They are the lowest of the low, the scape-goats of the foremen and the thugs. Faults in work are punished by beatings, fines and dismissal. But from the point of view of the girls' owner — the recruiting agent — the two last-named punishments are most undesirable. A fine cuts down his profits, while dismissal means that the girl stops earning altogether while he still has to feed her. So he has no hesitation in choosing the method of corporal punishment. At every festival, the labour contractors give the foremen presents, begging them humbly:

"Do us a good turn, brother! If my girls do anything wrong, just lam into them! Doesn't matter if you kill them — but don't fine them or sack them!"

"Doesn't matter if you kill them." This being the case, everyone can bully the "contract labour." One of them, called Hsiao-fu, once got a beating from the foreman for not clearing away the cotton waste. Unluckily for her, the Japanese boss' wife happened to come along, and to show how strict he was the foreman struck harder than usual. The Japanese woman watched for a while. Then, maybe finding this beating "uncivilized" or wanting to introduce a more rational penalty, she seized Hsiao-fu by the ear and dragged her up to the hydrant, where she made her stand facing the wall. As if guessing what was in his Japanese mistress' mind, the foreman came over with a roller that had been left on the ground. He slammed this spitefully on the girl's head, while the woman grinned.

"That's a very bad girl. Lazy!"

The foreman replied, imitating her foreign accent:

"With a roller on her head, the bitch can't fall asleep."

This "civilized penalty" may be imposed for a full two hours. But standing idle for two hours means you can't finish your daily quota and will be beaten by the labour contractor for docked pay — that is all in the day's work. Apart from beatings there are other punishments like being deprived of food, strung up, or locked in a dark room.

As a matter of fact, the foremen are not particularly polite to the workers from outside either, because there are more subtle forms of punishment than blows and abuse. For instance, they may give you difficult jobs or draft you to some task which you dislike. So some of the girls from outside are forced to bribe the foremen in self-defence. Obviously, it goes against the grain to spend hard-earned money on gifts for a foreman; but the "contract" girls do not even have this privilege. The girls from outside resent this additional burden, while the "contract" girls envy them the power of bribery.

Thanks to special privileges and the employment of such cheap labour, the Japanese textile mills in China have developed apace. This mill in Fulin Road will serve as an example. When Japanese capitalists bought Tachun Mill in 1902 and set up the first plant, there were less than 20,000 spindles; but today, after thirty years, they have six cotton mills, five textile mills, 250,000 spindles, 3,000 looms, 8,000 workers and a capital of 12 million dollars. Thoreau, friend of the American philosopher Emerson, declared in one of his books that each sleeper of the American railways is laid over the corpse of an Irish navvy. Surely over each spindle in these Japanese mills crouches the ghost of a Chinese slave cruelly done to death!

Since their attack on Shanghai in 1932, the Japanese have changed their tactics — work in the mills has been speeded up. Statistics show that in these four years the number of spindles and looms has increased, whereas the number of workers has diminished. But in the total of workers, the percentage of "contract labour" has shot up. Thus 24 out of 32 girls working at the drawing frame of a mill in Yangshupu are "contract labour," and that is roughly typical of the whole. If we make a conservative estimate of 50 per cent, there must be over 24,000 out of the 48,000 hands in the 30 Japanese textile mills in Shanghai who are "contract" girls doubly exploited by the mill-owners and recruiting agents.

Today we have scientific management and improved machines. In the roving room one girl used to tend one machine, but now she tends a whole row. In the spinning room one girl used to look after 30 top roller clearers (one clearer to 8 spindles) but now she looks after 100. In the weaving room one girl used to mind 5 looms, but now she minds around 20. One might expect this in-

crease in output to be accompanied by an increase in pay; but things are not so simple. The rate of pay in recent years has gone down by nearly half. For instance, the pay for weaving a hank of yarn (840 yards), which used to be 8 cents, is now less than 4. So a girl who minded one loom for twelve hours and wove 8 hanks in the past could get 64 cents; but now by minding 2 looms and weaving 16 hanks, she gets merely 48 cents. The rate of pay makes no difference to the girls under contract. The loss in this case hits the labour contractor.

Two meals of congee and one of rice, a 12-hour working day, a speed-up, additional tasks in the boss' house, filthy living conditions and inhuman treatment — this is the lot of these "machines" which are made, after all, of flesh and blood, not of steel. The term of their contract is for three years, but less than two thirds complete it. Work, work, work. You work even when you are too weak to walk, till your arms and legs are as thin as sticks, your back bowed, your face ghastly as death. Coughing, gasping, bathed in cold sweat, you are forced to work. Let us look at Spindle-shanks again. She is so fearfully thin that the wardress who searches the girls when they leave the mill cannot bring herself to touch her.

"Let her off! She's nothing but skin and bones. Touching her gives me a nightmare afterwards."

But the labour contractor is not afraid of nightmares. Someone shocked by the sight of Spindle-shanks said to him:

"Why not do a good deed for once, and let her go?"

"Let her go? Not likely! Not unless you give me back twenty dollars and two years' board and lodging." He glared at Spindle-shanks. "Don't go putting ideas in her head. I'd rather pay for a coffin and work her till she drops."

Spindle-shanks now earns 38 cents a day. If we estimate her pay at 32 cents (last year's pay) on the average, the recruiting agent has already made, in two years, 230 dollars out of her.

There was another girl, whose name escapes me. When she could not stand the life any longer, she contrived in the fifteen minutes' morning break to get one of the outside workers, who studied in night school, to write a letter home for her. I suppose the stamp must have been provided by the other girl, out of sympathy. A month passed with no reply. She was desperately anxious

yet lived in hope — her father might come to Shanghai to fetch her home! But his reply fell into the hands of her boss. When they came off work one day, the recruiter and two thugs were waiting at the gate. His jaws shaking with rage, he sprang at her and seized her by the hair. He kicked, punched, shoved and swore, incoherent in his fury.

"Damn bitch! Thought you'd queer my pitch at home, did you?"

"Pig! Three meals a day have addled your wits."

"I'll kill you! That'll teach the others a lesson."

"Who wrote the letter for you? Own up! Who was it?"

The girl's blood, her shrieks, petrified the entire workers' quarters. The others trembled — it might have been any one of them. When the recruiter was tired, he hung the girl up in his wife's room till the next morning. That night, but for the laboured breathing and shrieks of this girl at her last gasp, there was not a sound in the doss-house. The others lay open-eyed, holding their breath. In the black night, hundreds upon hundreds of slaves were sighing over their fate.

There is something extraordinary about the structure of the human body. Robust men of good physique may die as suddenly as a hemp stalk snaps while a girl like Spindle-shanks drags on from day to day. Any moment may be her last, yet she endures doggedly. Two meals of congee and one of rice, twelve hours of work in that din, dust and humidity — so the ceaseless grind goes on till the last drop of sweat and blood has been wrung from her emaciated body.

This system of keeping young girls to make a profit reminds me of the boatmen who kept cormorants to catch fish when I was a child. Cormorants look very much like crows. They line up on the prow of the boat with a cord round one foot, and dive into the water to catch fish. When they come up, the boatman squeezes their necks gently to make them eject their catch. The birds spend the whole day catching fish, but it is the boatman who keeps them who makes money out of it. In a child's eyes, however, the boatman was not being cruel, because he fed the birds well. But now that this relationship has been carried into human society, even this consideration has disappeared.

In the life of the thousands who are kept like this there is no light, no warmth, no hope . . . no law, no human kindness. Here

we have the advanced technique, machinery and management system of the twentieth century, while the slaves toiling faithfully for this modern system live under the feudal oppression of ages long past.

Their night is black and long, silent as the grave. It seems on the surface that here is no consciousness, no unity, no revolt as yet. They are living in a great casting furnace, and from time to time sparks flash past them; but these creatures are ground down so ruthlessly, squeezed so dry, that apparently they cannot even be enkindled.

None the less, the approach of dawn cannot be delayed. Thoreau warned the Americans to beware of the corpses under the sleepers. I would like to warn the colonialists to beware of the groans of the wrathful ghosts above these spindles.

April 1936, Shanghai

POSTSCRIPT

— Written in 1959

In 1927 I worked for a brief period as a trade-unionist in Cha-pei, Shanghai, and got to know various textile-workers. Before long I was drafted to another job. But towards the end of 1929 I was living in Tangshan Road and, since this was a working-class district, quite a few comrades who were active in the labour movement used my house as a port of call where they could leave a blue cotton worker's outfit. Arriving in a long gown or Western suit, they would change into working clothes to go to the factory, coming back after work to change again. It was from them that I first learned of the system of "contract labour" and the appalling conditions of the girls in the mills. Over a year later, I learned a good deal more from a comrade who was teaching in a workers' night school. After the Japanese attack on Shanghai in 1932, when the film director Shen Hsi-ling decided to write a scenario

dealing with girl workers in Shanghai, I told him about this contract labour. Later the Shanghai Ming Hsing Film Studio made it the subject of the film *The Outcry of the Women*. This was the first attempt by Chinese writers to deal with "contract labour," but owing to our lack of first-hand knowledge of the subject, as well as to the limitations imposed on us and the cuts made by reactionary Kuomintang censors, the film was not too successful. To write the script, however, I collected more material about contract labour and gained a deeper insight into the inhuman sufferings of these girls, which left me and other intellectuals like me aghast. I also read a fair amount about women in industry. While in Japan I gained some knowledge of the life of the Japanese textile workers, whose living standard and working conditions were considered in the capitalist world as the lowest and worst conceivable. Yet compared with China's "contract labour," the Japanese mill-hands were in heaven. It dawned on me with horror that the factories run by imperialism in the twentieth century were openly preserving the slave system. In bitter indignation I determined to expose this hell on earth, and tried to learn more in order to write a short story.

Then I met Hsing-ti, a Youth Leaguer who was working in the Japanese Naigai cotton mill. A few conversations with her convinced me that this method of collecting material would never give me a true understanding of the life of the "contract" girls — I must see it for myself. With the help of a former schoolmate who was doing clerical work in a Japanese mill, I was able to pay several visits to the workshops where contract labour was used and learn something about working conditions. But to grasp how the recruiting agents controlled these girls and how they lived, it was essential to see their quarters for myself. Young workers today must find it hard to understand or believe their conditions: the loft-houses where they slept were actually prisons guarded by Japanese gendarmes and sentries and the thugs employed by the labour-contractors. To prevent any contact between these slave girls and the outer world, this area was strictly out of bounds for outsiders. It is no exaggeration in my report when I describe the girls as a "tinned labour force" whom the capitalists sealed off tightly from any contact with the outer air. With Hsing-ti's help, I managed to run the blockade twice. After that, however, the

recruiters' thugs spotted me. My task was made doubly difficult by the fact that the girls went to the mill very early in the morning and did not come back till evening. Only at these hours could one see them on their way to work or coming back. Since I was living at some distance from the mill, to reach Yangshupu before five I had to get up soon after three and walk for more than ten *li*. So between March and May I worked for more than two months "on a night shift," eventually succeeding in this way in getting a clearer picture of their daily life. The multifold oppression of which they were victims and the untold misery they had suffered made these girls exceedingly chary of speaking to anyone, not only to me but even to the women from outside who were working in the same mill. Hsing-ti in her eagerness to help me, on several occasions came in time for the morning shift, joining their ranks in the hope of getting their inside story. But one look at her clothes and the girls, sizing her up, were on their guard. Some refused to utter a word, others watched her with undisguised hostility, taking her for a spy. From this it should be evident that it was far from easy to hear them speak frankly or know just how they felt.

In my report, I put all that I could find out at the time about their living conditions. *Contract Labour* is reportage, not fiction. My aim was the truth. I invented nothing and exaggerated nothing. I made as accurate a study as I could of the speed-up in the mills, the girls' working and living conditions, the system of pay. These things, well-nigh incredible to workers today, were incontrovertible facts.

I remember that what struck me most forcibly at that time was the close co-operation between imperialism, the feudal powers, thugs, Kuomintang agents and the like. To squeeze the last cent of profit from tens of thousands of helpless village girls, an unholy alliance was formed between the Japanese imperialists, the "Shanghai Municipal Council" of the so-called International Concession, the labour-contractors, mill-owners, gang leaders, Kuomintang spies and the local thugs and bullies. Within those red brick walls there was no Chinese sovereignty, no law or order, much less any safeguard for human life and freedom. After liberation, in a meeting during the movement to suppress counter-revolutionaries, I heard an old mill-hand make this accusation:

"You say we slaved like cattle for the bosses. We weren't as well off as cattle. We were treated like vermin. If the Japanese boss or the labour contractor killed a mill-hand, that was nothing. To them it was just like treading on an ant." She was quite right. That's how things were.

After liberation, I paid a visit to two new residential districts for workers, Tsaoyang Village and Kungchiang Village. I also accompanied some foreign visitors to the Workers' Hospital. I don't know how the others reacted, but what leaped to my mind was the thought of the life of the "contract" girls. Anyone with any decent feeling could not but be moved to tears by the thought of their conditions. Such phrases as "pale and gaunt" or "thin as a rake" are quite inadequate to convey their appearance. Very few of them indeed were free from disease—their most common ailments were T.B., beriberi and various skin diseases. In some cases their ankles had swollen to the size of rice bowls, but day after day, night after night, they stood there tending their machines. Last winter I visited a hostel for working women in Peking and rejoiced to see by their beds books, magazines, face-cream, scent. . . . When I first mixed with the "contract" girls, I was almost overpowered by the stench. It was May, during the rainy season in Shanghai, but they had no bathing facilities, no chance to wash their hair or their clothes. The result can be imagined.

I wrote *Contract Labour* in 1935 (it was printed in the spring of 1936), twenty-four years ago. To the younger generation in China, it must already seem ancient history. In those cruel times, today's young workers were still unborn. But I think for them to look back and learn a little about the past should give them an even deeper appreciation of their good fortune in living in the age of Mao Tse-tung. Gone for ever are the days when man preyed upon man in our country, when the capitalists treated the workers as cattle or vermin. But though those times will never return, let us remember at what a cost in blood and tears and countless lives our fathers drove out imperialism and overthrew that iniquitous social system. Happiness was won at a price.

Translated by Gladys Yang

Traditional Operas

CHANG KENG

The Revival of Two Operas

The Chinese theatre has a long history and a rich tradition. With roots in every village and town in China, it has always been close to the people. For long centuries, the local operas have played an important part in social and cultural life in China. And though during most of this time the Chinese theatre was utilized by the feudal ruling class, its true creators were the labouring people and writers and artists who came from the common people. They expressed the people's thoughts and feelings, creating a host of heroic characters known to every man, woman and child in the country and personifying the virtues of the labouring people, their industry, courage, wisdom and humanity. This is the salient feature of Chinese drama. Since the Chinese theatre arose in a feudal society, however, it could not but be influenced by the ideas of the feudal rulers, and feudal dregs are mixed with what is democratic and fine. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out in *On New Democracy*: "To clarify the process of development of this ancient culture, to throw away its feudal dross and to absorb its democratic essence is a necessary condition for the development of our new national culture and for the increase of our national self-confidence; but we should never absorb anything and everything uncritically. We must separate all the rotten things of

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the ancient feudal ruling class from the fine ancient popular culture that is more or less democratic and revolutionary in character." The editing and revising of good traditional operas is being carried out according to this principle. Since the liberation of China, under the correct leadership of the Party and the government, much work has been done in this field and notable results have been achieved. Our local dramas have been likened to "jewels hidden by dust." Now, after careful cleaning, they have revealed their splendour once more and are shining with a new lustre.

The Fukien opera *The Counterfeit Seal* and the Peking opera *Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind*, published in this number, are good traditional operas which have been revised and won an enthusiastic welcome in their new form. *The Counterfeit Seal* has also been made into a film and shown all over China. The success of these two operas testifies to the victory of the policy, "Let a hundred flowers blossom. Weed through the old to let the new emerge," in the field of drama achieved under the guidance of Marxism and Mao Tse-tung's thought on art and literature.

Fukien opera is popular in the region surrounding Foochow in the province of Fukien. It has a rich repertoire of more than two thousand plays, many of which deal with the past struggles of the local people, folk legends and life in Fukien. But even those which have been adapted from other forms of local opera possess a strong local flavour after being re-arranged according to the customs and conventions of Fukien. Fukien opera has its distinctive music and ways of singing, too, and these constitute the characteristics of this form of opera.

The Counterfeit Seal, which disappeared from the stage for a long time, by depicting the wit and sense of justice of two dismissed government runners exposes the corruption of feudal officials. The heroes Yang Chuan and Li Yi worked in the Ministry of Punishments in the capital till they were dismissed for protesting against acts of injustice. On their way home they pass Yangchow and hear complaints against the local despot Minister Hsiao, who has brought false charges against two blameless scholars, Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta. They are feeling indignant over this when they happen to meet Huang Pien, a servant of the newly appointed inspector general Chen Kuci, and

learn that Chen — expected in Yangchow — has gone home to be married. Then one of them poses as the inspector general, the other as his servant, to investigate cases and right the wrongs of the people. They release the arrested scholars and punish Minister Hsiao and the corrupt provincial judge. Soon afterwards the genuine inspector general arrives, but Yang and Li keep the initiative in their hands and worst him after a sharp struggle. Finally they leave on the pretext of travelling incognito to make further investigations.

The theme of this opera is very clear. It is a stirring comedy which clearly exposes and attacks the unjust feudal rulers who ground down the people, and brings out the moral strength of the common man. A series of sharp conflicts and contradictions leads up to a climax, holding the interest of the audience throughout. The characterization is successful too, with such typical figures as Yang Chuan and Li Yi, men with a strong sense of justice and intelligence. Both Yang and Li are optimistic, humane and fair-minded, but in other respects they are totally unlike. Yang is bold, thoughtful, calm and quick to take decisions, while Li is thoughtless and impatient and panics easily. Their differences in temperament lead to some of the humorous clashes in this opera.

The Counterfeit Seal in its original form is rather badly constructed. The first part deals mainly with how Minister Hsiao bribes the provincial judge to bring a false charge against Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta. Since this has no direct bearing on the central theme, it appears superfluous and weakens the main contradiction. This section was therefore cut in the new version, while other important changes were also made. The original opera makes Yang Chuan pose as an official for the fun of the thing; but since this is inconsistent with his desire to right the wrongs of the people, it has been altered. Again, during the meeting between the genuine and the counterfeit inspector general in the original, Chen Kuei denounces Yang for impersonating him and questions him severely, which is obviously out of character. In this revised version, Yang's ability to handle the situation is brought out by making him turn the tables on Chen. The strong contrast between Yang's intelligence and Chen's stupidity sharpens the conflict and heightens the comic effect. Similarly, in the

original script, Yang and Li finally abandon the gold seal and jump over the wall to escape. But clever and bold men should not appear so helpless, hence in the new version they pretend to be setting out to make investigations, and having reprimanded the provincial judge they walk off amidst respectful bows. This contributes to the delineation of their character. These examples show that only a historical materialist viewpoint and the use of a correct method of writing could enable us to revise our traditional dramas well and to bring out more forcibly their democratic essence. *The Counterfeit Seal* is a successful instance of this.

