CHINESE LITERATURE

CONTENTS

Three Short Stories

Crescent Moon by Lao Sheh

Fifteen Years Since the Yenan "Talks"

Chronicle

4

1957

CHINESE LITERATURE

CONTENTS

LIN CHIN-LAN — Taiwan Girl 3
HSIAO PING — The March Snow Flower 20
KUAN YU — The Young Hunter 45
LAO SHEH — Crescent Moon 66
HSU CHEN-NGO — Chinese Ghost and Fairy Stories of the 3rd to the 6th Century 89
A SELECTION OF EARLY GHOST AND FAIRY STORIES 93
FIVE TIBETAN FABLES: 122
The Fox Who Did Not Know His Place — The Lion and the Wolf — The Quarrelsome Kittens — The Magic Ox-Horn — Three Girls
REMINISCENCES OF THE RED ARMY VETERANS: 131
HSU HSIANG-CHIEN — Fragments of Red Army Life
WANG CHI-CHENG — How We Stormed Tsunyi
CHEN CHANG-FENG — With Chairman Mao on the Long March
YANG CHENG-WU — The Fight at Luting Bridge
CHEN KUO-HUI — The Battle of Pinghsingkuan Pass
FIFTEEN YEARS SINCE THE YENAN "TALKS": 163
TSAO MING — New Problems
KANG CHO — The Path I Have Travelled
CHU KUANG-CHIEN — My Understanding
CHRONICLE: 175
The Debate on *The Tale of the Lute* — The Opera Form in China Today — Studio of Traditional Painting Opened in Peking — State Theatre for Northern *Kunchu* Opera Set Up
THE TRADITIONS OF CHINESE DANCING 182
NEW PUBLICATIONS 188
WRITERS AND ARTISTS IN THIS NUMBER 190
Index to Nos. 1-4, 1957 192
PLATES:
WU CHANG-SHIH — Golden Harvest
HSU PEN — Sunshine After Snow
CHEN SHIH-TSENG — Late Autumn
WANG CHI — Homeward Bound

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CHINESE LITERATURE

QUARTERLY

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TAIWAN GIRL

Lin Chin-lan

Though I hated to do it, in order to make a living I left the mainland and crossed the sea in autumn of 1946 and took a position as a teacher in a middle school in central Taiwan. The school was far from town, and my quarters were far from the school. I lived in a Japanese style wooden bungalow which the Kuomintang had taken over after the Japanese surrendered. Its doors and windows were in lamentable condition; its courtyard wall had collapsed; the neglected garden and the surrounding lonely fields had merged into one. I thought with longing of the mainland and the War of Liberation that was raging there. Unable to speak the local dialect, without a single friend, I was like an exile in the desert.

One day when I returned from class and pushed open the door, I couldn't restrain an exclamation of surprise. I seemed to have entered the wrong house. The dirty clothes that had been hanging on the wall were gone; my bedding on the matted floor had been neatly folded; everything had been put in order. Most delightful of all was a fresh cool fragrance—the floor matting had obviously just been washed clean with cold water.

Hearing noises in the kitchen, I looked in. A thin young girl was scrubbing the pots and bowls. Her head was down and I could only see her profile. Her face was thin, her skin was very white. She gave me a timid glance, but neither raised her head nor spoke. Some kind-hearted Taiwan friend had found me a maid. But she was so young. How could she manage?

"What's your name, little girl?"

"Wa mwo dzey."

"Where do you live?"

"Wa mwo dzey."

"Don't be afraid. You won't have much to do around here."

"Wa mwo dzey."

I had just learned a few words of the local dialect—most Taiwanese speak the same language as the people in southern Fukien. I knew that

"Wa mwo dzey" means "I don't know." It was evident she couldn't make head or tail of what I was saying.

I went back to my room, took a piece of paper and wrote in big letters the words "firewood, rice, cooking oil, salt." Then I handed her the paper, together with ten dollars. Before I could explain, she quietly smiled, and put the paper and the money in her pocket.

With the aid of the few Taiwan phrases I had picked up, adding one or two Japanese words, plus plenty of gestures, I tried to tell her my needs. I hoped breakfast and lunch would be on time, but it didn't matter if dinner was a little late. I wasn't fussy about my clothes; she didn't have to wash them every day.

I could see she was getting at least half of it. Yet whenever anything I said called for an answer, it was always "Wa mwo dzey," or that quiet smile. I suspected there was quite a bit of guile behind that smile — she never once raised her head or looked me in the eye. Ah, she wasn't such a little girl after all; she had quite a mind of her own.

From then on, the dilapidated little Japanese style bungalow was redolent with cooking smoke. A rope was stretched across the weed-grown garden and hung with wash. During the day, the windows were opened to let the sunlight in.

One evening as I sat writing, I asked her to make a pot of tea. Thereafter, every night, whenever I sat down to write, I would hear her clattering out of the kitchen. At my door, she would remove her wooden clogs, then walk barefoot across the matted floor and kneel and place the tea-pot on the low table. This kneeling was a hang-over from the Japanese occupation. I suppose with the Japanese style floor matting and the low table, kneeling was the easiest way to serve things. But I couldn't get used to it. It seemed too deferential.