Peking opera, most popular of the different types of Chinese opera, arose and developed in the capital. Now with the increase in cultural interchange between many lands, it is becoming known to friends throughout the world. *Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind* is based on the legendary tales about the gallant men of Liangshan, "the heroes of the marshes" in the Sung dynasty. Li Kuei leaves the mountain stronghold of the peasant rebels on a mission and hears that his leader Sung Chiang and Lu Chih-shen the Tattooed Monk have kidnapped the daughter of a tavern keeper Wang Lin. Li Kuei goes back in a rage to the mountain and raises a tumult there. It is shown that he has been deceived, for Wang Lin's daughter was kidnapped by two men disguised as Sung Chiang and Lu Chih-shen sent by the local landlord Tsao Teng-lung. Impetuous Li Kuei, stricken with remorse, determines to atone for his mistake. He storms the Tsao manor-house, kills the wicked landlord and rescues the girl. Then with a cane on his back he returns to the mountain asking for punishment. Since he freely admits his fault and has always been a straightforward, honest man, Sung Chiang pardons him.

Li Kuei is one of the Liangshan heroes best known in China. At about the time when the popular novel *Outlaws of the Marshes** was written, some of these legends were made into plays by Yuan dynasty dramatists. During the past seven centuries Li Kuei has appeared as the hero of many local operas. A number of these are rather poor or unsuited for present-day audiences; hence an urgent need for revision was felt. The Peking opera *Li Kuei the*

*Or *Shui Hu*, one of China's great classical novels, four chapters of which were published in *Chinese Literature* No. 12, 1959.

Black Whirlwind is one of the most successful revised versions. This opera is based on the Yuan dynasty drama *Li Kuei Admits His Guilt* by Kang Chin-chih and has drawn material from the old Peking operas *Tingchia Mountain* and *Havoc in Chiangchow*. The process of re-editing was a complex one, for the opera was revised more than thirty times. Now, while remaining faithful to the old story and the characters of the heroes as described in the classical novel and traditional dramas, the editors have given us a truthful picture based on history, accurately portraying the period in which Li Kuei lived and his thoughts and feelings. They have succeeded in drawing a lifelike, unforgettable hero.

To throw Li Kuei's character into strong relief, great pains were taken to absorb the essence and discard the dregs. And as Lu Hsun said, when cuts are made there must be new additions also. The second scene "On the Road" has been much praised for the insight it gives into Li Kuei's character by his enjoyment of the scenery. A similar episode occurs in the original Yuan dynasty drama, but the scenery is described in the language of an intellectual, which seems out of character and incongruous. In this new version, Li Kuei declares: "If anyone says Liangshan has no good scenery, I'll smack his mouth! . . . How red the peach petals are! And how black my fingers!" These remarks vividly express his rough, honest character and his loyalty to Liangshan. In the ninth scene "Confronting the Witness," when it is proved that it was not Sung Chiang and Lu Chih-shen who kidnapped Wang Lin's daughter, Li Kuei forgets his own predicament and raising his thumb says proudly, "We men of Liangshan are all good fellows!" Only a simple, thoroughly honest fellow could react in this way. These deft touches convey his character most convincingly. In the eleventh scene, after storming the manor-house Li Kuei wants to kill himself and asks another Liangshan hero, Yen Ching, to take his head back to the fortress, and we know that he is speaking from his heart. But when Yen Ching tells him that a gallant man should admit his mistake and he had better go back to ask for punishment, he accepts the suggestion readily. This is in keeping with his blunt, open nature. These are some of the improvements in the revised Peking opera *Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind*.

Morning on Taibu Lake
by Ya Ming →

Ya Ming, born in 1924, comes from Anhwei Province. He took up art in 1940 when he joined the Communist New Fourth Army. He is at present vice-chairman of the Kiangsu branch of the Chinese Artists' Union. *Morning on Taibu Lake* is his recent work.



Many traditional operas are collective works by anonymous folk artists which have been revised at different times in history. *The Counterfeit Seal* is one of these, and today we are improving both the content and the artistic form of such works. Other types of traditional drama like *The Western Chamber*, written by famous playwrights, are classics which rank high in Chinese literature and have exercised an important influence. Owing to historical limitations, however, many of them cannot satisfy a modern audience and certainly cannot be accepted and appreciated unless certain changes are made. So for the stage it is necessary to revise these too. *Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind* belongs to this category.

There are more than three hundred different kinds of local opera in China which differ mainly in the use of local dialects and local music. In the old days they were seldom performed outside their own localities, thus there was little opportunity for mutual influence, and this held up the progress and development of the Chinese theatre. Since the birth of New China, local operas have travelled all over the country and some of the best have been made into films. This means that the best features of different local operas are spreading outside their place of origin, and each form of local opera is benefiting from this exchange.

The revision of these traditional scripts is one important aspect of the Party's policy, "Weed through the old to let the new emerge." The Chinese theatre embraces many arts. In addition to improving the scripts, improvements are also being made in stagecraft and music. Actors are receiving a thorough training in singing, elocution and acting, and are being enabled to get a wider experience of life in order to give convincing performances. These revised scripts are made even more effective, then, thanks to improved stagecraft, as was proved by the great success of recent performances of *The Counterfeit Seal* and *Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind*.

The Counterfeit Seal

(A Fukien opera)

CHARACTERS

YANG CHUAN }
LI YI } *two dismissed office runners*
MA SAN, *a drunkard*
KAO CHIEH, *a murderer*
CHEN KUEI, *inspector general*
HUANG PIEN, *his servant*
WEN HSI-MING, *a provincial scholar*
YANG CHEN-TA, *another scholar*
WAITER *in a tea-house*
LI HENG-TING, *provincial judge*
MINISTER HSIAO, *a powerful retired official*
PRIEST
GOVERNOR *of the circuit*
PREFECT
MAGISTRATE
ADJUTANT
STEWARD
SERVANTS
ATTENDANTS

SCENE I

(Enter YANG CHUAN and LI YI with luggage and umbrellas.)

YANG and LI:

*Thrown out of our jobs,**

In anger we've left the capital.

YANG: Brother Li, the two of us worked for some years in the Ministry of Punishments till we could stand it no longer. Then because we spoke up against injustice, we were dismissed. What is the world coming to?

LI (*sighs*): Only officials have any say nowadays, Brother Yang, not the common people.

YANG: Down here things are even worse. Feeling is running high over Minister Hsiao's false charge against Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta.

LI: I hear this Minister Hsiao is a dangerous enemy to have.

YANG: You mean we should look on and do nothing?

LI:

Everywhere there are bad officials,

YANG:

The common people are groaning under injustice.

We are tired from the road,

LI:

Let us find a tea-house and rest.

YANG (*seeing a signboard*): The Fairies' Garden Tea-house!

LI: Looks quiet and restful.

YANG (*calling*): Waiter!

(Enter the WAITER.)

WAITER: Do you want tea, gentlemen?

YANG: We do.

WAITER: Please come in.

*The lines in italics are sung.

(YANG and LI enter with the WAITER, who serves them and goes out. Enter HUANG PIEN with luggage and umbrella.)

HUANG:

*Don't be an official's servant,
It's a thankless job.*

My name is Huang Pien and I work for the new inspector general. My master, Chen Kuei, is making a tour of inspection on the emperor's orders. He has broken his journey to get married, sending me to Tsinan to report to his father. I am tired after travelling. I think I'll stop for a rest. *(Looking up.)* Ah, the Fairies' Garden Tea-house. *(Calling.)* Where's the waiter?

(Enter the WAITER.)

WAITER: Do you want tea, sir?

HUANG: Have you a quiet room?

WAITER: Yes, come on in.

(HUANG follows the WAITER inside. Passing YANG's table, he casts a glance at YANG, who notices him. LI is busy drinking tea.)

HUANG *(to the WAITER)*: Brew me a cup of good tea. *(He sits down near YANG.)*

(The WAITER assents, brings the tea and leaves.)

YANG *(standing up to greet HUANG)*: Excuse me, sir. Judging by your dress you are in government service.

HUANG: I work for the newly appointed inspector general.

YANG: Ah, an officer.

HUANG: Well, yes, in a way.

LI: A good, money-making job.

HUANG: A thankless job. Judging by your dress, you two gentlemen are in government service too.

YANG: Ah. . . . *(He smiles significantly at LI.)* We are from the Ministry of Punishments in the capital.

HUANG: So you are officers too.

YANG: Well, yes, in a way.

HUANG: A good, money-making job.

LI: A thankless job too.

YANG *(to HUANG)*: Would you care to join us?

HUANG: Why don't you both come to my table?

YANG: Don't stand on ceremony. Come over here.

(After some polite refusals on both sides, HUANG goes to their table.)

YANG: May I ask your honourable name?

HUANG: My humble name is Huang Pien.

YANG: I am delighted to meet you, Mr. Huang.

HUANG: Thank you. I have not had the pleasure. . . .

YANG: My humble name is Yang.

LI: And mine is Li.

YANG: Has your master taken up his duties yet?

HUANG: Not yet.

YANG: How is that?

HUANG *(hesitating)*: Well . . . I can't tell you.

YANG: We are all in government service. There need be no secrets between us.

HUANG: My master has been ordered to inspect this district, but he has broken his journey for his. . . .

YANG: For his what?

LI: Out with it, man!

HUANG: I can't tell you.

YANG: You can trust us. Don't worry.

HUANG: Promise not to tell anyone?

YANG: All right.

HUANG: My master has broken his journey to get ma. . . .

YANG: Married?

(HUANG nods.)

LI: By law he could be executed for that.

HUANG *(taken aback, says by way of justification)*: You may keep a secret from your superior but not deceive him.

YANG: That's right. You may keep a secret from the government but not from friends.

LI: You may keep a secret from those below but not from those above.

YANG: You're wrong there. You may keep a secret from those above, not from those below.

LI: That's right. A slip of the tongue.

HUANG: Have you gentlemen come here to investigate some case?

YANG: In government service, there's no escaping jobs like that.

HUANG: This is a bad place for you.

YANG: Why?

HUANG: There's a Minister Hsiao here whose word is law. Everyone's afraid of him.

YANG: Indeed? How do you know that?

HUANG: My master's father used to be Minister Hsiao's friend. He told his son not to offend him.

YANG: What does your master say to that?

HUANG: Well, all officials have to shut their eyes to certain things.

YANG (*reflectively*): Where is your master from? What is his name?

HUANG: I'll tell you, brother.
*My master's home is in Honan,
 South of Tengteng County in Kaifeng Prefecture.
 That's a fine spot, Taiping Village,
 With a hill behind and a lake before,
 And in front of the house two great flag-poles.*

YANG:

Has your master any brothers, sisters or parents?

HUANG:

*No brothers or sisters, but both his parents are living.
 His family has gone up and up in the world,
 He has risen again and again.
 Now theirs is one of the first houses in Honan!*

LI: Good for him!

YANG: Who was your master's father?

HUANG:

Chen Chin-lung, who passed the palace examination.

LI: A palace graduate, eh? What posts has he had?

HUANG:

He was a high official,

Made millions as prefect of Yangchow,

And was then promoted again.

Now he is well known, Governor of the Tsinan Circuit.

YANG:

So it seems his is an old, official family.

A governorship is rare enough,

And an inspectorship is even rarer;

Theirs is certainly no ordinary family.

Now tell me his name and his age.

HUANG:

My master is Chen Kuei, twenty-eight this year,

Learned in every branch of knowledge;

All his kin have been granted titles;

He has brought glory to his ancestors,

Coming third in the palace test, winning great fame.

YANG:

We are lucky to have met you today,

It was good of you to tell us this.

LI:

Since you serve your master so well,

You are sure to rise high —

Not like me, left out in the cold.

HUANG: Surely not!

YANG (*to HUANG*): My friend is very frank.

HUANG: Well, time's getting on. We may meet some other day.

(He picks up his luggage and umbrella from the other table.)

YANG: Where are you off to?

HUANG: When my master went to get married, he told me to go and report to his father in Tsinan.

YANG: Ah!

HUANG: Bring the bill, waiter.

(Enter the WAITER.)

YANG: Here! (He produces money.)

HUANG: Here! (He puts his hand slowly in his pocket.)

YANG (paying the WAITER): This is for both tables.

(The WAITER takes the money.)

HUANG: Thank you.

YANG: It's nothing.

(Exit the WAITER.)

HUANG: I'll say goodbye now.

YANG and LI: Hope we meet again.

(HUANG leaves, and YANG steps forward to watch him walk away.)

YANG (to LI): Did you hear that, brother?

LI: I wasn't listening carefully.

YANG: I could burst with anger!

LI: Whatever for?

YANG (looking round): We can't talk here. The walls have ears. Let's find a quiet place outside, and I'll tell you what I mean.

LI: Fine. Let's go. (He picks up the luggage and umbrellas and leaves with YANG.)

SCENE II

(YANG and LI walk on, looking round them.)

YANG (seeing a suitable place): "The God of Good Fortune and Virtue."

LI: A tutelary god's temple. Let's go in.

(They enter the temple and look different ways.)

YANG (calling): Care-taker!

LI (calling): Abbot!

YANG (to LI): Anybody there?

LI: Not a soul.

YANG: Not on this side either. (He sees a bench.) Let's sit down.

LI: Fine. (They sit down.) You said you were bursting with anger, brother. Now tell me why.

YANG:

According to Huang Pien,

Even when Chen Kuei comes he will do no good:

He dares not cross Minister Hsiao.

So Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta are doomed.

LI: What can we do about it?

YANG:

This Hsiao is a tyrant, hated by the common people,

All the officers in this city are corrupt;

Are we to let two innocent families suffer?

I refuse to stand by and do nothing!

LI: What do you mean to do?

YANG: I mean to intervene!

LI: How can you?

YANG (putting his thumb up): As an official. (Assuming a lordly air, he walks past LI with the measured official tread. LI is amused.)

LI: What official are you going to be?

YANG:

I shall be the inspector general, high and mighty.

LI:

Are you out of your mind? Let me pour cold water on you.

YANG:

I shall get my way only as a high official.

LI:

You can boast big without even blushing!

YANG: Leave it to me, brother. You didn't listen carefully to Huang Pien just now. It seems that since Chen Kuei has gone to be married, he won't be here for at least a month. So this post of inspector general is vacant. By filling the gap we can right the wrongs of Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta, besides doing good turns to some others. That's not a bad idea. So we shall be officials. How about it?

LI (*intrigued*): Sounds all right to me. (*A thought strikes him.*)

But we don't know enough about this inspector general.

YANG: I can remember all that Huang Pien said.

LI: You remember all that?

YANG: Of course. I mean to do this properly.

LI: Is that so? All right. Let's go. (*He takes up the things and tries to pull YANG out.*)

YANG: Where are we going?

LI: To become officials.

YANG: Wait! We must practise official etiquette first. If we don't behave like officials, we shall give the show away.

LI: We must practise first?

YANG: Certainly. I'll start, and you must join in.

LI: All right. Go on.

YANG (*speaking like an official*): Come, lead the way.

LI: Yes, Your Honour. (*Calling out.*) Hey, there! (*Impressed by YANG's air.*) You are pretty good.

YANG (*sitting down*): Here! I have come to take up my duties. Keep the crowd outside quiet. Anybody who makes a disturbance is to be brought here and severely punished.

LI: Yes, Your Honour. You do it to the manner born! (*He walks out of the temple and announces.*) Listen, folk! Today the new inspector general has arrived. You must all keep quiet. Anybody who makes a disturbance will be brought here and severely punished. (*He looks round.*) Not even a ghost is about. (*He goes back to report to YANG.*) I beg to report, Your Honour, I gave them your message but there is not even a ghost outside.

YANG: Don't be so simple. You'd never say 'There is not even a ghost outside.' Can't you make up something?

LI: You mean even a servant has to have talent?

YANG: Of course. You need talent in every job.

LI: If I have talent, let me play the inspector general. Why should I be your servant?

YANG: So you're not content with being a servant? Well, I'm not interested in being an official, I just want to help the people. If you prefer to be the inspector general, go ahead. What's that between brothers? We haven't reached our post yet, we can switch.

LI: Good! I'll be the inspector general, you the servant. Come, lead the way!

YANG: Yes, Your Honour. (*Calling.*) Make way there!

LI (*sitting down with an official air*): Come, I. . . . (*He stumbles and nearly slides off his seat.*) I have come to take up my duties. Go and announce that anyone who dares make a noise will be brought here and severely punished.

YANG: Yes, Your Honour.

(*Aside.*) Well, he is doing all right. As the proverb says: A good general has brave soldiers. If he can do it, that's fine. (*He goes outside to make the announcement.*) Listen, folk! Today the new inspector general has arrived. If you. . . . There really isn't even a ghost about. Shall I go in and report that? (*Thinks.*) I know. I'll try him out and see how he reacts. (*He re-enters.*) Your Honour, I have announced Your Honour's order. There are two brothers out there, whose parents have died. They are fighting over the family property and breaking each other's head. May it please Your Honour to pass judgement.

LI (*startled*): What! Two brothers fighting over their family property, breaking each other's head. . . . (*He reaches a decision.*) We can't have that. Bring them both here and give each forty strokes with the bastinado. As for the property. . . . let it be confiscated by this office. They shan't have it.

YANG: Ah, you started off all right, but how could you end by confiscating property? Do you want to make money for the office even before you take up your post? That would spoil everything.

LI (*cast down*): Can't I make even one wrong decision?



YANG: Not even one.

LI (*giving up*): Well, this is too difficult. I had better stick to being the servant.

YANG: Let's go to the city now to buy some clothes. Tonight we'll put up in some hostel and tomorrow go to the office. (*Acting like a high official.*) Come, lead the way!

LI: Yes, Your Honour. (*They look at each other and laugh, then leave.*)

SCENE III

(*Enter the provincial judge, LI HENG-TING.*)

JUDGE:

*I am the provincial judge, provincial judge!
I know nothing about the law;
I deceive those above, bully those below,
And make up to Minister Hsiao.*

Three days ago a messenger reported that the new inspector general Chen Kuei is on his way here. I have given orders to welcome him at Jade Pure Temple. I wonder if everything is ready. I must ask the priest when he arrives.

(*Offstage someone announces: The priest of Jade Pure Temple.*)

JUDGE: Send him in.

(*Enter the PRIEST.*)

PRIEST: The priest of Jade Pure Temple pays his respects.

JUDGE: Very good. Is all ready to welcome the inspector?

PRIEST: Yes, Your Honour.