With the tea, she would also bring a tiny slip of paper that she carried pressed in the palm of her hand. She would drop it on the table, and go out without a sound. The slip contained the day's accounts. I told her time and again it wasn't necessary, but all she would say was "Wa mwo dzey."

Finally, I pretended to be angry and tore the paper to bits. After that she stopped bringing them. But I noticed she kept a small account book hanging on the kitchen wall. What a stubborn girl!

I was just a wandering bachelor, strange to the people and the land. To be looked after so well and made so comfortable—I was grateful from the bottom of my heart. But, as the days slipped by, the only words I could get from her were "Wa mwo dzey." I felt she was deliberately keeping me at a distance. Painstakingly, stubbornly, she maintained her coolness, as if she didn't quite trust people from the mainland.

Once, with a pained expression, I told her that since I didn't know her name, I supposed I'd have to call her "Wa mwo dzey." She smiled, then burst into laughter. She laughed so hard she couldn't straighten

up. Covering her face with her hands, she collapsed on to the steps. But suddenly she stopped, and the laughter was gone, like a kite that had snapped its string. It was plain to me then that either her heart was much more burdened than her years warranted, or that these burdens had brought to her an early maturity. I asked some of my Taiwan friends about her. They said her father was a primary school teacher; she herself had graduated from a higher primary school. She came from a large family and couldn't afford to go on with her studies.

I thought it must be particularly painful for a school teacher not to be able to give his own daughter an education. I decided to spend a little time each evening teaching her composition. But the girl was very suspicious. I didn't dare broach the subject to her.

One day I walked into the kitchen and found her reading a book. She started to put it in the drawer when she saw me coming, but I picked it up and looked at it. It was a Japanese version of *Anna Karenina.* I was astonished.

"Do you understand it?" I asked rather stupidly.

"Hmph!" She closed her eyes.

I knew I had said the wrong thing. "You're very diligent," I hastily added. "That's good, very good. Would you like to study Chinese composition? I'll teach you. I have the time. Will you study?"

"Wa mwo dzey."

Nevertheless, every night after that, we spent an hour together over the books. I discovered she actually understood almost everything of standard spoken Chinese. Her comprehension of written Chinese was quite up to the standard of higher primary school graduates. After three months, I had her write her first composition. I asked her to jot down how she felt about studying. This is what she wrote:

"I want to work hard and study composition, and quickly become good at it. Then, next year, I can take the entrance exams for middle school. My eldest brother has been conscripted into the army, and he has food to eat. My second brother has been taken to jail, and he has food to eat too. Not only do they have food to eat, but their situation worried my dear mother to death, so now food is no problem to her either.

"Ever since Mama died, I seldom laugh and I don't enjoy playing. Everyone says I have become a little woman. But my Papa says, 'It's just as well there are only the two of us left. Now I can afford to send you to school.' Going to school has always been my dream, but I never thought it would be fulfilled this way.

"So I have not the least reason to be lazy. I must master composition very quickly."

I read students' compositions all year round, but never had any moved me as this one did. I memorized it.

I'm a cautious type, usually very careful what I say about politics. But in her class with me, I had her read the local newspaper and told her what was actually happening on the mainland. I helped her read between the lines to see how the War of Liberation was really progressing.

This often made me think of my own golden student days. When I was in middle school I had several clever, pert girl classmates with flashing eyes. We were in the Resist Japan and Save the Nation Movement together, and I had plenty of opportunity to get close to them. But I was timid, afraid of being laughed at for saying something improper, afraid of making any move that would injure the girls' fairy-like beauty.

After graduation, I lived a poor, wandering life. To seek a girl friend under those circumstances was absolutely unthinkable.

Now I was enjoying the utmost comfort. Heaven only knows how she managed to learn my habits—that I didn't like flowers on my desk but preferred them on the window sill; that if fresh clothes weren't laid out for me, I never thought of changing. And how could she have guessed that the fragrance of the straw floor mats after they have been washed with cold water could intoxicate me like wine? These were little things I had never talked about to anyone.

The morning of New Year's Day, she came hurrying from her home dressed in a new dark green skirt and a black satin jacket. From the style of the jacket I could tell it must have been her mother's. She smiled and gave me formal little bow. In carefully correct Chinese, enunciating every syllable, she said:

"I wish you a Happy New Year."

Immediately she left and went to the kitchen. I hastily called after her:

"I'm not hungry. I've already eaten breakfast. I always eat out the first three days of the New Year. Today, I'm going to be out all day. That's it. I'm going into town. Say, that's an idea. Why don't you go too? We'll go together, shall we?"

I was always tongue-tied like that in the presence of girls. It was only by pretending that this was something I had just thought of, that I dared invite her. She didn't seem to understand; she made no response at all, but clattered off on her wooden clogs to straighten up the room. I had no choice but to take up my newspaper and read morosely.