JUDGE: H'm. . . . Have you heard of any disturbances, priest, now that the new inspector general is coming?

PRIEST: Well. . . . I hardly like to say, Your Honour.

JUDGE: Don't worry. Speak up.

PRIEST: Ah. . . .

JUDGE: You mean those scoundrels are trying to seize this chance to stir up more trouble? Hah! They are crazy. I'll show them. . . . Let me know at once, priest, when the inspector general arrives, and see that everything goes off smoothly. If anything goes wrong, you'll suffer for it.

PRIEST: Yes, Your Honour. (*He leaves, sighing.*)

JUDGE: I must fetch the official robe, hat and belt ready to welcome him. (*Exit.*)

SCENE IV

(*Enter YANG CHUAN in civilian dress.*)

YANG: Worry kept me awake all night. Brother Li is still asleep. I'd better call him. Get up, brother!

(*Enter LI.*)

LI (*stretching and rubbing his eyes*): Why are you up so early?

YANG: I couldn't sleep all night. Don't you remember what day this is?

LI: The fifteenth of the eighth month.

YANG: What is going to happen today?

LI (*remembering excitedly*): This is the day for you to become an official.

YANG: What is the first thing an official must have?

LI: The first thing an official must have is a gold seal.

YANG: Well, have you got one ready for me?

LI: Confound it! I forgot. Wait while I find a piece of wood and cut one for you. (*He turns to go.*)

YANG (*stopping him*): Cut one now? It's too late. I made one with wax last night. (*He shows LI the wax counterfeit.*) Does it look genuine to you?

LI (*taking the seal and examining it*): It looks all right. (*He weighs it in his hand.*) But it's too light.

YANG: Have some sense! The two of us are imposters. When I go to the office my subordinate officers will want to see the seal. As soon as I give the order, show it to them quickly

and then put it away. They can hardly say: "Your Honour, let us weigh the seal to see how heavy it is."

LI (*laughing*): No, of course not. Do you know where our reception is to be?

YANG: Yes. At Jade Pure Temple. (*He adopts his official air.*) Come, lead the way!

LI: Yes, Your Honour. (*They walk around the stage.*) Here we are at the temple.

YANG (*nudging him*): Go in and see if anybody is there.

LI: What if there is?

YANG (*in a low voice*): Remember to look proud and supercilious.

(*LI goes up to the temple gate, then hesitates. YANG urges him on. LI walks proudly in, followed by YANG who takes a seat.*)

(*Enter the PRIEST.*)

PRIEST: You can't sit there, sir.

LI: Why not?

PRIEST: That seat is for the inspector general.

YANG (*calmly*): Who do you think I am?

LI (*pushing away the PRIEST, who is standing there gaping*): Get out!

PRIEST (*leaving the temple*): Well! Judging by their talk and behaviour, this must be the inspector general. I had better report this to Judge Li. (*Exit.*)

(*When the PRIEST has gone, YANG and LI relax.*)

YANG: You weren't bad, brother.

LI: You looked pretty impressive too.

YANG: I imagine the priest has gone to report this and people will be turning up soon.

LI: What shall we do then?

YANG: Don't worry. Just keep calm.

(*Enter the PRIEST with JUDGE LI, the GOVERNOR of the circuit, the PREFECT and the MAGISTRATE. Behind these officials come SERVANTS carrying the official hat and robe.*)

JUDGE (*to the PRIEST*): Are they inside?

PRIEST: Yes, Your Honour.

JUDGE: You may go.

(*Exit the PRIEST.*)

GOVERNOR: The new inspector general's arrival has fairly flustered me.

JUDGE: Don't worry, gentlemen. I hear from Minister Hsiao that this inspector general's father is his old friend. He's not likely to make trouble for us.

GOVERNOR (*bowing*): Thank Heaven for that!

PREFECT and MAGISTRATE (*bowing too*): Thank Heaven, indeed!

(*JUDGE LI throws them a dirty look which silences them.*)

JUDGE (*peering in, to LI*): Come here, officer!

(*LI, too nervous to go out, pretends not to have heard him.*)

JUDGE (*to LI again*): Hey!

(*YANG signs to LI to go out.*)

LI (*gulping and going out boldly*): Who are you?

JUDGE: The provincial judge Li Heng-ting, the governor of the circuit, the prefect and the county magistrate are here to see His Honour.

LI: Wait here! (*Alarmed by the gravity of the occasion, he runs inside to whisper to YANG.*) They're here, brother, they're here!

YANG (*stopping him with a look*): Well?

LI: The provincial judge Li Heng-ting, the governor of the circuit, the prefect and the county magistrate are here to see Your Honour.

YANG: So they've come, have they? Show them in! *(Since LI has not moved, YANG speaks again more loudly.)* Show them in! *(He signs to LI to be bold.)*

LI *(going out with the courage of desperation)*: Come in! *(He re-enters, followed by the JUDGE and the others.)*

YANG *(to JUDGE LI)*: Who are you?

JUDGE: Li Heng-ting, the provincial judge.

YANG: How is it, judge, that you fail to send men and horses to meet me when I come here on business of state?

JUDGE: We received notice of your coming three days ago, Your Honour, but you did not arrive. This is hardly our fault.

YANG: I see. Bring me the official robe.

JUDGE *(hesitantly)*: Well . . . we ought . . . we ought to see Your Honour's gold seal first.

YANG: Yes? *(He glances at LI.)* Bring my gold seal!

(LI takes out the seal, shows it quickly to the officials and puts it away again. They follow his movements closely.)

JUDGE: Ah!

GOVERNOR, PREFECT and MAGISTRATE: Ah! *(They nod to each other.)*

JUDGE: Please change into the official robe, Your Honour.

(SERVANTS bring a robe, hat and belt for the inspector and a gown for his attendant. YANG and LI change their clothes. LI is rather pleased.)

YANG: Judge Li, bring all your cases and culprits to me for re-examination. The other officials may go back to their own work.

THE OFFICIALS: Yes, Your Honour! *(Exeunt.)*

YANG: Come, let us go to our office. *(Exit.)*

YANG: The court is now in session.

(The RUNNERS raise a shout, the ADJUTANT appears. JUDGE LI, holding a sheaf of documents, bows to YANG.)

JUDGE: Your Honour, the culprits are outside, the cases are here. Please examine them.

(The ADJUTANT takes the documents and puts them on the table.)

YANG: Stand by, judge, to hear my judgement.

JUDGE *(uneasily)*: Yes, Your Honour.

YANG: Come, hang the appeals placard outside to show that the court is in session.

(RUNNERS hang up the placard.)

(Outside, citizens shout: "Right our wrongs, Your Honour!" Both LI and the JUDGE are nervous.)

YANG *(to LI)*: Tell the citizens to leave their appeals here and wait quietly for judgement. I shall see that justice is done.

LI: Yes, Your Honour. *(He announces.)* Listen, good folk out there. The new inspector general orders you to leave your appeals here and wait quietly for judgement. His Honour will see that justice is done.

(Outside the people can be heard withdrawing.)

YANG: Come, take down the appeals placard and hang up the judgement placard.

(A RUNNER takes down the first placard and puts up another.)

YANG: Silence in court!

LI: Silence in court!

YANG: Let me look at the first case. *(He reads a document.)*
"Ma San was guilty of manslaughter when drunk. He assaulted Wang Wu on the street so that Wang later died. The sentence is life imprisonment."
(He reflects.) Bring in Ma San!

(The RUNNERS bring in MA SAN.)

MA *(kneeling)*: Your Honour!

YANG: Ma San, how dare you run wild after drinking, assaulting a man on the street so that he died? Do you admit your guilt?

MA: Your Honour, that fellow Wang Wu owed me money, and happening to meet him on the street I asked him to pay me. When he refused I gave him a couple of blows. Later he fell ill and died, but it had nothing to do with our fight.

YANG: Answer this: When did you assault him?

MA: On the third of the third month.

YANG: When did he die of illness?

MA: On the eighth of the seventh month.

YANG: Where did you hit him?

MA: I was drunk at the time and can't remember clearly.

YANG *(to himself)*: The man was assaulted on the third of the third month and died on the eighth of the seventh month. *(He refers to the document.)* Quite correct. Though Ma gave Wang Wu two blows, Wang died of illness; and from the third to the seventh month . . . is a matter of over a hundred days. This can't be considered a case of manslaughter. *(The JUDGE is taken aback.)* Ma San, I sentence you to forty strokes to warn you not to get drunk and start fighting again. Here! Have him beaten!

(LI is shocked. MA SAN is dragged off by the RUNNERS to be beaten, then brought back.)

YANG *(to MA)*: Here and now I release you. Mind you don't get drunk and assault anyone again! *(He looks at the JUDGE who shrinks back fearfully.)*

MA *(in pain, but pleased)*: Thank you, Your Honour! *(Exit.)*

YANG: Now let me look at the next case. *(He reads.)* "Kao Chieh has robbed and killed men on the road, also committed rape and arson. Since this is his first offence, he is sentenced to three months' imprisonment." *(Angrily.)* Here! Bring in Kao Chieh!

(The RUNNERS bring in KAO CHIEH.)

KAO *(kneeling)*: Your Honour!

YANG: Are you Kao Chieh?

KAO: Yes, Your Honour.

YANG: Bold-faced villain! How dare you rob and kill men on the road, and commit rape and arson? This court sentenced you to three months only—you obviously bribed the judge to let you off lightly. Now I am re-examining the case and you cannot escape the law. *(He takes up the pen and changes the sentence on the record.)* Come, take Kao Chieh away and have him executed!

(KAO CHIEH falls to the ground with a furious look at the JUDGE, who is pale with fear. LI grows more nervous than ever.)

YANG *(banging the table with a stern glance at LI)*: Off with his head! *(The RUNNERS drag KAO CHIEH out for execution. The JUDGE is panic-stricken. LI makes a face and grips his own neck as if he were the one to be executed. The RUNNERS return.)*

YANG: Now let me look at another case. *(He reads.)* "Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta formed a conspiracy and plotted treason. The law demands their execution. . . ."

JUDGE: Your Honour, this charge was brought by Minister Hsiao. These culprits should be dealt with severely.

YANG: H'm. On my way here I travelled incognito to make inquiries, and learned that Minister Hsiao kidnapped Yang Chen-ta's younger sister who was betrothed to Wen Hsi-ming. When Wen brought a charge against Minister Hsiao on her behalf, the minister rounded on him and accused him falsely. Judge!

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour.

YANG: Why, instead of righting their wrong, did you strike Wen's name off the list of scholars and condemn them to death?

JUDGE (*almost speechless*): Ah. . . .

YANG: I shall pass a new sentence. Here! Fetch Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta.

(The RUNNERS bring the two men in.)

WEN and YANG (*kneeling*): Your Honour!

YANG: I am here by order of the government. I find that you were wrongly accused by Minister Hsiao. I herewith release you both and restore you to the ranks of scholars. You may go.

WEN and YANG: Thank you, Your Honour! (*They rise joyfully, nodding to each other.*) An upright official! (*Exeunt.*)

(LI is dumbfounded.)

YANG: Judge Li!

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour.

YANG: What do you think of my decisions?

JUDGE: Your Honour is most sagacious. You have dealt fairly.

YANG: Are you aware of your own guilt?

JUDGE (*fearfully*): Yes, Your Honour. . . .

YANG: H'm. I shall deal with you later. Go back now to your office.

(He starts to read the other records.)

JUDGE: Thank you, Your Honour! (*He starts out, saying to himself.*) I must tell Minister Hsiao at once and enlist his help. (*Exit.*)

YANG: Come, take away the judgement placard. (*The RUNNERS remove the placard.*) The court is adjourned.

(The RUNNERS withdraw. The ADJUTANT leads YANG and LI into an inner room. YANG walks in front of LI, who lets fall the counterfeit seal he is carrying on a tray. YANG stealthily kicks him. LI hastily picks up the seal and follows YANG.)

YANG (*to the ADJUTANT*): You may go. (*Exit the ADJUTANT. YANG sits down wearily and yawns. LI closes the door, grabs YANG and punches him.*)

LI: You! . . .

YANG: Hey! What's that for?

LI: You nearly scared the wits out of me with your wild decisions, beating and killing and releasing men just as you pleased!

YANG: I saw that justice was done.

LI (*loudly*): Who's talking about justice? We're here under false pretences. . . .

YANG (*stopping his mouth*): Even if we are here under false pretences, we must deal properly with these cases and have men beaten, killed or released correctly. That's what makes an upright official.

LI (*after a pause*): Let me ask you: who was the man whom you had given forty strokes for no reason, so that he was groaning with pain?

YANG: That was Ma San. On the third of the third month he was drunk and quarrelled with a certain Wang who owed him money, giving the other man a couple of blows. When Wang died of illness on the eighth of the seventh month, Ma was unfairly sentenced to life imprisonment. I gave him forty strokes to warn him not to get drunk or assault anyone again, then I released him on the spot. Wasn't that fair enough?

(He takes off his official gauze hat and fans himself.)

LI (*half convinced*): Well, how about that man you sentenced to death?

YANG: He was an out and out scoundrel. (*He puts his bat on the table.*) That was Kao Chieh, a desperate criminal who robbed and killed men on the road and committed rape and arson. He had been arrested several times, but since he always had money he could take plenty of silver to the government office whenever he was in trouble. Then the death sentence was commuted into imprisonment, and imprisonment into release. Today he fell into my hands, but he should have died long ago. Did I judge his case wrongly? (*He fans himself.*)

LI: No, you were right to kill him. Let me ask you another thing. You let two men off, saying: "You may go now." How could you let culprits off so casually? Who were those two men?

YANG: Have you forgotten? When we left the capital, we met two women: Wen Hsi-ming's mother and Yang Chen-ta's wife. They were carrying appeals and protesting bitterly that these men had been falsely accused by Minister Hsiao and wrongly sentenced to death. Before coming here, then, we knew that this charge was unjust. That is why I released them both and restored their ranks. Did I do wrong?

LI (*convinced*): You were right — but what a risk you're running! Why should we ask for trouble like this?

YANG: What, are you frightened?

LI: Not really, but we've already been dismissed. Now if something goes wrong, I'm afraid we'll lose our heads.

YANG: Leave that to me. Call the adjutant. (*He puts on his bat again and sits up straight.*)

LI (*puzzled*): Why do you want the adjutant? What new tricks are you up to? (*He opens the door and goes out to call.*) Adjutant! Come here! (*He returns.*)

(*Enter the ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Your Honour!

YANG: Here is my card. Go and ask Minister Hsiao to come here. I have business with him.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Your Honour. (*Exit.*)

LI (*angrily pushing YANG off the chair*): This is the limit!

YANG: Hey! What sort of manners are these?

LI: Couldn't you send for somebody else? Why Minister Hsiao?

YANG: The more powerful the man, the more fun we can have with him.

LI: This Minister Hsiao has retired on account of old age. Even the emperor has to treat him politely. What fun can you have with such a man?

YANG: The emperor may treat him politely, but I'm not afraid of him. I'm going to make him come here and sit down with me for a chat. I'm going to get a confession out of him too. Just watch me, brother!

(*He swaggers off.*)

LI: Watch you, eh? You're a fine one! (*He follows YANG.*)

SCENE VI

(*Enter the ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Anyone there?

STEWARD (*coming out*): What do you want?

ADJUTANT: I've come from the new inspector general. Here is his card. He wants your master to go to his office on some business. (*He gives the STEWARD the card and leaves.*)

STEWARD (*entering the house*): Master!

(*Enter MINISTER HSIAO followed by JUDGE LI.*)

HSIAO:

*This new inspector general lacks finesse,
Freeing even my enemies!*

What do you want?

STEWARD: Here is the new inspector general's card. He asks you to go to his office to discuss business.

HSIAO (*takes the card, looks at it and throws it aside*): H'm!
This Chen Kuei should have called on me first, but instead
he summons me with his card. This is no way to treat his
senior!

JUDGE: To tell the truth, sir, this Chen Kuei is quite over-
bearing, with no respect for his elders. His release of Wen
Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta was obviously a slap in the face
for you.

HSIAO: I can't understand it. Why should Chen Kuei pay
no attention to family connections and be so rude to his elders?
I shall go there to demand an apology. (*To the STEWARD.*)
My sedan-chair!

(*Exit the STEWARD.*)

JUDGE: I must take my leave of you.

HSIAO: Excuse me for not seeing you off. (*He watches JUDGE
LI go.*) Well, Chen Kuei is inspector general, while I have
retired. If he won't be reasonable, what shall I do? (*He
reflects.*) I had better offer him two thousand taels of silver.
If he accepts, I shall have him. Ha, ha! (*Exit.*)

SCENE VII

(*Enter the ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Your Honour!

(*Enter YANG and LI.*)

YANG: Has Minister Hsiao come?

ADJUTANT: Yes, Your Honour. He is outside.

YANG: Invite him in.

(*Enter MINISTER HSIAO followed by his STEWARD.*)

YANG: Excuse me for not going out to greet you, uncle.

HSIAO: I came too abruptly. Please overlook it, worthy nephew.

(*They sit down as guest and host.*)

(*HSIAO laughs haughtily.*)

(*YANG laughs superciliously.*)

HSIAO (*startled*): Why did you ask me over, nephew?

YANG: The fact is, uncle, that as soon as I came here I found
complaints against you from all the citizens. They accuse you
of opening graves, seizing other men's property and wives and
falsely accusing Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta. Feeling
is running very high. I want your advice, uncle, as to how to
proceed.

HSIAO: Ah. . . . Well, by holding office in the capital and
meting out justice, I naturally offended some evil-doers. After
I retired and came home, they started spreading rumours
about me and accusing me of using my position to oppress
the people — confound them! (*Seeing that YANG is not
impressed, he changes his tone.*) Well, even if I have done
certain wrong things, you must make some concessions to
your father's old friend.

YANG: No, sir, that is a most improper suggestion. Drawing
a government salary, I must act in the public interest. (*He
stands up, as does MINISTER HSIAO.*) The law is no
respector of persons. You must make a clean breast of your
crimes. If you try to hide anything, I shall have to carry
out His Majesty's orders and deal with you severely. (*Shaking
his sleeves, he walks away. LI brings a chair over. YANG
sits down again haughtily.*)

HSIAO (*staggers into his chair, then stands up again*): So Chen
Kuei cares nothing for friendship and means to ruin me! . . .
(*To his STEWARD.*) Bring in the silver.

(*LI watches with interest as two SERVANTS bring in the
silver.*)

HSIAO (*approaching YANG*): Nephew, look at this.

YANG (*with a casual glance*): What is that? Why did you
bring it here?

HSIAO: These are two thousand taels of silver — a small gift
for you.

YANG: Having done nothing to deserve it, I cannot accept it.



(*LI is horrified.*)

HSIAO: But if you accept it, then you will deserve it!

YANG: Behaviour of this kind cannot go unpunished. (*He stands up.*)

HSIAO: What do you mean?