After a while, the sound of her clogs stopped. I looked up. She was standing very straight in the doorway, gazing out at the fields. It suddenly dawned on me—she was waiting for me! I hurried over to her and said:

"What a beautiful day!"

She remained silent. We set out together.

Along the road we ran into various colleagues of mine and a few teachers from a neighbouring school. To each and every one of them,

she nodded and, speaking either standard Chinese or Taiwan dialect, said in her clear careful voice:

"I wish you a Happy New Year."

Curious, I asked her how she knew so many people. To my surprise, she replied:

"I don't know them. But you must give season's greetings at the New Year. That is only courteous."

Though somewhat abashed that I wasn't familiar with this fine courtesy, I couldn't help noticing that everyone she greeted—whether they knew her or not—gave us a rather quizzical look.

I was quite embarrassed, but she didn't seem to mind a bit. She continued to greet people, placidly, enunciating carefully:

"I wish you a Happy New Year."

On reaching town, I quickly led her to a quiet coffee house. We ate opposite each other. Her eyes were hesitant, and a trifle sad, but she said nothing. Though she kept her emotions to herself, they were as plain as black on white in her clear, limpid eyes.

"Never mind about other people. Let's enjoy ourselves," I proposed tentatively.

"What?" she asked. Then she understood. "Oh, I don't care about them. Why should I?"

"You look a little upset."

"The end of the old year is the time for squaring accounts. Last night Papa was up very late going over his figures. He finished smoking a pipe, then said to me: 'We're very poor. Your brothers both have been taken away. I'm a healthy old ox; I can still pull the cart for a couple of years, but after that? How will you get along?'. . ." She paused, then said simply, "Papa wants me not to bother about anything else, to just go ahead and study medicine."

"Medicine is a fine field."

"Ah." She closed her eyes. When she opened them again, the troubled look was gone. "Teacher," she asked, "are you being careful? I hear that the principal sometimes secretly listens in on your lectures."

My heart gave a leap. She knew too? I was cautious, but I never lied. When I couldn't speak the truth, I said nothing. My lectures on modern Chinese history and contemporary literature only went as far as the May Fourth Movement of 1919, which indicated that I couldn't say any more. But I couldn't avoid talking about the revolutionary writers of that period. I introduced Lu Hsun, Kuo Mo-jo, Mao Tun. . . . I noticed several times that the principal was listening outside the classroom window, sticking close to the wall like a lizard. Experience told me sooner or later I'd have to pack up and leave.

"How do you know?" I asked her. "Have you heard anything?"

She shook her head. "Some teachers don't say much in class. But

some of them organize a few of their good students into special groups to meet after class for outside reading."

Her eyes were fixed on the table as she said this, and her voice was low—the very picture of a demure girl student. But what she was suggesting was extremely serious. I didn't know whether it was her own idea, or if others had put her up to it.

After this conversation, I felt we understood each other much better. Her thinking was advanced far beyond her years. But we didn't really enjoy our day in town. We both seemed conscious of some kind of a menace hanging over us.

On the fifth day of the New Year holiday, the school gave a banquet. Our little bureaucrat of a principal drank like a fish. He swilled from dusk until ten in the evening, and the more liquor he consumed, the more talkative he became. One after another, teachers rose and drank to his health. Finally, as one of them helped him on to the table, several others servilely rushed over to help. Then we were all called to stand around and drain our glasses in a respectful salute.

I just couldn't take it. I put down my glass, pushed my way through the crowd and left the room. In the hubbub of sound I heard the principal's cold laugh and his sneering remark:

"Communist!"

I thought all night and decided that the old saw was correct—"When in doubt, get out." Early in the morning I packed my bag. "Wa mwo dzey" silently helped me tie my things together. She didn't act as if there was anything amiss. I went out to call a porter, and when I returned to the house, she was gone. I called, but there was no answer. Alarmed, I hurried to the kitchen. She was standing very straight by the window, tears running down her face. She clutched my name card in trembling fingers—she must have taken it down from the door—and stood rigid. I took one look at her, suffering like that, and my brain exploded. My thoughts ran wild. I was speechless. I turned and fled.

It was a winter morning, the sky the colour of dark iron. Wind sobbed over the desolate fields. I picked up my bag and plodded down the road. After going a few hundred yards, I couldn't hold out any longer. I turned and looked back. I could see the kitchen window through the gap where the courtyard wall had collapsed. The window was dark, but I seemed to see "Wa mwo dzey" very clearly, standing there weeping, with my card in her hands. I felt like a coward abandoning a dear one and running away to save my own skin.

I went into town to borrow some money from a friend who was teaching in a vocational school. He said they were looking for someone who could conduct classes in composition and geography. I told him I didn't know anything about geography. He said it didn't matter. If I could draw the outline of a province on the blackboard with a piece of chalk and sketch in the principal rivers and mountains, that would be

enough. They only covered three or four provinces in a term. There was still half a month before school began. That gave me plenty of time to prepare.

Having no better alternative, I agreed and set to work practising map drawing. I was afraid I'd make a fool of myself in class, so I buckled down and drew and drew.

I took part in the opening ceremonies, then went home to finish preparing my lectures; classes were to start in three days. Suddenly, clattering footsteps approached my door, and I heard wooden clogs being slipped off. The sound was very clear. My hands began to tremble. I could sense that someone was standing in my doorway. A shiver ran up my spine. I whirled around. Sure enough—it was "Wa mwo dzey."

Smiling, she placed both hands on her knees and gave me a deep bow in the Japanese fashion. In her careful crisp voice, she greeted me:

"Good day, teacher."

It was so unexpected. I hastily invited her to be seated, offered her some water. Embarrassed, she came in, carrying a small package, which she put down. After a glance at the maps I had spread all over the place, she went directly to the kitchen. I heard her testing the faucet, raising a pot cover then clanging it down again. She came out of the kitchen frowning, apparently quite dissatisfied.

"There's no hurry. Take it easy," I pleaded. "I know the place is a mess. But you ought to rest a while first."

She hesitated, then said with a quiet smile, "Papa won't let me be a maid any more."

"Ah, good, good."

"I've taken the entrance exams for this school. Do you approve?"

"Fine, fine, excellent," I babbled, red with embarrassment that I had still been thinking of her as my maid. But she had already put on her wooden clogs again and gone out of the gate. "Wait a minute," I called after her. "Did you pass the entrance exams?"

"Wa mwo dzey." She continued on her way.

I noticed her small package; she had left it behind. "Wait," I called. "You've forgotten your package."

"Wa mwo dzey."

I opened it. It was a box of cakes—plainly a gift for me. I remembered her telling me how her father sat up half the night over their family accounts, struggling to find a way to make ends meet. Yet she was sending me a present. My eyes grew damp.

The next two days, I didn't see "Wa mwo dzey." In my first geography class I was to begin with the province of Kiangsi. I practised sketching its outline dozens of times. Somehow, no matter how I tried, it more and more resembled the profile of a girl's head. I don't know why.

The following morning I went to the school. Students had gathered in small groups in the courtyard, and were hurrying excitedly back and forth across the athletic field. Entering the faculty room, I found my colleagues seated in stunned silence. My friend pulled me to one side and told me that a shocking incident had taken place in Taipei the previous afternoon which had set off the people's long smouldering hatred of Chiang Kai-shek's rule. They had surrounded Kuomintang offices, gone on strike, closed their shops. Many students had stopped attending class. Even the trains were no longer running. The whole island was aroused. — This was the beginning of the famous February Rising of 1947 which Chiang Kai-shek's troops bloodily put down with the slaughter of thousands.

When the bell rang, not a single student entered the classroom. The youngsters had formed into ranks on the athletic field. A tall boy student got up on a platform and shouted an order, then a girl student began to tell everyone about something. The girl was "Wa mwo dzey". . . .

As in a trance, I watched the students through the window. They marched out of the schoolyard singing, shouting slogans, banners flying. In an instant, my own days at middle school again unfolded before my eyes. We had shouted "Resist the Japanese and Save the Nation!" We had quit class, we had also marched. . . . How straightforward, how bold I had been then.

But today I was isolated, weak, like a furtive grey rat. My heart was beating wildly and my eyes filled with tears.

I received a notice from the school authorities: Because I didn't speak the local dialect and might say something that would be misunderstood, I was not to leave the school grounds. All day I paced my room like a donkey pushing a roller around a millstone. In the evening half a dozen students suddenly came in, asking whether I had a pistol or any other weapon. "Wa mwo dzey" trailed in behind them and stood in a corner, her eyes on the ground, as if we had never met. One of the students said they were taking all weapons into safe-keeping, to avoid any possible confusion.

They were using this device to arm themselves—I could see that. From the way they spoke, they seemed to consider me on the side of the enemy. There was nothing I could say. "Wa mwo dzey" was the first to leave the room. The others followed behind her.

One question kept boring into my brain. What did they want with weapons? Did they think this was the time for guns? These kids were much too inexperienced in student movements. They didn't know that a couple of guns could ruin the whole thing! "Wa mwo dzey," why didn't you ask me?

I couldn't sit still; I grew unbearably restless. Finally, throwing caution to the winds, I stumbled through the dark to the school. The lights in one of the classrooms were burning brightly. I entered, and

a very familiar sight met my eyes. All of the desks had been pushed together to make one large table. On it students were drawing big cartoon poster, writing slogans.

Deliberately avoiding looking at "Wa mwo dzey," or anyone else, I ignored the suspicious glances cast at me from all sides, and began to speak. I told them that I too had taken part in student movements, that I had a little experience which I was willing to offer. Out of the corner of my eye I could see "Wa mwo dzey" and a couple of other students whispering together. When I finished speaking, the students welcomed me enthusiastically. Somehow, "Wa mwo dzey" was standing before me, leading me to a chair. I couldn't hear clearly what she was saying above all the racket. I only knew that she was smiling, smiling. Even in such a tumult, her smile had a quality of quiet and calm.

That night, we decided to send out two groups—one to make contact with the students in northern Taiwan, the other to go to central Taiwan. "Wa mwo dzey" went with the second group. In the hazy dawn light, they got into a truck and left.