YANG: You shall give one thousand taels to Wen Hsi-ming and the other thousand to Yang Chen-ta.

(*LI tugs at YANG's robe. YANG gives him a stealthy kick.*)

HSIAO: Why should those two scoundrels have my silver?

YANG: You are wrong to call them scoundrels! You accused these two men falsely, nearly ruining their families. It's up to you to make amends.

HSIAO: Make what amends? (*He refuses.*)

YANG: Very well. Let us summon the court.

HSIAO (*fearing his stubbornness may land him in trouble, pretends to agree. He stops YANG*): All right, then, I'll do it. I'll do it. Here! (*With a significant look at his STEWARD.*) Give these two thousand taels of silver to the Wen and the Yang families. (*He signs to show that he is not in earnest.*)

STEWARD: Very good, sir. (*He leaves with the SERVANTS carrying silver.*)

HSIAO: I will take my leave then, nephew.

YANG: Excuse me for not seeing you out.

HSIAO (*goes off in a rage, saying to himself*): I won't send the silver. Let's see what you can do! (*Exit.*)

LI (*seizing YANG when HSIAO has left*): You really deserve a good kicking. (*He kicks him.*) Now you've squeezed two thousand taels of silver out of Minister Hsiao, he won't let us off lightly.

YANG: I gave the silver to those two families. Was that wrong?

LI: Of course not. But. . .

YANG: Don't you worry. That reminds me of something else. Call the adjutant.

LI (*puzzled*): You want the adjutant again? (*He goes out and calls.*) The inspector general wants the adjutant.

(*Enter the ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Your Honour!

YANG: Go to Wen Hsi-ming and Yang Chen-ta. Tell them to accept Minister Hsiao's silver and then to leave immediately. They must not delay.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Your Honour. (*Exit.*)

LI: What's the idea now?

YANG: What a dolt you are! I'm not going to pose as inspector general for ever, am I? Although these two have been released, they may get into fresh trouble if they stay here. Their only safe course is to leave.

LI: That's true. But you should have had enough by now of being inspector general. Why not quit?

YANG: What? Quit now? With so many cases still to settle? In any case, I'm not tired of this game yet.

LI: So you're not tired of this game yet. When the genuine article turns up, the real fun will start.

YANG: The genuine article? We've plenty of time. He won't be here for another month at least. And when he does come, I shall invite him in for a chat. Just leave it to me!

LI: Big talk again! Pride goes before a fall.

(*Exit YANG in high spirits. LI follows shaking his head.*)

SCENE VIII

(CHEN KUEI rides in with his SERVANT.)

CHEN:

*I broke my journey to marry,
Today I shall reach my post and I am worried!
How to deal with so many cases?
Any mistake will have serious consequences,
And I shall forfeit my good reputation.*

SERVANT: Here we are, sir, at the provincial judge's office.

CHEN: Go and sound the drum.

SERVANT (*beating the drum*): The inspector general has arrived.

JUDGE (*hastily putting on his hat, hurries in with four RUNNERS*): Who is sounding the drum?

RUNNERS: The inspector general is here.

JUDGE (*nervously, thinking it is YANG*): Hurry up and welcome him. (*He runs out of the office, bowing, not daring to look up.*)

(CHEN KUEI and his SERVANT enter the office, followed by JUDGE LI.)

JUDGE (*suddenly discovering that this is not YANG*): Ah! Who are you?

CHEN: What post do you hold?

JUDGE: I am Li Heng-ting, provincial judge.

CHEN: See here! Why did you send no horses and men to meet me?

JUDGE: What? Are you another inspector general?

CHEN: Of course.

JUDGE: One inspector general arrived three days ago.

CHEN: What's that? One inspector general arrived three days ago? Do you mean to say you think me an imposter?

JUDGE: That's hard for me to say. May I see your gold seal?

CHEN: My gold seal? Here, man, show him the seal.

SERVANT: Yes, Your Honour. (*He produces the seal.*) Here it is.

(*The JUDGE is startled. The SERVANT puts the seal away.*)

JUDGE: Ah!

CHEN: It is clear, judge, that the other man is an imposter. You must have him arrested. If he escapes, you will be held responsible. I am going straight to my office.

(*Exit with SERVANT.*)

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour. How extraordinary! The other day one inspector general turned up, and here's another today. Good! Now the fun will begin. Come, let's go to the inspector general's office.

(*Exit with RUNNERS.*)

SCENE IX

(*Enter the ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Your Honour!

(*Enter YANG and LI.*)

YANG: What is it?

ADJUTANT: A few days ago I went by your order to the Wen and Yang families, but they said they had received no silver from Minister Hsiao. Today I went again, but they've still received none. So they haven't left yet.

YANG: Indeed? Very well. You may go.

(*Exit the ADJUTANT.*)

YANG: Confound the old brigand! He must be taught a thorough lesson.

LI: That's right.

(Enter the JUDGE.)

JUDGE (*whispering to LI*): Hey, officer!

LI (*going out*): What do you want?

JUDGE: Kindly report to His Honour that another inspector general has shown up today. He is waiting outside.

LI (*flabbergasted*): Let . . . let him wait in the west corridor.

(Exit the JUDGE.)

(LI stands rooted to the ground for a moment, before running in and seizing YANG.)

LI: We're ruined, brother, ruined! The genuine article has come.

YANG (*gives a start, then slaps LI on the chest*): Don't worry. Ask him in.

LI (*goes out to call*): Please come in!

(Enter CHEN KUEI with his SERVANT. YANG comes out to meet him and the JUDGE follows them into the office.)

CHEN: May I ask where your home is, sir?

YANG: In Honan Province.

CHEN: Which prefecture?

YANG: Kaifeng.

CHEN: Which county?

YANG: Tengfeng.

CHEN: In or outside the city?

YANG: In Taiping Village outside the city.

CHEN: Your father's name?

YANG: Chen Chin-lung.

CHEN (*looking in bewilderment at his servant, who is also puzzled*): What post does he hold?

YANG: Governor of Tsinan Circuit, Shangtung Province.

CHEN (*desperately*): Which examination did you pass?

YANG: I came third in the palace examination.

CHEN: Your age?

YANG: Twenty-eight.

CHEN: Your name?

YANG: Chen Kuei.

CHEN: What did you say?

YANG: Chen Kuei! Chen Kuei! (*He flips his sleeve impatiently.*)

CHEN: Well! (*He collapses onto a chair.*)

YANG: Let me ask you where *your* home is?

CHEN: In Honan Province.

YANG: Which prefecture?

CHEN: Kaifeng.

YANG: Which county?

CHEN: Tengfeng.

YANG: In or outside the city?

CHEN: In Taiping Village outside the city.

YANG: Your father's name?

CHEN: Chen Chin-lung.

YANG: What post does he hold?

CHEN: Governor of Tsinan Circuit, Shantung Province.

YANG: Which examination did you pass?

CHEN (*nearly choking*): I came third in the palace examination.

YANG: Your age?

CHEN: Twenty-eight.

YANG: Your name?

CHEN: Chen Kuei.

YANG: What did you say?

CHEN: Chen Kuei! Chen Kuei!

YANG: You simply repeated all I said. What a scoundrel to dare to impersonate me! You shall suffer for this.

CHEN (*staggers back, supported by his SERVANT. To the SERVANT*): He's turning on me! (*He gets up to swagger up to YANG, hoping to intimidate him.*) Bah! What a scoundrel to dare to impersonate me! You shall suffer for this.

YANG: You shall suffer for this.

CHEN: You shall suffer for this.

YANG: You shall suffer for this.

CHEN (*gazes at his SERVANT in consternation. The SERVANT points to the gold seal. CHEN turns to YANG*):

You call me an imposter. A name may be faked, but not the gold seal given by the emperor.

YANG (*suppressing a start*): Shall we make an examination of the seals?

CHEN: Yes!

YANG: Very well. How shall we go about it?

CHEN: Prepare a fire and throw both seals into the flames.

(*LI is horrified.*)

YANG (*reflectively*): If the seal is genuine?

CHEN: Gold is not afraid of fire!

YANG: If it melts in the fire?

CHEN: It cannot be pure gold!

YANG: H'm. (*Decisively.*) Judge Li!

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour.

YANG: Summon all the officials here tomorrow. We shall make a public examination of the seals.

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour. (*Exit.*)

CHEN: Then I shall leave you. (*Exit with his SERVANT.*)

(*YANG ignores CHEN. After CHEN has gone, LI turns to YANG. They look at each other in silence.*)

LI: This is the end. We're ruined. Why did you agree to test the seals by fire?

YANG: I had to accept his challenge.

LI: Bah! It's all very well to say that. He got his gold seal from the emperor. He can put it on the fire and it won't be burnt. But the moment our wax seal is put in the flames, it will sizzle and melt. You and I are dead men! (*He sobs.*)

YANG: It's no use crying, brother. Go and fetch some wine and food, while I think out a plan. Then if I can't find a way out and am executed, at least I shan't become a hungry ghost.

LI (*struck by an idea*): Brother, we can run away!

YANG: Run away? Not likely. We are being watched.

LI: You had a good run for your money, posing as inspector general for some days. I was only the servant, yet tomorrow

they will drag me off and kill me too. It's too bad. . . .

(*He breaks down again.*)

YANG: Don't take it so hard. Fetch wine and food while I think of a way out.

LI: Ah, all you want is to be a pot-bellied ghost.

(*Thinking of the execution the next day, he fingers his neck and totters out.*)

(*LI returns with wine and a candle. YANG takes these and places them on the table. He pours wine for LI and himself and urges LI to drink. LI raises his cup but finds it hard to drink. As he puts the cup down, the first watch* sounds outside.*)

YANG (*drinking his second cup*):

When we left the capital

We never expected

This tangle with bad officials.

(*Outside the second watch sounds.*)

YANG:

I like to see justice done,

I hate Minister Hsiao

Who has injured innocent people.

(*He drinks another cup and urges LI to drink, but LI refuses.*)

(*Outside the third watch sounds and both men look worried.*)

I passed myself off as the inspector general.

(*He goes through the examination of seals in pantomime, and is dismayed to think how his seal will burn.*)

How am I to extricate myself tomorrow?

* In the old days in China the night was divided into five watches of two hours each, and drums were sounded at every watch. The third watch was at midnight, the fifth at dawn.

(LI hangs his head and weeps. The fourth watch sounds. LI is growing desperate and YANG can think of no solution.)

*In a few hours
The seals will be tested by fire;
I frown in dismay.*

(YANG goes on drinking. Having finished his cup, he takes the one before LI too. As he puts the second cup down next to his own, he is struck by their resemblance to the seals, and realizes that he can change the seals round too. His spirits rise. But as LI watches him changing the cups, YANG remembers that there will be many eyes on him and he will be detected. His heart sinks again. He paces up and down and pounds the table in exasperation so that the candle nearly topples over. LI rescues it. This gives YANG an idea. He claps his hands. LI, in the dark, staggers and falls.)

YANG: Good!

*I have a good plan,
A good plan!
My mind is at rest. (He pulls LI to his feet.)
Don't worry, brother!
At the test by fire tomorrow,
Run out just before the seals
Are put in the flames,
And call: "Help! Fire in the back!
Quick! Put out the fire!"
I shall be quite cool,
But that fledgeling will be flustered;
And taking advantage of the general confusion
We can push away our counterfeit seal of wax
And take in its place the genuine seal of gold.
Then in the test by fire
He is bound to lose.
We shall have the laugh of him.*

(YANG and LI dance for joy.)

LI: This is our only chance.

(The drum sounds announcing dawn.)

YANG: Dawn is breaking. Take good care and get everything ready. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE X

(Enter the RUNNERS, calling out together. Enter the JUDGE and other OFFICIALS. YANG and CHEN come in and stand behind a table.)

YANG: The gold seal will be publicly tested.

CHEN: The truth will soon be known.

I am Chen Kuei.

YANG *(also announcing himself)*: I am Chen Kuei. Bring the gold seal!

(YANG's seal is brought out and put on the table. CHEN's seal is also brought out and put on the table.)

YANG: Judge Li, bring in the stove.

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour.

(Two RUNNERS carry in a stove and place it in the middle of the room.)

YANG: Come, let us have the seals tested.

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour.

(Just before the JUDGE picks up the seals, LI rushes in, shouting.)

LI: Fire, fire! Your Honour! The back office is on fire!

(There is a general panic. CHEN KUEI and the officials turn to look.)



YANG (*quickly changing the seals while they are looking for the fire*): Put out the fire!

CHEN (*turning and putting his hand on the counterfeit seal*): Put out the fire!

LI: Yes, Your Honour. (*He turns and runs back.*) Put out the fire! Put out the fire! (*He returns.*) The fire is under control. (*Meaningfully*) Is that all right, Your Honour?

YANG: That is all right.

CHEN (*thinking he is referring to the fire*): That's all right, then.

LI: Yes, Your Honour, that's all right.

YANG: Judge Li, test the seals by fire.

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour. (*Taking tongs from the stove, he puts the seal in front of YANG in the flames. All watch, but nothing happens.*) This one is genuine.

(*He brings the seal back to YANG.*)

(*LI is overjoyed.*)

YANG (*significantly*): Gold is not afraid of fire.

CHEN (*puzzled, but still confident*): Anything that melts in the fire is not pure gold. Judge Li, test my seal.

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour. (*He takes the seal in front of CHEN, finds it very light, and puts it in the flames. At once it starts to burn. The officials break into a hubbub. CHEN and his SERVANT turn pale.*)

CHEN: Ah!

YANG (*pushing CHEN away*): You scoundrel! How dare you pose as a government official? This is unpardonable. Arrest this man!

(*Chen's SERVANT escapes in the confusion.*)

(*The RUNNERS come forward, remove CHEN's official cap and take him away.*)

YANG: Judge Li, fetch Minister Hsiao here immediately. Look sharp about it!

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour.

YANG: The court is adjourned.

(*The OFFICIALS and RUNNERS retire. YANG and LI mop their faces and start dancing for joy. LI plays with the seal but scorches his fingers. He picks it up again, throwing it into the air. They fight for the seal, prancing into the inner room. They shut the door and YANG plays with the seal, while LI takes off YANG's official cap and puts it on himself, dancing wildly.*)

LI: Now you must let me play at being inspector general.

YANG: No, this game has got to stop.

LI: Why stop now?

YANG: Chen Kuei's servant got away. If he'd been caught too, we could have played this game for a few more days.

LI: Oh!

YANG: That fellow will go home to report this to Chen's father. If the old man comes to see his son, won't he expose us?

LI (*quickly returning the cap to YANG*): All right, then. What do we do now? Of thirty-six stratagems, it seems flight is the best.

YANG: There's no hurry. We haven't finished with Minister Hsiao yet.

LI: What fresh tricks are you up to?

YANG: Leave that to me. I'm going to change my clothes. Wait out here, and tell me when they come. (*He goes in.*)

LI: Look at him! The show is nearly over, yet he wants to play some more tricks. *(He opens the door and looks outside.)*

(Enter JUDGE LI and MINISTER HSIAO.)

JUDGE *(seeing LI)*: Please announce us, officer. Minister Hsiao is here.

LI *(with a stern glance at HSIAO)*: Wait here. *(He enters the office.)* Your Honour!

YANG *(coming out in civilian dress)*: What is it?

LI: The old rascal is here.

YANG: Show him in.

LI *(going out)*: Come in. *(He goes inside to change his clothes.)*

(The JUDGE and HSIAO uneasily enter the office.)

JUDGE: Your Honour! Minister Hsiao is here.

YANG: Minister Hsiao, I am troubling you again.

HSIAO: Not at all. I heard that you had caught an impostor and was meaning to come to offer congratulations. *(He bows.)*

YANG: Don't worry. True and counterfeit are bound to be known. I asked you today because the Wen and Yang families. . . .

HSIAO *(bastily)*: I have just sent the two thousand taels of silver.

YANG: How is it that you waited until today? If you dare behave like this to the inspector general, no wonder so many citizens have brought charges against you.

HSIAO: Well, even if I have done wrong, you need not treat me so rudely. You are young and inexperienced in official ways. You should ask your father to advise you.

YANG *(with a significant glance at LI)*: Since you are so stubborn, I am afraid I must detain you. Here! *(Two RUNNERS come in.)* Arrest this man. I shall settle his case after consulting the court.

HSIAO: But. . . .

YANG: Take him away.

(The RUNNERS drag HSIAO off. JUDGE LI is trembling.)

YANG: Judge Li!

JUDGE: Yes . . . yes, Your Honour.

YANG: I have investigated all your cases and found that you have distorted the truth, turning right into wrong. You have obviously been accepting bribes and working hand in glove with Minister Hsiao to oppress the people. Do you admit your guilt?

JUDGE: Yes, Your Honour. Pardon me!

YANG: I am going out now to travel incognito and make further investigations. I shall return in three days. Mind you punish that imposter severely and make a thorough investigation of Minister Hsiao's crimes. If you let them off lightly, I shall deal harshly with you.

(LI goes inside to return with their luggage and umbrellas.)

JUDGE: Yes, yes, Your Honour! *(Obsequiously.)* Would Your Honour like an escort?

YANG: No. *(To LI.)* Go on. *(He leaves the office with LI.)*

JUDGE *(following them)*: Let me see you off, Your Honour.

YANG: There is no need. Go back and attend to your business.

(Exit JUDGE LI.)

LI *(amused)*: Ha! Imagine a fellow like that being an official!

YANG: Aha! Now the carp has escaped from the golden hook!

LI: Off it frisks, without ever a backward look!

(Exeunt.)

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang*

Illustrations by Li Ke-yu

Li Kuei, the Black Whirlwind

(A Peking opera)

CHARACTERS

LI KUEI, the BLACK WHIRLWIND }
LU CHIH-SHEN, the Tattooed Monk }
LIN CHUNG, the Panther Head } heroes of Liangshan
YEN CHING, the Young Vagabond }
WU YUNG, the Strategist }
SUNG CHIANG, leader of the heroes of Liangshan
Eight other GALLANT MEN
WANG LIN, an innkeeper
JOY, his daughter
TSAO TENG-LUNG, a local despot
CHIANG LI }
KUNG FU } his stewards
CHANG CHIN-PIAO }
TU SHIH-WU } his arms instructors
Four other INSTRUCTORS
Four SERVANTS
LI QUEI, a brigand
AUNTY LIU, Tsao's servant

SCENE I

Leaving the Mountain

Time: early spring.

Place: the Hall of Loyalty and Justice, Liangshan.

(Enter LIN CHUNG and LU CHIH-SHEN.)

LIN:

My spear has won me a name.

LU:

My staff makes the enemy quake.

(Enter YEN CHING and LI KUEI, the BLACK WHIRLWIND.)

YEN:

My wrestling is known to all.