The spring of my youth had returned. No matter how severe a winter may be, when the earth awakens from its slumbers, the ice and snow are turned into nourishing mud. I felt even stronger and more fit than the students.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to establish a firm footing. The streets were lined with Kuomintang sentries and pillboxes. They used live ammunition and they shot to kill. The rising was suppressed.

"Wa mwo dzey" hadn't come back, and there was no news of her. The school authorities had forbidden me to leave the grounds; but even if they hadn't, there was no place I could go. I put my tooth-brush and tooth-paste and a change of clothes into a small bundle, and waited to be taken to jail. Once, when I was listening to the radio, a girl's voice broke in. Although very agitated, she pronounced every word carefully:

". . . Young folks, workers, rush to the Central Taiwan Railway Station. We're surrounded. Student Council, attention, Student Council, use every available means of transport, get help to the railway station. . . ."

There was a click, and the voice stopped. No matter how I twisted my dial I couldn't get a sound; the radio had gone dead.

That same afternoon, two toughs said I was wanted at the principal's office. When I came out of my room, they hustled me on to a waiting truck. By evening, I was delivered to a secret concentration camp.

It consisted of a row of steel and concrete pavilions linked together with iron fences. In each pavilion were three rows of large wooden cages. Two sides of the cages were solid wood; two sides had wooden bars thick as rice bowls. People were locked in these cages like animals in a zoo.

One morning, as another prisoner and I were carrying slop-buckets to the latrine, we passed the small pavilion in the centre that housed the jail office. There was a tall dressing mirror inside, and I used to look at myself in it whenever the office door was open. On this day, there was a girl standing before the mirror, combing her hair. A small bundle rested at her feet. Calm and unflurried, she combed her hair as if she were in her own home. She moved a bit to one side, and I could see myself in the mirror together with — "Wa mwo dzey"! She smiled at me in the glass. My prisoner mate coughed warningly, and we picked up the slop-buckets and continued on. I could hear "Wa mwo dzey" saying loudly to someone:

"I haven't done a thing. I don't know why they sent me here."

That reflection of us in the mirror stayed with me a long time. Me — my hair dishevelled, my face pale, unkempt as a rag-picker. And there beside me — "Wa mwo dzey" placidly combing her hair, smiling so calmly and matter-of-factly.

Late every night, the fascists would question the newly arrived inmates. In the still of the night, we could hear every sound. Night after night I fearfully waited for them to question "Wa mwo dzey." But nothing seemed to happen to her. Then one night, dizzy, with a feeling of pressure on the top of my head, I fell into a deep slumber. I dreamed that she was standing before me, and that flailing whips from all sides were biting into her like poison snakes, but she continued to smile at me quietly. My heart leaped and I woke with a start. I heard a man yelling:

"You still smile, eh? You still smile!"

He reeled off a string of curses. Then a familiar voice said:

"Wa mwo dzey."

I rushed to the bars of my cage and pressed my ear to an opening between them. I heard angry pounding on a table, stamping, curses. And still that calm reply:

"Wa mwo dzey."

Men snarled like enraged wolves, and I jumped from the floor of my cell. But then the voice quietly insisted, "Wa mwo dzey" and I relaxed again. I heard the trample of feet, the clang of iron, wood knocking against wood. I got up, lay down again, got up once more. I gritted my teeth till my jaws went numb, clenched my fists till my sinews ached. My heart pounded so hard I thought it was going to fly out of my throat. Yet each time, just as my agony seemed unbearable, I heard the calm words, "Wa mwo dzey."

I don't know how long it went on. Suddenly, all sound stopped. I was in a cold sweat, but I didn't have the strength to raise my hand to wipe my face. I fell into a doze that was like a faint.

Some time later, I again woke abruptly. It was very late, but I couldn't fall asleep again. I vowed to myself that I'd fight the bastards

to the end. From that night on, I never feared death again. I became a man with a purpose.

After that, there was no news of "Wa mwo dzey." One day at noon, a young turnkey opened the door of my cell and barked, "Outside!"

I glared at him, and came out. He led me towards the iron fence around another pavilion. As he was unlocking the fence gate, he whispered:

"Not more than three minutes. The second cage on the left."

I hurried over. "Wa mwo dzey" was seated beside the bars. She was so pale; her chin was so sharp, her eyes so bright. Just as on that first day I saw her in the kitchen, again I thought — how young, how very young. My heart contracted; my eyes grew moist. But she smiled at me so calmly that I forced back my tears; in fact I felt a little ashamed of myself. She asked me, could I eat the food? Did I get enough? — And the three minutes were up. As the young turnkey urged me to go, she looked me over and shook her head.

"Filthy. Take that shirt off and give it to me. And your cloth shoes are all torn. Take them off, take them off."

I had no time to think. I returned to my cage shirtless and barefoot. The next day my shirt came back clean; the shoes were neatly stitched. It was like a miracle.