BLACK:

My axe makes even ghosts shriek.

TOGETHER: I am —

LIN: Lin Chung the Panther Head.

LU: Lu Chih-shen the Tattooed Monk.

YEN: Yen Ching the Young Vagabond.

BLACK: Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind.

LIN: Good day, brothers!

THE OTHERS: Good day, brother!

LIN: Commander Sung has summoned all his men. Let us wait in the hall.

THE OTHERS: After you, brother.

(They leave the stage. Enter WU YUNG and SUNG CHIANG, preceded by eight other GALLANT MEN.)

SUNG:

Our courage is sky-high;

Here in the marshes we work the will of Heaven,

Helping the good and overthrowing tyrants.

(SUNG sits down. Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND and the others.)

TOGETHER: Greetings, elder brother!

SUNG: Take your places on either side.

*A yellow banner flutters before our hall,
We are well versed in the arts of war and peace;
We mean to right all wrongs,
Destroying evil officials and local despots.*

I am Sung Chiang, known as Seasonal Rain. Since we gathered here, brothers, heroes from all over the land have come to join us. Now in our mountain stronghold we have stout men and swift steeds. Unfortunately we are short of grain and fodder. If fighting starts, we shall be at a disadvantage. What good advice have you to offer?

WU: I hear there was a good harvest last year in Yichow. If someone will find out whether this is true, we can send men to buy grain and get in a supply.

SUNG: Which of you will leave the mountain to do this?

BLACK: I'll go!

SUNG: Well. . . .

BLACK: Yichow is my old home. I'm just the man for you.

SUNG: It's that temper of yours I'm afraid of.

BLACK: I won't show any temper this time.

SUNG: Well, Li Kuei, on two conditions you may go.

BLACK: I'd accept two hundred conditions, let alone two. What is the first condition, elder brother?

SUNG: Once away from here, you must watch your step. If you find a case of injustice, don't interfere unless you're sure of success, but come back and talk it over with us.

BLACK: Must watch my step. . . . All right. What is the second condition?

SUNG: No drinking on the road!

BLACK: No drinking. . . .

SUNG: Well?

BLACK: I agree. Give me my orders!

SUNG: Listen, then, Li Kuei!

BLACK: Yes, commander.

SUNG: You are to go to Yichow to spy out the land. Come back as fast as you can.

BLACK: It shall be done!

*My elder brother has given me two warnings,
I have taken them to heart.*

*I bid goodbye now and make haste to leave,
Taking the road to Yichow! (Exit.)*

SUNG: Guard the fortress well, brothers.

Li Kuei has gone in search of fodder and grain.

WU:

May he have a speedy and a safe return! (Exeunt.)

SCENE II

On the Road

Time: soon after the last scene.

Place: the highway near Liangshan.

(Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND.)

BLACK:

*I have left the bill under orders, in disguise,
The roadside willows have put on a new dress too;
Young paddy shoots ripple like green waves in the breeze,
Peach blossom on every side glimmers in the sun;
Fishing-boats make eddies in the water,
While swallows and water-fowl wheel over the stream.
If anyone says Liangshan has no good scenery, I'll smack his mouth.*

*A golden oriole is warbling on that bough,
Singing on and on, happy as the day is long.*

Just look at that oriole pecking the peach petals so that they fall into the water. What a pretty sight! Now what was that poem about peach blossom? . . . Yes, I remember. Our strategist told me: "The wanton peach blossom floats off downstream." *(Picking up some petals.)* What a glorious red

these petals are. (*Looking at his hand.*) And how black my fingers are! This stream runs alongside the Yichow highway. I'll drop the flowers in the stream and race with them.
*I chase after the blossom in the stream;
 The flag of a tavern is beckoning to me.*
 That wine smells good. It smells fine! Fine! I'll. . . .
 (*Remembering SUNG CHIANG's warning, he strikes his forehead.*) No, it's not fine at all. See here, Li Kuei! What did Brother Sung tell you when you left the hill? No drinking on the way! You nearly disobeyed orders! My elder brother warned me —
*What came over me as soon as I left the hill?
 I must take his parting words to heart.
 The smell of that heated wine is wafted to me,
 It is making my mouth water;
 But Li Kuei is not drinking today.
 I stride quickly on,
 Going cheerfully on my way. (Exit.)*

SCENE III

The Tavern

Time: the next morning.

Place: Wang Lin's tavern in Apricot Blossom Village about a hundred li from Liangshan.

(Enter JOY.)

JOY:

*My unhappy mother died early,
 A sad life have father and daughter;
 Rising early in the morning to clear the room,*

(She dusts the table and chairs and goes out to hang up the tavern sign.)

I see the sun rise in the east from a glowing sky.

(Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND.)

BLACK:

*Travelling fast, regardless
 of the distance,
 For our mountain fort I
 think nothing of wind
 and dust.*

*As a scout I must show
 great caution.*

JOY (*calling from the door to her father inside*): Here, dad! Quick!

(Enter WANG LIN.)

WANG: What is it, daughter?

JOY: Look at the man coming this way. Isn't that (*Whispering.*) Uncle Li from Liangshan?

WANG: That's him! I dare say he's come here for a drink. I'll call him. (*He looks around first.*) Hey! Brother Li!

BLACK:

I hear Wang Lin calling.

WANG: How are you, Brother Li?

BLACK: How is business, Brother Wang?

WANG: Not bad.

BLACK: Has anyone been making trouble?

WANG: Oh, no.

BLACK: If anyone makes trouble, just let me know. I'll settle scores for you!

WANG: Thank you, brother!

JOY (*pouring out wine*): Are all the heroes in the hills as brave as you?

BLACK: My brothers up there are all much better than me. I'm too rough and rude.



JOY: Don't run yourself down, uncle. You're so generous and brave — you're just too good.

BLACK: Not a bit of it! *(Without thinking, he drains the wine.)*

WANG: Hurry up and fill your uncle's cup, daughter.

BLACK: No, don't! I'm not drinking today.

WANG: Why not?

BLACK: Commander Sung Chiang has sent me out on a mission. When I was leaving, he told me particularly not to drink on the road.

JOY: If you're not drinking, why did you finish that cup just now?

BLACK: That. . . . *(He feels ashamed.)*

JOY: Since you've already drunk something, have another cup.

BLACK: No, no! Just now I forgot, but I can't break my word knowingly. Goodbye, Brother Wang!

Leaving Brother Wang I hastily take the road. (He walks out.)

When my task is done I shall come back for a good drink. (Exit.)

JOY: On your way back you must come and drink here!

WANG: A real hero, that!

He's a gallant man! (He goes to clear up.)

JOY:

Straight and honest, beyond compare.

(Enter CHIANG LI and KUNG FU. They are struck by JOY, who goes into the tavern.)

CHIANG:

Today we are both in luck.

KUNG:

We see a girl pretty as a flower.

CHIANG: This is a tavern, Old Kung. Let's have a couple of drinks.

KUNG: Fine. Come on in. *(They enter the tavern.)*

CHIANG *(beaming)*: Do you sell wine here, girl?

JOY *(annoyed)*: Of course a wineshop sells wine. Dad! Customers!

(As WANG enters, JOY goes out.)

WANG: Do you want wine, gentlemen?

CHIANG: Warm us a pot of your best wine, old man.

WANG: Please take seats while I fetch the wine.

(CHIANG and KUNG sit down. WANG goes out.)

CHIANG: That girl is a real good-looker, Old Kung. Our master likes fine-looking women. If we can get hold of her, he's bound to be pleased.

KUNG: Right you are. If we pull this off, it'll be a fine feather in our caps. Let's sound the old man out.

(Enter WANG with wine.)

WANG: Here is a pot of good wine.

CHIANG: Say, old man, who is that young girl?

WANG: My daughter.

CHIANG: You're a lucky old fellow. How old is she?

WANG: Eighteen.

CHIANG: Eighteen, eh? What's her name?

WANG: Joy.

KUNG: Joy. What a splendid name!

WANG: What's splendid about it?

CHIANG: All right, all right. Bring us another pot of wine, old man. *(Exit WANG.)*

CHIANG: Old Kung, this old fellow looks stubborn and we aren't far from Liangshan. We'll have to choose our words carefully.

(WANG returns with more wine.)

WANG: Here you are.

CHIANG: Tell me, old man, do you have a son?

WANG: No.

CHIANG: In that case you should find your daughter a husband early. A son-in-law is half a son.

WANG: Pah! *(He turns away.)*

KUNG: Shall I introduce a husband for your girl, old man?

WANG: Don't put yourselves out. My daughter is engaged already.

CHIANG *(noticing WANG's displeasure)*: Engaged already, is she? Very good! *(To KUNG.)* Drink up, Old Kung. Come on. *(They drink.)* Let's go.

KUNG: Very well. Let's go.

(They go out. WANG hurries after them.)

WANG: Where's my money?

KUNG: Put it on our account.

WANG: We expect cash here.

CHIANG: Pay him. Pay him.

KUNG: What? You mean we have to pay?

CHIANG: Of course we must pay for the wine. *(He pays the bill.)*

WANG *(muttering as he goes inside)*: Dirty dogs!

KUNG: Why should he swear at us?

CHIANG: Forget it. *(He pushes KUNG off.)*

(WANG clears the table and goes out.)

SCENE IV

The Plot

Time: the day after the last scene.

Place: Tsao's manor-house.

(Enter TSAO TENG-LUNG, preceded by four SERVANTS.)

TSAO:

*I come from a feast in my back hall,
I have drunk and sung and made merry.*

(Enter CHIANG and KUNG.)

CHIANG and KUNG: Greetings, sir!

TSAO: I sent you to collect rent. How much did you get?

KUNG: We didn't get any, but we've brought you good news, sir.

TSAO: What good news?

CHIANG: As we were passing Apricot Blossom Village, we saw a girl in Wang Lin's tavern. Just eighteen, by the name of Joy. Pretty as a picture!

TSAO: Did you propose a marriage?

CHIANG: The girl's father is a pig-headed fellow. A proposal of marriage won't do the trick. We must think of some other way.

TSAO: Apricot Blossom Village; eh. . . . *(He thinks.)* I know what to do. Call Instructors Chang and Tu.

CHIANG *(calling)*: Instructor Chang! Instructor Tu!

(Enter CHANG CHIN-PIAO and TU SHIH-WU.)

CHANG and TU: What are your orders, sir?

TSAO: Take some men to Apricot Blossom Village. . . . Come here! *(He whispers to CHANG and TU.)* Use your discretion.

CHANG and TU: Yes, sir. *(Exeunt.)*

TSAO: Ah! I've worked out a fine plan. The beauty will be mine. *(Exit.)*

SCENE V

Highway Robbery

Time: the same as the last scene.

Place: Yiling Mountain, Yichow.

(Enter LI QUEI, posing as the BLACK WHIRLWIND.)

LI QUEI:

*I am Li Quei, a stout fellow,
I have boxed and fought from boyhood;
I hate the petty tyrants and crooked officials
Who will not let me take good care of my mother
And have forced me to be a robber –
But I rob only the wicked.
If you ask my name,
Know that I am Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind!
I am actually Li Quei the Black Bear. Landlord Tsao is a
rich scoundrel. He won't let me make an honest living to
support my old mother. So I have taken to highway robbery
here. There is a pine forest in front. I shall hide myself
there. (Exit.)*

*(Offstage the BLACK WHIRLWIND shouts: "Confound it!")
(Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND.)*

BLACK:

*I was sent to find what grain there is in Yichow;
A tyrant has boarded it, the people are hungry;
In a towering rage
I am hurrying back to Liangshan.
Here I am at the pine forest.*

LI QUEI (off): Hey! Your money or your life!

BLACK: Ha! What little rascal thinks he is going to rob me?
Let me put down my bundle and have a bout with him. *(He
puts down his bundle.)* Listen, you brigand in the forest!
If you have any guts, come out and have a go at me.

LI QUEI (off): Here I come!

(Enter LI QUEI. The two men look at each other.)

BOTH: Why, he looks like me!

*Both use double axes,
Both have voices like spring thunder.*

LI QUEI:

Quickly put down your gold and silver.

BLACK:

You must have a bout with me first.

So you want my gold and silver. Well, tell me your name.

LI QUEI: My name is going to frighten you out of your wits.

BLACK: I'm not such a coward. Go on.

LI QUEI: Listen, then!

BLACK: Go on.

LI QUEI: I am he who two years ago wreaked havoc in Chiang-
chow, then went to Liangshan and became the sworn brother
of Sung Chiang and Tai Tsung. My name is Li Kuei the
Black Whirlwind.

BLACK (to himself): So there's a true and false to everything,
even a false Li Kuei!

LI QUEI: Now tell me your name.

BLACK: There's no need. If you can get the better of my two
axes, I'll leave you my gold and silver.

LI QUEI: You mean you want to fight me?

BLACK: That's right. Come on.

*(They fight. LI QUEI is knocked down. The BLACK
WHIRLWIND raises his axe to kill him.)*

LI QUEI: Oh, my poor mother!

BLACK: Why are you crying for your mother?

LI QUEI: Well, sir, I have an old mother of over eighty. Once
I'm dead there'll be no one to look after her. Please let me
off.

BLACK: So you're not such a bad fellow. All right, get up,
get up.

LI QUEI: I'm up.

BLACK: Let me ask you this: why are you a highway man?

LI QUEI: I have no other way to keep my mother except by
relieving bad people of their ill-gotten gains.

BLACK: Don't talk nonsense. I heard that last year there was
a good harvest here. Why can't you support your mother?

LI QUEI: You don't understand, sir. There was a good harvest
last year, it's true. But we have a grasping landlord, Tsao
Teng-lung, who put up the levies so that all our grain was
taken clean away.

BLACK (*to himself*): Just what the others said. I'll go back and report this to my elder brother, then bring our men to crush this tyrant. That will provide us with grain and rid the people of a pest. (*To LI QUEI.*) Tell me, what is your real name?

LI QUEI: Li Quei the Black Bear. I'm a fake.

BLACK: I knew that all along.

LI QUEI: May I ask your name, sir?

BLACK: My name is going to frighten you out of your wits. I am he who two years ago. . . .

LI QUEI: Ah!

BLACK: Wreaked havoc in Chiangchow. . . .

LI QUEI: Ah!

BLACK: Then went to Liangshan. . . .

LI QUEI: Ah!

BLACK: And became the sworn brother of Sung Chiang and Tai Tsung, Li Kuei the Black Whirlwind!

LI QUEI: Well, well. . . . No wonder you put up such a fight.

BLACK: Why did you take my name?

LI QUEI: Because you made such a stir in Chiangchow, carrying out the will of Heaven. I admired you and took your great name.

BLACK: You are a stout fellow yourself. Why not go to Liangshan?

LI QUEI: There's nothing I'd like better, but who will introduce me?

BLACK: I will.

LI QUEI: Thank you, elder brother! Let's go.

BLACK: Wait! Tell me: do you know Tsao Teng-lung's manor-house?

LI QUEI: I know it inside out. What do you want me to do?

BLACK: I'm going back to our mountain fortress to report to our commander Sung Chiang. Then we shall send troops to attack the manor-house. That's when you'll come in useful.

LI QUEI: If you really attack the manor, I'll gladly guide you.

BLACK: Good! Then you wait for me here.

LI QUEI: I live in that thatched hut at the foot of the hill. If you need me, you'll find me there.

BLACK (*taking silver from his pocket*): Here is some loose silver. Take this home for your mother.

LI QUEI: I can't take your silver.

BLACK: Are you refusing because it's too little?

LI QUEI: All right, I shall accept it with shame.

BLACK: Time's getting on. Let's say goodbye. Don't despise my small gift of silver, but take it home to your mother.

LI QUEI:
*I shall wait for you, brother, at home,
 And hope for your speedy return.*

BLACK: Goodbye! (*Exit.*)

LI QUEI: He's a true hero! (*Exit.*)

SCENE VI

The Kidnapping

Time: a day later.

Place: WANG LIN's tavern.

(Enter CHANG CHIN-PIAO and TU SHIH-WU disguised as SUNG CHIANG and LU CHIH-SHEN with four SERVANTS from the manor-house.)

CHANG:

At the order of the lord of the manor,

TU:

We come in disguise to carry off a girl.

CHANG:

We spur our horses on.

TU:

We must act with discretion.

There is Apricot Blossom Village in front. We must make our plans.

CHANG: Right. (*To the SERVANTS.*) Go and hide in the wood there, and don't come till we call you. (*Exeunt the SERVANTS.*)

TU: Now let's ask which is Wang Lin's tavern.

(Enter WANG LIN.)

WANG: Do you want some wine, gentlemen?

TU: Old man, where is Wang Lin's tavern?

WANG: I am Wang Lin.

TU: Well met!

WANG: How did you know my name, gentlemen?

TU: Everyone hereabouts knows that you are an honest man and do fair business. (He laughs ingratiatingly.)

WANG: Walk in, gentlemen.

(They enter the tavern. CHANG and TU take seats.)

CHANG: Please warm a pot of your best wine, uncle.

WANG: Yes, sir. (Exit.)

(CHANG and TU look round for the girl. WANG comes in with the wine. CHANG signs to TU.)

WANG: Here is your wine.

TU: Sit down with us, uncle, and let us have a chat.

WANG: A chat? I'll join you with pleasure. (He takes a seat.)

CHANG: Have a cup of wine too, uncle.

WANG: Thank you, but I never drink.

TU: You are too frugal. You keep a tavern yet don't drink yourself.

WANG: A man who sells wine should never drink. If I liked drinking, I wouldn't be selling wine—I'd have finished it myself.

CHANG: What a good fellow you are! (He laughs.)

WANG: May I ask where you gentlemen are from?

TU (hesitating): Well, now . . . from over there, not so far away.

WANG: You mean? . . . (He looks round to make sure there is no one about.)

CHANG: We are leaders of Liangshan.

WANG: So you are two heroes! Excuse me for lacking in respect.

CHANG (trying him out): Do you know anyone in our stronghold, uncle?

WANG: Only Brother Li Kuei, who often comes here. I count myself very lucky to have met you today. I have not asked your names yet.

TU (reassured): I am Lu Chih-shen the Tattooed Monk. (Indicating CHANG.) This is Sung Chiang our leader.

WANG: Ah! I have eyes yet failed to recognize Mount Tai!* So you are great Sung Chiang and Lu Chih-shen. Forgive me for being so remiss.

CHANG: You are too polite, uncle.

WANG: This is a rare occasion. This is more than I ever dared to hope for. Let me pour you some more wine.

I pour two cups of wine,

And bare my heart to you.

Sung Chiang is famed for his kindness and might;

The Tattooed Monk is known far and wide.

I rejoice to meet you. Drink your fill—

Don't doubt the warmth of my welcome!

TU: Thank you!

(CHANG and TU drink.)

WANG (calling): Daughter, warm another pot of wine for our honoured guests.