We were in a concentration camp. But if we paid enough, the young turnkey managed to smuggle things in from prisoners' families. We also could make little necessities to send to one another. This mutual help increased from day to day. For some reason, "Wa mwo dzey" was allowed to walk up to the iron fence; she became a kind of exchange post between the two pavilions.

This solved the material problems of many of the inmates. More important, it brought comfort and encouragement, the joy of a family-like affection. Most important of all, it provided the means to exchange news and written message slips.

I took this opportunity to talk a little with "Wa mwo dzey" every day. After I began taking full part in these activities, I learned they were not the work of one or two individuals, but of an organization. Of course we could only operate when certain turnkeys were on duty; it was necessary to conceal our efforts from the head keeper at all costs.

One morning as we were lined up to carry the slop-buckets to the latrine, "Wa mwo dzey" handed a pair of underwear shorts which she had washed to a new inmate.

"Pass it along," she instructed. "It belongs to number eighteen."

But the new inmate put the shorts inside his shirt. "Wa mwo dzey" saw me, about ten paces down the line, and she called, "Hurry, hurry, get those shorts, number eighteen."

I put down my slop-bucket. As I stepped out of line and came forward, a voice snarled:

"What's going on? Who told you to go over there? What are you doing?"

It was the head keeper, glaring at "Wa mwo dzey" as if he were ready to eat her. I halted. "Wa mwo dzey" probably was afraid I hadn't understood her. She glanced at the head keeper out of the corner of her eye, then, facing me, she asked deliberately:

"Have any of you men seen a pair of shorts? I just dropped them here. They're in awful condition, but the waist section is still pretty good. I'd hate to lose them."

I knew immediately there was a message concealed in the waist band.

With an angry bellow, the head keeper shoved "Wa mwo dzey" away from the fence, and she disappeared from my view. On my way back from the latrine I heard that she had been placed in the Black Cell, a dungeon in the cellar. It was said that three months in the Black Cell was enough to drive you out of your mind.

We waited ten days, three weeks, a month, two months — but still "Wa mwo dzey" didn't return. At first I inquired every day. Later, I didn't dare to ask, fearful that the answer would spell tragedy. I used to wake in the middle of the night, my heart tight. I would softly whisper her name, lying wide-eyed until dawn.

One night, I heard a cuckoo calling outside our walls. I could hardly wait until morning to pass this news around. But that morning there was another item of news that put mine in the pale — "Wa mwo dzey" was back, and in our pavilion, in the cage in the corner of the third row!

After that, every morning, like the endless waves of a rising tide, schemes would surge through my mind of how to get to see her, to speak to her. Although we were in the same pavilion, no matter how I planned, I was only able to see her three more times.

The first time —

She was sitting cross-legged, as I cautiously approached, her head leaning against the bars, her eyes closed as if in sleep. I went up to her softly. Her face was very white. She opened her eyes, looked at me a moment, then shut them again. It was as if we saw each other every day and there was nothing unusual about this meeting. A small cry escaped me. Again she opened her eyes. This time her face became animated with excitement.

"You've come, you've really come. It's not a dream."

"I thought you didn't recognize me."

"No, no, I was sure I was dreaming. I dream all the time now. The moment I close my eyes, I dream."

She breathed heavily. Every few words she had to pause for breath. Her voice was hoarse, and she spoke with a great effort.

My heart trembled. "Was it very bad in the Black Cell?"

"It was alright." She smiled quietly. "I'm fine, can't you see?" It was hard for her to speak. Her voice was barely audible.

"We heard that it's pitch dark, you can't see a thing in there. We were worried stiff about you."

"There's a little light there at night. It's brighter at night than during the day. There's a bulb in the corridor. It gives enough light to cover the palm of your hand. I didn't sleep at night; I used to read. Thanks to that light, I finished *Three Hundred Tang Dynasty Poems*. All the ones I understood, I memorized."

"Tang poems?"

"One night I heard something scratching on my cell floor. It sounded enormous, big as a bear, at least. But when it crept into the light, I saw that it was a little mouse, sleek and fat. The light made it blink, and it stroked its whiskers with its little paws. Very cute. I laughed aloud, but it wasn't the least frightened. All these people who occupied the cell before me must have fed it and made it tame. It seemed to be playing hide-and-seek with me. One minute I'd see it, the next minute it would be gone. I searched the floor for the hole it came out of, and discovered a loose board. I lifted the board and there was a book of poems. . . ."

Tired, she smiled and closed her eyes.

"Rest a while."

"No, no, no."

"During the day you just slept?"

"I dreamed all the time. I'd sleep and dream. Now too. Sometimes I don't know whether I'm dreaming or awake."

"What sort of dreams do you have?"

"Wa mwo dzey" smiled and her eyes sparkled. "When you came just now, I was dreaming that I was home. I had just washed the floor mats with cold water. The room smelled cool and fresh. I was standing by the window, waiting for my brother. Ah, our compound wall had been repaired and was covered with rambling roses and blue and white morning glories. The banana tree was as high as the house; the coconut palm reached the clouds. The ground was covered with the lovely plant of many colours that we call Life Without Roots. You stick a sprig of it anywhere, and it grows. It's really wonderful. Then I looked up, and there you were. . . ."