(Enter JOY with wine.)

JOY: Dad!

(CHANG and TU exchange significant glances.)

CHANG: Who is this young lady?

WANG: This is my daughter. Joy, that gentleman is the great Sung Chiang and this is brave Lu Chih-shen. Come and pay your respects.

* A sacred mountain in Shantung.

JOY: Greetings, sirs!

CHANG and TU: Don't stand on ceremony.

JOY: This is a rare honour for us. Let me pour you some wine.

TU: Fetch us a whole vat of wine, uncle. We want to drink our fill today.

WANG: Very good.

JOY: Let me go, dad.

WANG: No, I'll fetch it. *(Exit.)*

CHANG: What is your name, girl?

JOY: Joy.

CHANG: A pretty name! How old are you?

JOY: Eighteen.

CHANG: Good. The right age, a pretty name, a beautiful girl and so sweet-spoken too. Splendid! Come now, you must drink a cup with us. *(He takes her hand.)*

JOY *(freeing herself rather crossly)*: I don't drink.

TU: What do you think of our leader, Joy?

JOY: Your leader is a hero.

(Re-enter WANG with wine. JOY leaves.)

WANG *(as he comes in)*: Yes, each of the leaders of Liangshan is a hero.

(He puts the wine on the table.)

TU: Please come over here, uncle.

WANG: What orders have you for me, sir?

TU: Our elder brother Sung Chiang wants to marry your daughter and has asked me to be the go-between. You mustn't refuse this offer, uncle.

WANG: The fact is, sir, my daughter is already engaged.

TU: That doesn't matter. I shall give you a hundred ounces of gold when I go back to the mountain, and you can break off the first engagement. Married to our commander, she will have her fill of wealth and splendour.

WANG: How can I do such a thing?

CHANG: That's enough. I see you won't listen to reason. When we propose marriage politely, you won't agree. Here, men!

(Enter the four SERVANTS.)

CHANG: Carry the girl off.

(WANG rises to stop them, but TU holds him off. CHANG goes inside with the four SERVANTS and drags out JOY.)

JOY: Dad! . . .

(CHANG and the SERVANTS carry JOY off.)

WANG: Let my daughter go at once!

TU: To hell with you! *(He knocks him down and goes out.)*

WANG *(struggles to his feet, frantic)*: Ah!

This is a bolt from the blue,

I am wild with grief and rage!

I thought the men of Liangshan good and just;

Now I see they are nothing but brigands.

We all thought the good men of Liangshan carried out the will of Heaven, overthrowing tyrants and helping the good.

Now it seems they are simply frauds. What were the names of those two scoundrels? . . . *(He thinks.)* Yes, one was

Sung Chiang and the other was Lu Chih-shen.

I shall remember their names:

Sung Chiang and Lu Chih-shen.

My heart is bursting with anger.

(Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND.)

BLACK:

In no time I am back at Apricot Blossom Village.

WANG *(lamenting)*: My daughter! Joy!

BLACK: Brother Wang! Here I am again!

WANG *(lamenting)*: Ah, daughter. . . .

BLACK: What's this?

Why is he weeping so bitterly?

Wang Lin, what's the reason for these tears? Tell me what has happened. I'll help you.

(Ignoring him, WANG goes into his tavern.)

BLACK: The old fellow was calling his daughter's name. Can anything have happened to her? Let me go and find out.
(He enters the tavern.) Brother Wang, is your daughter ill?

WANG: No.

BLACK: Is she dead?

WANG: No.

BLACK: Then why were you weeping?

WANG: She's been . . . kidnapped.

BLACK: Ah! What wicked man dared to do such a thing?

WANG: It was. . . .

BLACK: Who was it?

WANG: It was. . . .

BLACK: Who?

WANG: Ah. . . .

BLACK: Hah!

What heartless scoundrel

Dared to carry off your girl?

Tell me frankly, brother. Quick!

Don't stammer and stutter.

Who was it?

WANG: There's nothing you can do.

BLACK: No?

Li Kuei has a fiery temper,

His iron fist knows no mercy.

Tell me who it was, Brother Wang.

WANG: I'm afraid you can't afford to offend this kidnapper.

BLACK: Pah!

Even if he were the King of Hell,

I'd hamstring him and skin him alive.

Out with his name, Brother Wang! I'll avenge you.

WANG: He is one of your Liangshan leaders.

BLACK: What's that, Wang Lin? All my brothers at Liangshan are gallant men. None of them would do such a thing.
Don't blacken our name.

WANG: No, Brother Li!

Don't be angry,

But listen to my story.

BLACK: Go on.

WANG:

Two of them were here just now,

I remember their names and age clearly.

BLACK: Who were they?

WANG:

Lu Chih-shen was the go-between.

BLACK: What!

WANG:

He insisted that my daughter should marry your chief.

BLACK: What!

WANG:

Since she is engaged already, I could not agree.

BLACK: Then what did they do?

WANG:

Sung Chiang stepped forward and carried Joy away.

BLACK: Is this true?

WANG: Every word of it.

BLACK: Did this really happen?

WANG: I swear it.

BLACK: How old was this Sung Chiang? What did he look like?

WANG: He's about forty, rather short with a swarthy face.

BLACK: And Lu Chih-shen?

WANG: Over thirty. A fat monk.

BLACK: Hah!

I am convulsed with fury,

And pointing at Liangshan I curse Sung Chiang.

How could you leave the mountain to kidnap a girl?

How could you bully a good man, you hypocrite!

The Tattooed Monk was your accomplice.

Bah, Sung Chiang!

You are a beast with a human face!

WANG (*weeping*): My little Joy!

BLACK: Brother Wang,

Don't weep, don't lose heart.

I shall avenge you. (He sees the wine on the table.)

There's wine!

In fury I drink up the wine.

WANG: Don't get drunk now and get into trouble.

BLACK:

I turn to Wang Lin.

Brother Wang, I'm going back to our stronghold to kill that scoundrel and bring your daughter back so that you can live together happily. I've given you my word. Now I'm off. (*Exit.*)

WANG: Ah, daughter! (*Exit.*)

SCENE VII

Confusion in the Fortress

Time: soon after the last scene.

Place: the Hall of Loyalty and Justice, Liangshan.

(*Enter SUNG CHIANG preceded by LIN CHUNG, LU CHIH-SHEN, YEN CHING, WU YUNG, and six other GALLANT MEN.*)

SUNG:

Once I was a clerk in Yuncheng,

Known to the gallants there as Seasonal Rain.

I killed Yen Hsi-chiao at Black Dragon Court,

*Was sent to Chiangchow, wrote a poem when drunk and
so got into trouble.*

Heroes rescued me at the execution ground,

We gathered together as outlaws in Liangshan.

Serving Heaven's will, we championed the common people,

Killing tyrants and evil officials.

I have sent Brother Li Kuei out to look for grain;

May he return soon in safety.

*In the Hall of Loyalty and
Justice,
I wait anxiously for his
report.*

(*Enter one of his LIEUTENANTS.*)

LIEUTENANT: Commander!
The Black Whirlwind has
knocked down our yellow
flag and charged into the
fortress.

ALL: Ah!

(*Enter the BLACK
WHIRLWIND brandishing
his axe in a towering rage.
He forces his way in.*)



BLACK: Black-hearted Sung Chiang! I looked upon you as my elder brother. Yet you did such a dastardly deed! Take this! (*He raises his axe to kill SUNG CHIANG.*)

LIN and YEN (*stopping him*): What does this mean, Li Kuei? Why have you knocked down our yellow flag? Why make such an uproar in our hall?

BLACK: Brothers, what are the words written on our flag?

LIN and YEN: "Do the Will of Heaven, Kill Tyrants, Preserve the Good."

BLACK: Do the will of Heaven, indeed! Shame on you, Sung Chiang! Bring out the girl at once, and let our brothers deal with you as you deserve!

SUNG: He is talking utter nonsense. He must be drunk. Help him to the back and make him lie down.

BLACK: Wait a bit, Sung Chiang! Now your secret is out, stop pretending to be a good fellow! You sneaked out of the fortress and kidnapped a girl. You surely don't expect me to let you off lightly? (*He swings his axes to attack SUNG CHIANG but is stopped by the others.*)

LU: Li Kuei, you are stinking drunk and making a fool of yourself.

BLACK: Hah! I'm not going to let you off either, you woman-snatching monk. (*He rounds on LU but is stopped by LIN CHUNG.*)

LU: Have you gone off your head to accuse me of such a thing? I won't forgive you for this!

WU: Li Kuei, our elder brother and Lu Chih-shen haven't left the mountain. You've been listening to rumours.

ALL: That's right. They haven't left the fortress. You're slandering them.

BLACK: Ah, Brother Wu, they've fooled the lot of you.

SUNG: Li Kuei, you insist that I left the mountain to kidnap some woman. What proof have you?

BLACK: I've got proof all right.

LU: Let's hear it.

BLACK: Listen! I was sent to spy out the land in Yichow. I found that the lord of the manor there, Tsao Teng-lung, is hoarding grain and oppressing the people cruelly. As I was hurrying back, I passed Wang Lin's tavern in Apricot Blossom Village and found old Wang in tears. He told me Lu Chih-shen had acted as go-between to marry his daughter Joy to Sung Chiang. When the old man refused, he . . . (*Pointing at SUNG CHIANG.*) carried the girl off by force. Ah, Sung Chiang, this is a fine thing you've done! Let's see you talk your way out of this.

ALL: Ah!

WU: No wonder he's so angry. Obviously those kidnappers passed themselves off as two of our men to give Liangshan a bad name.

YEN: If that's the case, elder brother, let me go down to find out the truth. Then we'll catch the kidnappers.

SUNG: Very well. Hear my orders, Yen Ching.

YEN: Yes, commander.

SUNG: I order you to go and find out the whereabouts of that girl. Report back quickly.

YEN: It shall be done! (*Exit.*)

WU: I think you might go with Li Kuei, elder brother, to confront his witness. That should clear the matter up.

BLACK: Sung Chiang, do you dare go with me to confront the witness?

SUNG: Just let me change my clothes and I'll go with you.

LU: If you're going to confront the witness, I'll come too.

BLACK: Of course, we must have the go-between as well. When we get to Wang Lin's tavern, if the old man says you were the monk — whizz! I'll cut off your monkish head.

LU: If he says I was the go-between, I'll deserve it. What if he says it wasn't me?

BLACK: In that case you can cut off my black head.

LU: I'm afraid that black head of yours is dropping already.

BLACK: Don't quibble. Come on! (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE VIII

The Girl Resists

Time: some time after Scene VI.
Place: Tsao Teng-lung's manor-house.
(Enter JOY.)

JOY:

*This wolf in human form
 Kidnapped-me by a trick;
 The thought of my father makes my tears rain down,
 Grief is an arrow in my heart.*
 This hateful scoundrel Tsao Teng-lung has kidnapped me
 and is trying to force me to marry him. Though I am the
 daughter of an innkeeper, wealth and rank cannot tempt me
 to do wrong. If he persists, I shall take my own life.
*Although he beat me cruelly,
 Never, never shall I be his wife!*

(Enter AUNTY LIU with clothes and trinkets.)

AUNTY: Ah, mistress, why do you make things so hard for yourself? Our master lost his appetite for longing for you; but as soon as you entered his house you swore at him and threatened to kill yourself. That made the master angry and he had you whipped. How can you stand such hard treatment? Look, your hair is hanging wild and your clothes are torn. I suppose all young girls are headstrong, but you'll soon get used to this life.

JOY: Get out!

AUNTY: Look, the master is sorry that he had you beaten. He blamed us for not stopping him. Here are some clothes and trinkets he told me to bring you. Stop sulking now! When a pretty girl like you is dressed up, not only our master but even I. . . .

JOY (*slapping her face*): Bah!

Such talk enrages me;

For what do you take me?

Even a young girl has her principles;

Enough of your foul insinuations!

AUNTY: How dare I make foul insinuations! Look! (*Holding out the clothes.*) This will show you how much in earnest our master is. Isn't this wonderful embroidery?

JOY:

How can such a scoundrel be in earnest?

*I shall wear no clothes from the Tsao family! (*She tears up the clothes.*)*

AUNTY: Don't you like them? Look at this, then. (*Picking up a jewel-box.*) Here are hair-ornaments, rings and other trinkets that you couldn't get for love or money. How pretty you will look in these.

JOY:

Don't speak to me of trinkets,

*I care nothing for jewels. (*She throws away the trinkets.*)*

AUNTY: Don't do that! Can't you appreciate our master's kindness? Look at this pearl head-dress — exquisite!

JOY:

*I will not take his bead-dress! (*She throws the bead-dress away.*)*

AUNTY: Heaven! You nearly frightened me out of my wits.

(She picks up the head-dress.)

JOY:

*Another word, and I shall kill myself! (*Exit.*)*

AUNTY: Stubborn girl! Let's see how long you can hold out.

(Exit.)

SCENE IX

Confronting the Witness

Time: the same time as Scene VIII.

Place: on the road and in Wang Lin's tavern.

SUNG (*off*):

Confound Li Kuei's insolence!

(Enter LU CHIH-SHEN and SUNG CHIANG.)

LU: Elder brother, Li Kuei was insufferably rude!

SUNG: Yes, brother,

He had no right to make that scene in our hall.

LU: He had no right to slander good men.

SUNG:

Who can have told him such a pack of lies,

To bring this baseless charge against Sung Chiang!

LU: If you hadn't stopped me, I'd have given the pig-headed fool a good beating.

SUNG:

Have patience, Brother Lu!

Once down the hill, we shall know what to do.

LU: Elder Brother,

Liangshan is famed for its discipline;

Why did you let the Black Whirlwind off so lightly?

This accusation is more than I can stand;

If he insults me again, I shall set on him!

SUNG: I admit that Li Kuci has been most offensive, but be patient a little longer. The one I hate is the scoundrel who . . . (Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND.) kidnapped the girl.

BLACK: So, Sung Chiang, you confess your guilt!

SUNG: What did I confess?

BLACK: Didn't you just admit that you . . . er . . . kidnapped the girl? Wasn't that a confession?

SUNG: I was speaking of the wretch who carried her off.

BLACK: You can't fool me. Come on.

*You may swear by heaven and earth to fool the ghosts,
But you won't fool me over this kidnapping.*

SUNG: I won't argue with you. When we get to the tavern you'll find out the truth.

BLACK: Ah, Sung Chiang!

*When we meet the witness in the tavern,
I shall cut off Lu's head and stop your mouth —
You have only yourselves to blame!*

Tattooed Monk! You said back there in the fortress that if Wang Lin recognizes you as the go-between, you'll pay with your life. So don't blame me if I split your head open!

LU: Confound it!

BLACK: That'll leave you, Sung Chiang. And I know how to deal with you.

SUNG: What will you do to me?

BLACK: I shall take you back to the fortress, and call all our brothers together. . . .

SUNG: And then?

BLACK: And then we shall hack you to pieces with our swords!

SUNG: Bah!

BLACK: Bah! Come on. (He notices that SUNG CHIANG is lagging behind.)

*Sung Chiang is walking slowly, knowing his guilt;
No doubt he is afraid and wants to turn back.*

Why are you walking so slowly, Sung Chiang?

Are you hoping to slip back to the mountain?

Don't imagine you can escape me today! (He notices that

LU CHIH-SHEN is also lagging behind.)

Tattooed Monk, are you falling behind?

No doubt the go-between feels guilty too.

Tattooed Monk, usually you stride like the wind. How is it you are dawdling like this today? Are you trying to escape?

Ha, neither of you will escape me. Come on!

LU: Oh!

SUNG: Be patient, Brother Lu. Come on.

LU: All right. Come on.

(They walk around the stage and reach WANG LIN's tavern.)

BLACK: Go in!

SUNG: Let's go in.

(They enter the tavern.)

BLACK: Brother Wang, Brother Wang! The Black Whirlwind is here.

(Enter WANG LIN.)

WANG: Brother Li! Where is Joy?

BLACK: They will have to send her back. I've brought you the two ruffians who kidnapped your girl. That is Sung Chiang sitting there. Go and have a look at him.

WANG: I will.

BLACK: Don't be afraid, Brother Wang. Point him out boldly.

WANG: Right.

SUNG: I am Sung Chiang, uncle. Am I the man who kidnapped your daughter?

BLACK: Is that him?

WANG: Well. . . .

SUNG: H'm.

BLACK: Hey! The old man was just about to identify you when you glared at him and frightened him. Close your eyes!

SUNG: All right, I'll close my eyes.
 BLACK: Don't be afraid, Brother Wang. You're safe with me.
 Just identify him.
 WANG: Yes.
 BLACK: Is that the man?
 WANG: He. . . .
 BLACK: Well?
 WANG: He . . . his face is just as dark.
 BLACK: Ha!
 WANG: His height is the same.
 BLACK: Ha!
 WANG: But his features are different. No, this is not the man.
 BLACK: Are you sure, Brother Wang?
 WANG: That's not the man.
 BLACK: Is your eyesight failing?
 WANG: I wouldn't fail to recognize an enemy.
 BLACK: So he's not the one. (*Looking at LU CHIH-SHEN.*)
 Brother Wang, would you recognize the go-between monk?
 WANG: I would.
 BLACK: I've got him too. Go and identify him. If you say
 this is the man, I shall kill him with my axe. Have a good
 look, Brother Wang.
 WANG: Right.
 LU: Come here quickly and look at me.
 BLACK: Is that him?
 WANG: Well. . . .
 BLACK: It's him, isn't it?
 WANG: No, it isn't. This monk has long hair; the other's head
 was shaved.
 BLACK: What, this isn't the man either?
 WANG: No, this isn't the man.
 BLACK: Sung Chiang?
 WANG: Not him.
 BLACK: Lu Chih-shen?
 WANG: Not him.
 BLACK: In that case, this wasn't the work of anyone from
 Liangshan.
 WANG: No, they weren't from Liangshan. I was taken in by
 those devils.

BLACK (*forgetting his position and raising his thumb*): All our
 Liangshan brothers are good men!
 LU: So I wasn't that go-between, Li Kuci.
 BLACK (*penitently*): I was too hasty again.
 I am too hot-tempered,
 I wronged our elder brother and should be punished;
 I am filled with shame and remorse. (He kneels before
 SUNG CHIANG.)
 Elder brother,
 Deal with me severely.
 SUNG: Li Kuci, your rudeness and thoughtlessness will be
 dealt with when we go back to the mountain.
 LU: Get up!
 (*The BLACK WHIRLWIND gets up and stands on one side.*)
 SUNG: So it seems that it wasn't men from Liangshan who
 kidnapped your daughter, uncle.
 WANG: I shouldn't have let myself be tricked so easily. For-
 give me for misjudging good men.
 SUNG: You are not to be blamed since you couldn't know.
 What's important is saving your daughter.
 LU: Yes, rescuing your daughter is the important thing.
 SUNG: Do you know of any bad characters near by, uncle?
 WANG: No. . . . I can't think of anyone.
 SUNG: Have no suspicious characters been drinking in your
 tavern?
 WANG: Yes, just after Brother Li left us that day two dirty
 dogs came here. When they saw my daughter, they made
 an improper proposal and I sent them packing.
 SUNG: Do you know who they were or where they came from?
 WANG: No, I didn't ask.
 BLACK: Why didn't you find out, Brother Wang?
 LU: You keep out of this!
 SUNG: This makes it rather difficult.

(*Enter YEN CHING.*)

YEN: I bring news, elder brother.
 SUNG: What did you find out, Brother Yen?

YEN: I've found out the girl's whereabouts.

SUNG: Where is she now?

YEN: She was kidnapped by a bad landlord, Tsao Teng-lung.

BLACK: Ah! (*Wild with fury he dashes off.*)

LU: Elder brother! Let me go and give that villain three hundred blows with my staff to work off my feelings.

SUNG: Wait! Brother Yen, do you know how many arms instructors and guards Tsao has?

YEN: About a dozen instructors and five hundred guards.

(*Enter LIN CHUNG.*)

LIN: Elder brother, Wu Yung has sent me here with troops.

We are stationed outside the village, waiting your orders.

SUNG: Good.

LIN: Just now I saw Li Kuci rush out of the village in a fury.

SUNG: I expect he has gone to the Tsao manor-house.

WANG: My poor daughter!

SUNG: Don't be distressed. I am sending my troops at once to rescue your daughter.

WANG: Thank you, sir!

SUNG: Quick, brothers! Come with me.

(*Exeunt SUNG CHIANG, LIN CHUNG, LU CHIH-SHEN and YEN CHING.*)

WANG: They are gallant men! I'll pack up now so that I can go to the Tsao manor-house tomorrow to fetch my daughter.
(*Exit.*)

SCENE X

The Attack on the Manor-House

Time: directly after the last scene.

Place: on the road between Apricot Blossom Village and Tsao's house.

(*Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND.*)

BLACK: Just now Brother Yen said that it was the bully Tsao Teng-lung who kidnapped Joy. I am bursting with anger. I shall go to Yichow and ask Li Quei to take me to the manor-house. We'll kill the whole lot of them! (*Exit.*)

(*Enter LIN CHUNG with eight other GALLANT MEN.*)

TOGETHER:

Flags flutter in pairs,

Like a flight of wild swans;

Our halberds, spears and swords gleam in the sun;

With our might we kill wolves and tigers.

Heroes all,

We charge like a torrent rushing to the sea,

Like wind and thunder breaking through dark mist,

Raising great echoes, dismaying the gods on high.

Who can withstand the strong host of Liangshan?

We are off to storm the Tsao Manor. (Exeunt.)

(*LU CHIH-SHEN and YEN CHING pass across the stage and out.*)

SCENE XI

Storming the Manor

Time: the next evening.

Place: Tsao's manor-house.

(*Enter CHIANG LI and KUNG FU supporting TSAO TENG-LUNG who is drunk.*)

CHIANG: Master, you are in high spirits today. You drank a good deal — one cup after another.

KUNG: Have you had too much, master?

TSAO: No, I'm all right. Call Aunty Liu here at once.

CHIANG: Yes, master. Aunty Liu! The master wants you.

(*Enter AUNTY LIU.*)

AUNTY: Coming, coming! What do you want, master?
TSAO: What happened to the girl I told you to persuade?
AUNTY: Master, I have nearly worn out my lips, but she shows no sign of listening to reason.
TSAO: In that case, bring her here.

(Exit AUNTY LIU.)

TSAO: So the bitch doesn't know what's good for her. If she doesn't have me tonight, I'll beat her to death.

(Enter AUNTY LIU with JOY.)

AUNTY: Here she is, master.

TSAO: Joy, you are too young to be so headstrong. You'll find it more difficult to escape from my clutches than to climb up to heaven. But if you're good to me, there's no end to the wealth and splendour you'll enjoy. Come now! Tonight shall be our wedding-night. Hahaha!

JOY: You brigand!

*A curse on this cruel robber chief
Who can only bully the weak!
I may be young
But I have a high sense of honour;
I will bite you, even if you kill me. . . .*

TSAO: Tie her up.

(CHIANG and KUNG tie JOY up.)

TSAO:

*The wretch has chosen to die,
She shall not escape!
Come!*

(Enter Instructor CHANG with four SERVANTS.)

TSAO: Drag this bitch to the back and beat her to death.

(Exeunt TSAO with CHIANG, KUNG and AUNTY LIU.)

CHANG: Boys, take her outside the manor and beat her to death.

(They walk round the stage. Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND. They fight. CHANG is defeated and flees. The BLACK WHIRLWIND rescues the girl.)

JOY: Thank you, Uncle Li, for saving my life!

BLACK: Come with me

(Enter the instructors CHANG and TU with SERVANTS. The BLACK WHIRLWIND fights with them but is forced to give ground. The situation is becoming desperate when LI QUEI appears with LIN CHUNG and others. They fight the INSTRUCTORS and SERVANTS and kill them. Re-enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND with JOY.)

LIN: Li Kuei, have you seen the landlord?

BLACK: I made mincemeat of him.

(Enter WANG LIN. He clasps his daughter and they weep for joy.)

WANG: Thank you all for saving my daughter. *(He kowtows.)*

LIN: Don't be so ceremonious, uncle.

BLACK: Brother Wang, take her home at once.

WANG: Thank you, thank you! *(Exeunt WANG and JOY.)*

LIN: Li Kuei, who is this gentleman?

BLACK: This is Brother Li Quei. Let me introduce you to our leaders.

LI QUEI: Greetings, gentlemen!

LU, LIN and YEN: Greetings.

LIN: The storming of the Tsao manor-house today is to the credit of the two of you.

BLACK: It was nothing. But I had a good fight. Ahaha!

LU *(significantly)*: Li Kuei, don't forget that you still owe me your head.

BLACK: That's right! (*Remembering how he knocked down the flag and created an uproar in the hall, he hangs his head in shame.*)

LIN: Brothers, now that we have stormed the Tsao manor-house and killed the wicked landlord, hear my orders! Brother Kuo and Brother Lu!

KUO and LU: Yes, commander.

LIN: Stay here with Brother Li Quei to distribute half of the landlord's grain and wealth to the peasants. Then bring the other half to our fortress.

KUO, LU and LI QUEI: It shall be done! (*Exeunt.*)

LIN: Now let us go back to Liangshan.

(*Exeunt LIN CHUNG, LU CHIH-SHEN, YEN CHING and the others.*)

BLACK: Wait a minute, Brother Yen!

(*Re-enter YEN CHING.*)

YEN: Aren't you coming?

BLACK: Brother, I made trouble in the fortress and broke our rules. I cannot face our elder brother again. Now the Tsao manor-house is captured, my work is done. Please take my black head to the fortress with you. (*He raises an axe to kill himself.*)

YEN: Steady on! A real man ought to admit his mistake.

BLACK: Eh?

YEN: So fasten a cane to your back and go to the Hall of Loyalty and Justice to ask for punishment.

BLACK: All right, I'll fasten a cane to my back and go to admit my mistake. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE XII

The Black Whirlwind Pleads Guilty

Time: soon after.

Place: the Hall of Loyalty and Justice.

(*Enter the Liangshan men. LIN CHUNG, LU CHIH-SHEN and WU YUNG lead in SUNG CHIANG, who takes the seat in the middle.*)

SUNG: Brothers, thanks to your concerted efforts we have stormed the Tsao manor-house. I have prepared a feast in the back-hall to celebrate our victory. We must all have a good drink together.

ALL: We shall come.

(*Enter YEN CHING.*)

YEN: Elder brother, Li Kuei has come to apologize.

SUNG: Send him in.

LIN: One minute! He did well in the storming of the manor-house. I hope you will pardon him.

SUNG: H'm.

YEN: He realizes his mistake and has come with a cane on his back to ask for punishment. I hope you will forgive him, elder brother.

SUNG: H'm.

LU: Well. . . . Li Kuei has always been stubborn and thoughtless. Though he slipped up this time, I think we might let him off lightly.

SUNG: H'm.

WU: Elder brother, since all of us wish it, pardon him!

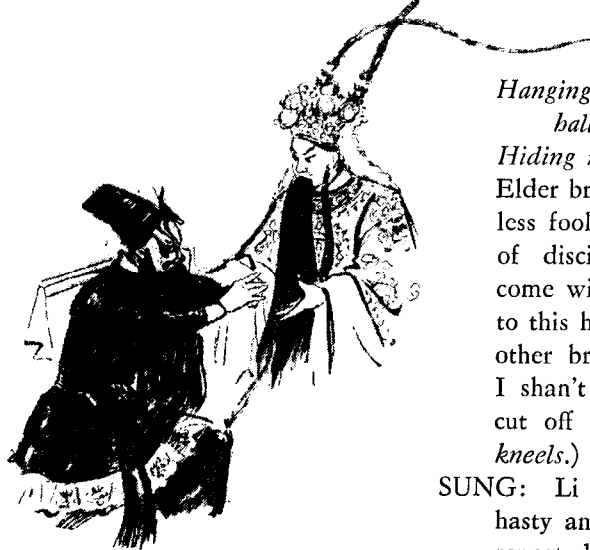
SUNG: Since you all say so, I'll consider it. Call him in.

YEN: Li Kuei! Come here.

BLACK (*off*): Here I come. (*Enter the BLACK WHIRLWIND carrying a cane on his back.*)

I was wrong to run amok that day,

I was wrong to blame our elder brother;



Hanging my head I enter the hall, (He enters.)

Hiding my face for shame.

Elder brother, I was a thoughtless fool and I broke our rules of discipline. Now I have come with a cane on my back to this hall so that you and my other brothers can punish me. I shan't complain even if you cut off my black head. *(He kneels.)*

SUNG: Li Kuei, you were too hasty and paid no attention to repeated warnings. So you were easily fooled by a dastardly

trick and caused havoc in our Hall of Loyalty and Justice. Such thoughtless behaviour should be punished to enforce our discipline. *(He leaves his seat.)* But you have always been straightforward and unselfish, hating evil-doers. And now you have come with a cane to ask for punishment. This is a sign of your sincere repentance. I only hope that in future you will not be guilty of the same mistake or behave so thoughtlessly. Stand up now, brother!

When I sent you off on a mission,

I bade you remember two things:

Not to let your rashness get you into trouble,

And not to drink any wine,

Yet you came back roaring drunk,

Swearing at me, your commander.

You were wrong to raise that rude clamour,

You were wrong to force me to accompany you.

But you showed great courage in storming the manor-house

And in rescuing Wang Lin's daughter.

From now on you must not be so rash,

But use your head.

I step forward and remove the cane from your back.

Now let us feast together!

Get up, brother!

BLACK: Thank you, elder brother. *(He rises penitently.)* I am very ashamed.

I acted too thoughtlessly.

Hating the scoundrel who passed himself off as Sung Cbiang
And kidnapped Wang Lin's daughter,

I was so enraged

That I charged to Liangshan with my axes,

Knocked down the flag and set our hall in a tumult.

Now the true Sung Cbiang and the false are known;

The truth is out, I am overcome with shame.

Thank you, elder brother, for pardoning my fault.

I shall change my ways and never run wild again.

LU:

I shall not ask you for the head you owe me.

BLACK:

Don't bear me a grudge, Brother Lu!

WU:

The Black Whirlwind must not be so rash again;

Don't forget this day in the Hall of Loyalty and Justice.

SUNG: Now the feast is ready in the back. Let us go to drink together.

ALL: We go!

(The End)

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Li Ke-yu

CHOU ERH-FU

Literary Ties Between China and Latin America

It was October 11, 1958, close to winter in China but already spring in Argentina. Coloured neon lights lit up the sky over Buenos Aires, transforming the Argentine capital into a realm of magic. Late as it was, people were still working hard: factory workers were preparing for the next day's struggle; students were holding meetings to discuss how to oppose the law by which the government meant to use religion to interfere in education; in front of newspaper offices and the broadcasting station, crowds had gathered to exchange views on important events at home and abroad; the streets were seething with anger against American imperialism and its stooges.

I went to an apartment house in a relatively quiet road where the Guatemalan poet Miguel Asturias had invited me to dinner. At his door I was met by a tall, well-built elderly man, who stretched out his arms to hold me tight, then patted me warmly on the back. Such emotion gripped me that I can never forget the moment. This was Asturias, outstanding progressive writer of Guatemala and former chairman of the Guatemalan Peace

Chou Erh-fu, born in 1913 in Anhwei, is a well-known novelist. *Morning in Shanghai* and *Doctor Bethune* are his two most popular novels. He is a vice-president of the China-Latin America Friendship Association.

Committee, who has fought indefatigably for the independence and freedom of his country. His stories *Week-end in Guatemala* and *They Are All Yankees* were introduced to Chinese readers last year. These two stories show us the real nature of the predatory, aggressive American imperialists and the heroism with which the Guatemalan people are fighting to protect their independence and freedom. Asturias has visited China and been my guest in Shanghai. This was his fifty-ninth birthday, and he had invited a number of Latin American writers to meet me.

Entering his flat, I saw many writers sitting there, not only from Argentina but from Cuba, Chile and Spain as well. The talk turned naturally to the literary ties between China and Latin America.

Chinese writers are greatly interested in Latin American literature. Forty years ago the *Stories Monthly* published a number of articles about literary developments in Latin America. We were introduced to *Canaa* by Graca Aranha of Brazil; *Juan Mariera* by Silverio Maneo, *Santos Vega* by Luis Bayon Herrera, and *Mountain of the Witches* by Julio Sanchez Gardel of Argentina; *The Immoral Men* and *The General and the Doctor* by Carlos Loveira of Cuba; and the well-known poem *Prayer for All* by the Chilean poet Andeas Bello. In November 1921 we published a translation of *Queen Mab's Veil* by Dario, a Nicaraguan poet born in Chile. This was the first translation of Latin American literature in China; thus this masterpiece which has had such a great influence on Latin American poetry was enjoyed by Chinese readers forty years ago. The year after, in November 1922, the *Stories Monthly* published a translation of the Chilean writer Barrios' one-act play *Father and Mother*. Since that time reports in Chinese periodicals on Latin American literature have never ceased to arouse wide interest.

Since the founding of New China, we have invited many writers from Latin America to China. These visitors include Nicolas Guillen of Cuba, Pablo Neruda of Chile, Jorge Amado of Brazil, Alfredo Varela of Argentina, Helvio Romero of Paraguay, Franck Fuche of Haiti, Enrique Amorim of Uruguay and Miguel Asturias himself. Their works have been introduced to China and warmly received by Chinese readers, for they tell us the truth about the life of the people in the Latin

American countries on the far shore of the Pacific, how bravely they opposed and defeated the Spanish and Portuguese colonialists in the past, how today they are fighting against American imperialism to defend their national independence, democracy and freedom, and how the tide of revolution is rising in Latin America.

I was very glad to have this opportunity to visit Latin America, in the forefront of the struggle against imperialism, during this great period of the decline of imperialism and the rise of the socialist revolution. I was happy to be able to meet some of the progressive writers of Latin America in the Argentine capital. Just as the Chilean poet Victor Domingo Silva has said:

I may be a poet,
But above all I want to be
A revolutionary!

All the Latin American writers I have met are heroes who are more than poets. Of those present at the gathering that evening, for instance, was one poet whose eyes shone with wisdom and integrity. He sat there without speaking much, but his words scintillated with a revolutionary fervour. This was the great Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen. At fifty-six, he still looks a young revolutionary fighter. He worked as a printer, took part in the Spanish people's war against Fascism and wrote stirring poems in praise of the Spanish people. He conveys to us in his poems the Cuban people's fighting spirit and passionate desire for revolution. In 1945 he was forced to go into exile, while under the despotic regime of Batista he was not even free to write to his wife — had they corresponded openly his wife and children might have been arrested. He went to France but was forced to leave as soon as De Gaulle came to power, and moved on to stay in Buenos Aires. Guillen has visited China twice, bringing with him to the Chinese people the good wishes and friendship of the country of José Martí, and carrying back to Latin America the friendship of the Chinese people for Cuba and other Latin American countries. As soon as we met, we fell into a discussion of how China and Cuba, so far apart geographically, are yet so close in revolutionary thought and feeling. In his poems we seem to see our own past history:

It is the Yankees who, without our consent,
Rob and carry off our wealth;
It is the Yankees who, with foul, dirty language,
Curse us after despoiling us.
U.S. marines rush forward in a mob
To gorge themselves and get drunk here;
They jeer at you, they jeer at me;
And as if such insults were not enough,
They urinate on Martí's statue.

The following poem also gives a good picture of the vicious attitude of U.S. imperialism not only towards Cuba but towards other parts of Latin America.

Ah, our American continent is carved up.
From the Pacific to the Caribbean,
From Rio Grande to Parana
It is the same story:
Whatever takes Uncle Sam's fancy.
He carries off —
Petroleum, coal or coffee,
Sugar, saltpetre, copper,
Till there is no place can call our own,
No standing room for us.

But Guillen, like all the Latin American people, is not intimidated by the most powerful imperialism of the world, American imperialism. He attacks it bravely, fully confident of victory:

In the wake of its planes
The imperialist eagle takes wing,
Its eyes hard as stones;
But though it may kill and pillage today,
Tomorrow will see the end of this bird of prey.

Imperialism is hastening towards its grave. Despite its last desperate efforts, it cannot escape the laws of historical development. The Chinese people love the literature of Latin America because it reveals the present and the future of the Latin American

countries. Written in sweat and blood, it reflects the people's determination. It is a clarion call to battle, the dirge of the colonialists, the harbinger of victory.

I saw works by many Chinese writers in Asturias' study, in Kordon's library, on Romero's desk, in the bookshops of many Latin American countries. Here are the poems of Mao Tse-tung, the stories of Lu Hsun, the works of Kuo Mo-jo, Mao Tun's *Midnight*, Tsao Yu's *Thunderstorm* and the *Chinese Literature* monthly. The poems of Mao Tse-tung, translated and published by many periodicals, were warmly welcomed by readers far and wide, and Spanish and Portuguese versions in book form soon appeared. The Portuguese edition is an excellent one with fine Chinese woodcuts. These poems of Mao Tse-tung which are such splendid examples of revolutionary realism combined with revolutionary romanticism are known throughout Latin America. Almost without exception, all the friends I met had read these poems and quoted them time and again with great admiration. One Peruvian professor said to me: "The influence of these poems of Comrade Mao Tse-tung surpasses that of ordinary literature. With their brilliant synthesis of high ideological content and art, they arouse men to fight. The extent of their popularity in Latin America is something which has never been seen before. These poems and the other writings of Mao Tse-tung are like a lighthouse on the vast Atlantic Ocean, a beacon shining through the dark night, guiding people on the road of struggle, showing the direction of the revolution and revealing the prospect of victory gleaming in the distance."