"I came at the wrong time. I interrupted your beautiful dream."

"How can you say that? You shouldn't. . . ."

She lay her head against the bars of the cage. I didn't know whether she was tired or whether my words had hurt her. I said:

"Excuse me. I didn't mean anything."

"It's alright. It doesn't matter. I don't really like those flowers and plants so much. I don't know why I dream of my home and childhood all the time now." She smiled. "I'm grown up now."

"It's not so long since you were a child."

In a soft hoarse voice she replied with a smile, "Those flowers are really lovely."

A warning cough came down the line of cages. Someone was coming.

"You'd better go. But tell me, first, what does 'well nigh' mean?"

"Well nigh?"

"Spring, and the city is lush with grass.
But our country lies ruined,
Only the mountains and rivers remain."

"Oh—*'I've scratched my white hair short with worry.*
It's well nigh impossible
To stick a hairpin in it.' "

"That's it. That's the one."

"Well nigh means nearly, almost."

. . . .

The second time —

Carrying a piece of dried beef rolled about as big as a cigarette, I hurriedly turned the corner of the row of cages. "Wa mwo dzey" was seated cross-legged on the floor of the cell, her face peering out at me through the wooden bars. Before I had even reached her, she began scolding:

"It's been nine days. I've been waiting for you for nine days. Last time, we talked only nonsense. Now let me ask you—what have you been doing all winter?"

"I've been busy."

"What doing?"

"Day-dreaming."

"What about?"

"Life and death."

"Oh!" she cried, as if recoiling from something filthy.

"What's wrong? Don't you feel well?"

"I'm alright, really I am. Why don't you draw maps?"

"Maps?"

"You're a geography teacher, aren't you?"

"That's a joke."

"No, you draw maps very well. Why not draw a couple — of the north-east provinces, of Shantung? Sketch in the battle lines, show the way the advance is going. . . ." Her lips were moving but no sound was coming from them.

"I'll draw some, I'll draw some," I hastily assented. "You rest, you must rest."

She drew a deep breath, then smiled. Making a great effort, she managed to rasp out in a low hoarse whisper:

"It's nothing at all. I just was talking too fast. Have you read any books?"

"Where would I find books in this place?"

"Then why don't you study Japanese?"

"How?"

"You've got good conditions for it."

"Good conditions?"

"That's right. You're all living together. Almost everyone knows a little Japanese — even the keepers who swear at you. Why don't you all pool your knowledge?"

"I can't study Japanese. Just hearing it makes me mad."

"That's wrong. When you were teaching me composition, you told me learning a language is like opening a window in your soul. Yet you, with such ideal conditions —"

"What's ideal about them?"

"The main thing is you've got plenty of time."

"Alright, I'll study. Here, I've brought you some dried beef."

"No, I don't want it. I have enough to eat, I've got plenty. Take it back. I don't need anything."

"You're weak. You need nourishment."

"We all need nourishment. Besides, I'm not weak, honestly, there's nothing wrong with me. I'm very happy, really. I have so many dreams; they're all happy, every one."

"Take it. It wasn't easy to get."

"How did it come?"

"A sister of one of the inmates spent a lot of money to get it smuggled in. They say she sells herself for a living. . . ."

"Oh." "Wa mwo dzey" closed her eyes and lowered her head, pressing it against the bars. I hadn't thought my remark would upset her so.

"Sorry. I shouldn't have spoken so crudely."

"It's alright. Is there any crudity you don't hear in here? But you said she's an inmate's sister. How pitiful. . . ."

I heard the young turnkey let out a roar. That was his signal that someone was coming.

"Go back. In the second row, there's a man who's sick. Give the beef to him. But wait, don't tell him how it got here. He wouldn't be able to swallow it if he knew."

. . . .

The third time —

I quietly approached her cage. She was leaning against the bars with her eyes shut, her neat hair hanging over one side of her face. That hair of hers was a miracle. It was always neatly combed, no matter when. She was so peaceful, so pale — as if she had been sitting by the window watching the moon and had fallen asleep.

She had always seemed beautiful to me, though I couldn't exactly say in what way. Aside from regular features, I hadn't noticed anything particularly striking about her. Now I saw that the lines of her face were very finely chiselled. The curve of her eyes, her straight nose, her bow-shaped mouth — all were clearly and strongly defined.

I called her softly and she immediately opened her eyes — so large, so fully awake. They were lovely, but deeply sunken. Yet her black pupils and the whites of her iris were absolutely clear, not bloodshot in the least.

"What are you doing here? Go back, hurry. They're having a big inspection this morning. Haven't you heard? Go back and tell everyone, right away."

"We know, we all know. But I haven't seen you in twelve days. Even if they put me in the Black Cell for it, I had to see you. In these past twelve days I thought of a hundred schemes to come, but none of them worked. Of all the stinking, lousy luck — "

"Ah." "Wa mwo dzey" closed her eyes.

"Sorry. I've become quite foul-mouthed in here."