From the writings of Lu Hsun, Kuo Mo-jo and Mao Tun, our friends in Latin America can see China's past and its similarity in many respects to the present situation in their own countries. From these authors they learn how China has walked the road of bourgeois democratic revolution, how the forces of imperialism and feudalism which once lorded it over China met with defeat in the end. But what attracts the Latin American people even more are writings reflecting life today in New China. In the ten years since the establishment of New China our country has advanced by giant strides to enter the ranks of the great world powers. This is an event which has shaken the whole world. Mil-

lions in Latin America are eager to know our "knack," to study our Party's General Line for socialist revolution and socialist construction. This glorious Line, whose correctness has been proved by the great victories achieved, has become a focal point of attention to the peoples of Latin America, who want to learn from our experience. When writers and reporters from Latin America visit China, the publication of their writings in newspapers and magazines after their return sends the circulation soaring. When Murilo Marroquim of Brazil published an account of his interview with Chairman Mao Tse-tung in the magazine *O Cruzeiro*, the circulation of that number increased by several hundreds of thousands of copies. Papers carrying writings about China sell out very quickly. Books on China are extremely popular. A few examples are *Asia Major*, *The China Planet* by Maria Martins of Brazil, *Six Hundred Million and Myself* by Kordon of Argentina and *I Learned of China in Autumn* by Jesualdo of Uruguay. *China Is Smiling* by the Spanish poet Alberti who lives in Argentina and his wife the prose writer, Maria Teresa Léon is also an excellent book, deservedly popular.

Argentina is one of the cultural centres of Latin America. Latin American writers living in Argentina and Argentine writers, artists and other public figures held a big meeting to celebrate the first anniversary of the publication of *China Is Smiling*. I took part in the celebration, which was held in a Spanish restaurant in Buenos Aires. Writers of Argentina and other Latin American countries together toasted the success of this book, the popularity of works about present-day China in Latin America, and the increasing literary interchange between China and the Latin American countries.

That evening, Alberti and his wife were also present. Wherever they went one heard eager talk and clear laughter. Alberti introduced me to many new friends and we had a good talk about literary developments in China and in Latin America. We all shared the desire to promote the introduction and translation of literary works of different lands. The peoples of Latin America are waiting for more Chinese writings, those already published falling far short of their needs. We in China have the same wish.

The feast to celebrate Asturias' birthday began. We walked into the dining room and took seats or stood in groups, drinking wine and chatting. I raised my cup to offer a toast:

"May the cultural interchange between China and the Latin American peoples flow ceaselessly like the Pacific Ocean!

"May the friendship between the Chinese and the Latin American peoples remain steadfast for ever like the Andes Mountains!"

We all raised our cups. That evening we were intoxicated with joy and friendship.

June 4, 1960, Peking

Carp Jumping over the Dragon-gate (a New-Year picture)
by Shih Pang-hua

Shih Pang-hua is a young artist who is now doing mass cultural work at a cultural centre in Shantung. See the article on New-Year pictures on the following pages.



The Weifang New-Year Pictures

For generations in the Chinese countryside, at the end of the year the peasants have pasted up pictures with auspicious patterns in their houses to welcome the coming spring and invoke good luck. This is a long-standing and widespread tradition. These pictures, known as *nien bua* or New-Year pictures, have a history of more than a thousand years and their development was speeded up after the end of the Ming dynasty by the use of wood-block printing, until *nien-bua* became an independent art form. The three best-known centres of production were Yangliuching in Tientsin, Taohuawu in Soochow and Yangchiafu in Weifang. The New-Year pictures printed in these places were popular all over China thanks to their rich content and variety, each type having its distinctive modes of expression. This article, however, will deal only with the coloured woodcuts of Weifang.

Weifang is a small town in southern Shantung. It used to be no more than a large village where the peasants when their work in the fields was finished would turn to handicrafts. They did exquisite carving and inlaid work, made most attractive kites of different designs, and could even carve a small peach-stone into a tiny object of art. However, their most important and beautiful craft was the making of wood-block pictures for New Year.

When not long ago I visited a *nien-bua* workshop in Weifang, I learned that more than three hundred years ago the people here started using wood-block colour printing for New-Year pictures.

At first they used wood blocks to produce the outlines, adding the colours by hand; but later they developed a process of colour printing with a set of blocks with different colours. When you enter their workshop and see the country women and white-haired old men deftly turning sheet after sheet of paper to apply the colours, you cannot but be struck by their skill. The folk artists who carve these blocks and make the designs use simple colours, cheap paper and wood blocks of every size to produce *nien-hua* infinite in variety and rich in local colour. During their most prosperous period in the Ching dynasty, there were workshops in every family and production went on throughout the year. But not even the tens of millions of woodcuts they supplied annually could satisfy the great demand. Customers in carts or on donkeys would hurry here from all around before the lunar New-Year festival to place orders. These wood-block prints were popular because they reflected the life, thoughts and feelings of labouring folk and were within the means of the peasants. Since the craftsmen were for the most part peasants themselves, they were familiar with the villagers' life, could catch their mood, satisfy their longings and cater to their taste. Whatever the theme they took, whether social events, local opera, family life, scenery and flowers or door-gods, through the picture shone the labouring people's optimism and unquenchable love of life.

The form and size of the pictures are well adapted to the villagers' needs. There are two door-gods for the double gate, pictures shaped to fit both sides of a window, others to be pasted above it, friezes for above the bed, illustrated farming calendars for the kitchen, square designs for the hole in the wall when a stove-pipe is removed, as well as pictures of every size and shape for general wall decoration. In short, there is something to beautify each part of the house. The colouring and paper are well suited to their purpose too. Bright, smooth colours are blended in pleasing combinations, while the paper is light but strong and to some extent waterproof. And the finished product is so cheap that the villagers say: "For twenty cents you can cover a whole wall." These are the chief reasons for the popularity of these wood-block prints in the countryside.

In the last few decades before liberation, however, the development of lithographic printing, the contempt of the ruling class for

folk art and the heavy taxes which impoverished the people, forced many folk artists to give up their crafts and the production of *nien-hua* dropped very considerably. After liberation, the attention paid to this form of folk art and the help given by the Chinese Communist Party and the government ensured a rapid development, and the folk artists were organized to work in special centres. Since 1952, the artists of Shantung Province have sent four work teams to the villages to co-operate with the folk artists. They have made a study of these wood-block prints and improved them, getting rid of the dross and preserving what is good, producing many new prints with new contents. This folk art has now become a useful means of educating the people and bringing beauty into their lives. This is especially true since 1959 when a summary was made of the experience gained during the last few years, and with the close co-operation of folk artists a large number of outstanding new pictures were produced.

Just as many of the old *nien-hua* expressed the unattainable desires of the toiling masses, the new prints show the realization of these wishes. The men and women who are working hard to build a socialist society and a better tomorrow have become the true masters in these new prints, which combine a brand-new socialist content with the traditional style. In form, composition and colour, they have inherited and carried forward the best features of the old *nien-hua*, and their unity of form and content is one of their charms. Many of these prints use the old symbolic forms of expression and bold fantasy to bring out salient characteristics; but there are certain innovations also. For example, Shih Pang-hua's *Carp Jumping over the Dragon-gate* and Lu Hsueh-chin's *Wealth from Five Sources* use familiar conventions to show the new achievements in irrigation and the many-sided production of a commune. The former with its happy children tells of the benefits of reservoirs. The two plump babies playing with water in this picture are simply drawn, yet we know they are in the pink of condition with their smiling faces and bright eyes. One is riding on a carp, the other on a goldfish; one holds a lotus-seed, the other a lotus flower; thus there is balance as well as contrast. Around them lively ducklings swim, frogs leap and waterfowl rest on the lotus, all adding to the atmosphere of blissful



Wealth from Five Sources by Lu Hsueh-chin

content. Strongly contrasting colours, mainly red, yellow and green, form a splendid effect of brightness. And the rich variety of images and strongly decorative character of the painting, far from distracting our attention rather strengthen and enrich the main theme.

Wealth from Five Sources shows five gay children, on horseback, with a chicken, riding on a fish, carrying a peach, holding ears of wheat. These represent the commune's five fields of production: agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, subsidiary occupations and fish breeding. The children with their different gestures and costumes form one harmonious, satisfying whole, combining variety and unity. Spaces in the picture are filled with red flowers and coloured ribbons to make it full without monotony or overcrowding. The cheerful contrast of red and green comes out vividly against a background of white, heightening the decorativeness and rhythm of the picture. Here the fine sense of balance and careful composition of the traditional prints are further developed. This woodcut was made by a young peasant who never studied

painting, learning only in the workshop where he rapidly reached a high artistic level.

The Good Daughter-in-law is different again. This is a small horizontal picture with a verse attached, presenting the new type of village woman who loves to work in the fields. The folk song goes:

Early in the morning the magpies cry,
The new bride is carrying manure.
Her trousers are stained,
Her gay jacket is wet with sweat;
The whole commune praises her and mum is pleased;
All tell her she's got a good daughter-in-law.

The artist did not try to put all this in his picture, however. He has drawn neither commune members nor mother-in-law but three quarters of the space is devoted to peonies and magnolias, with two sleek magpies on the branches. Through the gaps in the blossom we see the new bride carrying manure. The flowers make a splendid foil for the young wife, who is further contrasted with the magpies on the branches to give a pleasing balance in this

The Good Daughter-in-law by Hsieh Chang-yi



varied composition. The birds and flowers in this simple happy scene naturally convey delight to those who see it.

One of the distinctive features of the Weifang New-Year pictures is the liberal use of purple, green, pink and similar colours. The folk artists say: "Purple is the skeleton and green the sinews." Usually not more than eight different colours are used. These artists make full use of the space at their disposal, creating a very decorative effect. But the most important characteristic of the Weifang prints is the freshness and interest of the contents, which leave an unforgettable impression.

While in Weifang, I met several white-haired old artists who told me that in the past they taught their skill to members of their own families only, never to outsiders. Hence the scope of the artists' influence was always limited. Since the establishment of people's communes, professional secrets are being shared with all, and young artists are rapidly being trained. The work of some of these young artists has made me confident that the Weifang New-Year pictures, which have a history of some three hundred years, have a still greater future before them.

Chronicle

Festival of Local Operas on Modern Themes

In April the Ministry of Culture sponsored a local opera festival in Peking at which six types of opera were performed using traditional dramatic forms to present contemporary themes.

The Eight Heroines of the Peony River by the Heilungkiang Pingchu Opera Company showed the steadfast courage of eight women in their struggle against the enemy during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. *A Single Spark* by the Shanghai Huchu Opera Company reflected the May 30 movement led by the Party in 1925 through the struggle of the workers in a mill against the capitalists. *Cheng Hung-mei* by the Anhwei Luchu Opera Company presented Cheng Hung-mei, heroine of the Taping Mountains, during the second revolutionary civil war. Guided by the instructions of the Party, she led the peasants against the landlords and Kuomintang reactionaries till they defeated the enemy and re-established the soviet power. *Flames over Palin* by the Peking Opera Company from Inner Mongolia depicted a slave revolt of the Palin Banner against despotic overlords more than fifty years ago. *After Winter Comes Spring* by the Honan Yuchu Opera Company showed how some peasants built a big water conservancy project, while *For Sixty-one Class Brothers* by the Peking Chuchu Opera Troupe depicted how the people of Peking sent medicine to Pinglu County hundreds of miles away in Shansi Province to save sixty-one patients poisoned by counter-revolutionaries.

This festival revealed the great achievements made in the last two years by the Chinese traditional operas in presenting contemporary life and in carrying out the policy "Let a hundred flowers blossom. Weed through the old to let the new emerge."

Art Exhibition of the Three Northeast Provinces

An art exhibition from the provinces of Kirin, Liaoning and Heilungkiang in Northeast China opened during April in the capital. The exhibits included Chinese ink and colours, woodcuts, oils, pos-

ters, sculptures, cartoons and scissor-cuts by professional and amateur artists and students of fine arts schools and academies. The exhibition testified to the rapid development of socialist construction in the three northeastern provinces and the optimistic and confident enthusiasm of the workers since the Big Leap. *Starting from Scratch* (serial) painted by students of the middle school affiliated to the Lu Hsun Art Academy depicted four demobilized soldiers building an alloy factory from nothing. The exuberance, ingenuity and dogged determination of these men were successfully conveyed. *Cable Workers Storm the Peaks of Science* (serial) by first-year students of the department of Chinese painting of the Lu Hsun Art Academy showed powerfully how the workers in the technical revolution use their brains to conquer difficulties and achieve miraculous results. The artists devoted most of their space not to the technical processes of production but bring to prominence the inventive spirit of the cable workers with great delicacy. Three works by young graphic artists, *Morning* by Chao Mei, *Winter in the Wanta Mountains* by Liu Lo-sheng and *Riding in the Forests* by Hsu Leng, gave poetic expression to the way in which socialist labour has made the "great northern wilds" as rich and fertile as the region south of the Yangtse. The themes of the exhibits reflected various aspects of construction in the Northeast. They showed us the heroism of the people in the Northeast in the revolutionary struggle as well as how those living on the Changpai Mountains or on the banks of the Sungari River are building their new life today.

Workers' and Cadres' Theatre Arts Festival

In May this year, Peking witnessed the largest national theatre arts festival of workers and cadres since 1949. The participants came from twenty-eight provinces, cities and autonomous regions and from more than twenty nationalities. They performed about six hundred items including music, dances, modern plays, local operas, modern operas, ballets, variety shows and acrobatics.

The original and stirring chorus *We Sing by Chairman Mao's Side* presented by the Peking group was composed and sung by more than four hundred advanced workers or representatives of advanced groups who took part in the Peking or the National Conference of Outstanding Groups and Workers. *The Great Leap Drum*, performed jointly by more than six hundred workers and cadres from

different provinces, cities and autonomous regions, presented to the full the spirit of our Big Leap Forward. *Women Militia*, by the group from Kirin, was a very humorous piece. Thirteen young women of the militia sang verses set to a merry Northeast folk tune and accompanied by the *sona*, a Chinese trumpet:

Sickles in our hands,
Guns on our shoulders,
We reap and thresh,
And do sentry duty to safeguard our motherland.

Red Flag Steel Squad, a dance by the group from Shanghai, showed the boundless drive of the Shanghai steel workers. *The Heroic Miners*, a dance by the Shantung group, was also outstanding.

The items presented at the festival covered a wide range of themes. Besides reflecting life today, some of them also dealt with revolutionary history or were traditional favourites of China's different nationalities. But the majority were produced by the workers themselves and had some bearing on their current tasks.

This festival provided the performers with the chance to learn from each other. Several discussions to exchange experience were organized.

Performances by Soviet Artists

A group of Soviet artists visited Peking in May and performed scenes from ballets, solos of vocal and instrumental music, folk dances and calisthenics. Alexandra Yakovenko, merited artist of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, delighted audiences with Russian and Ukrainian folk songs, *Song of the Horsemen* and *Song of the Youth* sung by Jafar Chabaldayev, merited artist of the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic were rich in national style. Yuri Galkin of the Bolshoi sang Russian and Ukrainian folk songs and the aria from *Snjegourotchka* by Rimsky Korsakov. His powerful, richly expressive voice and brilliant technique were felt to be typical of the Russian school of singing. The people's artists of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, Lydia Krupenina and Yuri Grevchov showed superb precision and verve in dances from *Don Quixote* and *The Stone Flower*. Larissa Brusnitchina and Dmitri Kharkov performed spirited, humorous and romantic folk dances. Clara Yusupova, merited artist of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic,

introduced certain ballet techniques into folk dances in a thoroughly successful combination. The performances of other artists also won high praise.

The Soviet artists later toured other cities of China.

50th Anniversary of the Death of Björnstjernes Bjornson

Writers and artists in Peking held a meeting on April 26 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Björnstjernes Bjornson. Present at the meeting were Tien Han, Lao Sheh, Chou Erh-fu, Chen Pai-chen and other well-known writers as well as more than four hundred lovers of literature. Knut Bernt Berger of the Norwegian Embassy also attended the meeting.

The meeting was chaired by Tien Han, president of the Union of Chinese Dramatists. He said in his opening speech, "Bjornson has exercised enlightening influence on progressive culture. He was one of the fighters in the national democratic struggle of Norway. He fought for the establishment of the national culture and independence of Norway and was opposed to the big capitalist countries who were invading smaller and weaker nations. So he was also a peace fighter."

Playwright Chen Pai-chen, member of the secretariat of the Chinese Writers' Union, gave a talk entitled "Learn from the Fighter of the Norwegian National Democratic Struggle." He introduced Bjornson's life and creative activities, analysing his works and their influence on world culture. He said, "We believe that the commemoration of Björnstjernes Bjornson will further strengthen the bond of friendship, solidarity and cultural exchange between the Chinese and Norwegian peoples."

After the meeting, in addition to a recital of Bjornson's poems, the Norwegian film *Such a Night* was shown.

Coming Shortly

THE SCARECROW

BY YEH SHENG-TAO

Yeh Sheng-tao is a well-known author of the older generation. He has the priceless gift of telling stories for children in such a way as to start them thinking about the world around them. Here, in this selection, are nine of his best children's stories written in the period between 1921 to 1936.

In "One Seed," the characters are a king, a rich man, a merchant and a soldier who exploit and oppress the people. The seed refuses to grow for their pleasure, but willingly germinates and flourishes for the peasant who works the field. In "The Scarecrow" the bitter, lamentable happenings of a single night in the old society are told. "The Language of Birds and Animals" satirizes the language of the aggressors who call their aggressive acts "civilized." The stories are told with apparent simplicity but unfailing grip, and make fascinating reading for both children and adults.

Illustrated with colour woodcuts by the Chinese artist Huang Yung-yu.

14 cm. × 21 cm.

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AN ORDINARY LABOURER

BY WANG YUAN-CHIEN

This is a collection of eight stories written by the well-known young writer Wang Yuan-chien during the period 1954-1958. Most of them describe the people's life of struggle during the Second Revolutionary Civil War. "Membership Dues" is a story of the White Terror in the early thirties. "Grain for the Guerillas" is the story of a Communist who ran great risks to send grain to the guerillas in the mountains. "A Little Guerilla" depicts a small boy who saved the life of a Red Scout leader, captured by the enemy. "The Three Slips of Paper" shows the close ties between the peasants and their own Red Army troops. The author gives a moving picture of the resolute, heroic and exemplary character of the Red commanders, guerillas and underground workers, and shows their boundless loyalty to the Party and revolutionary cause as well as their noble spirit of self-sacrifice.

12 cm. × 18.8 cm.

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