"Never mind." She smiled quietly. "I saw the maps you drew. One of them had a few Japanese captions. So you're learning."

"Let's not talk about that. For twelve days I've been thinking, I have to tell you, when we talk, you give me strength . . . when we're together, I — "

"I don't understand any of that. Let's talk about something else. You're happy today. You must be bringing good news. But don't tell me. Today's the big inspection day. It would be a pity to waste good news on a bad day like this." She never had to strain so hard to speak before. Perspiration stood out on her forehead. Her voice was very weak.

"Alright. I won't say anything. Rest. I'll leave."

"Wait. Do you ever get the feeling that we're on a ship?"

"Uh?"

"We're in cabins on a big steamship. But this is the lowest deck — no, it's the hold. I once travelled in the hold of a ship. It moved very slowly, very clumsily. That hold was suffocating. It nearly drove people crazy. We were all longing for the sight of land."

"We have to do a lot more work."

"But we need a compass."

"Yes, a compass to guide us."

"I hope you'll think more about that." Panting, she rested her head against the bars. Then she said in a hoarse whisper, "My father says my ancestors came from Fukien in a wooden sailing ship. They had no engines — only a tiny compass. But they crossed the ocean and came to Taiwan. I often see that ship in my dreams."

"I dreamed of a ship too. It was full of people. You were on it too, and me. It sailed to the mainland. And I, the geography teacher, took you to Shanghai and Hangchow. . . ."

Her entire body slumped and her head drooped lower. She was almost lying on the ground. "I had the same kind of dream." Suddenly, she struggled to her knees and extended her arms to me through the bars. I reached for her and we embraced tightly with the bars between us. There were tears in her eyes, but she smiled and murmured:

"We'll go to Peking, to Peking, and when we get there, when we get to Peking we'll be so happy, won't we be happy? . . ."

* * *

Seven days later, she sat cross-legged on the ground, her head leaning against the wooden bars of the cage, her eyes closed. The turnkey, passing by several times, noticed that she didn't move. He shouted at her, but she made no response. When he touched her, her body was cold.

She sat there like a girl who had been gazing from her window at the twilight dimmed street, but could see nothing clearly in the hazy darkness. And so, she shut her eyes and dreamed of the rising sun and the awakening and flourishing of all life.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

THE MARCH SNOW FLOWER

Hsiao Ping

I

It was late at night when Chou Hao, secretary of the Party committee, came back to his office. This was the fourth night since his transfer to the Teachers' College. All around was very quiet. He switched on the light, sat down at the table, took out five applications which the students' Party branch of the Chinese Language Department had handed in that morning, and started to look over them. They were coming up for approval at the next Party committee meeting.

He began to go through the applications one after the other, with great care. Suddenly he jumped. One carried a name he knew—Li Shu-chuan. He looked at the form. Yes, it *was* she. "Father, Li Wei-min, age 45, Communist Party member, now working in the Ministry of Industry." Below, in brackets, were the following words: "Mother, Liu Yun, Communist Party member. Died, a martyr, in 1943."

He still could hardly believe his eyes. To reassure himself he read it over and over again, tracing every word with his finger.

Yes; there was no mistake. There were the words: Li Shu-chuan . . . Li Wei-min. And Liu Yun . . . died a martyr in 1943.

He put both hands on the table and pushed himself up. His thoughts seemed to be shouting to him.

"Ah! Strange, strange! Such coincidences do happen. Fate is a strange thing!"

He opened the door, wanting to send someone to fetch her, the person he had been looking for for more than ten years. But it was so late that everyone was in bed.

He went back and rapidly opened his dispatch case, where he kept personal papers, and took out an old diary. He fumbled rather, his fingers shaking, as he opened it at a page where lay a withered snow-white flower. He picked it up gently and gazed at it. A vivid memory rose before him of the March snow flower, scenting the air where it stood in a little opening among the tall green pine trees, and the martyrs' graves which lay there. . . . Liu Yun's grave, Liu Yun whom the enemy had murdered under the blossoming March snow flower.

He put the flower back between the pages, and slowly looked through the diary. Fragments of the past came to life in his mind.

II

It was back in '43, that hard and difficult year, when he was secretary of a regional Party committee in eastern Shantung bordering on enemy-occupied area. The struggle against the enemy's "nibbling up" campaign was at its height when one day, in early spring, a woman comrade of about thirty was sent over from the county Party committee. She came with a little girl. The letter from the county committee ran as follows: "The bearer, Comrade Liu Yun, is one of our branch members whom we are sending to assist you in your work. Salute!" On the back of the paper was a note: "Comrade Liu Yun is Comrade Li Wei-min's wife and Little Chuan is their daughter."

"I'm Chou Hao," he said. "Come in, and sit down. I know Comrade Li Wei-min well—I've worked under him—but you and I have never met. Have you just come here from southern Shantung?"

"Well, I came up here in the middle of January," she answered.

Chou Hao looked at her. She was dressed very simply, like a peasant woman, yet she somehow had a quite distinctive air. She looked kind and brave. She had beautiful eyes which sparkled with energy.

"What made you leave?"

"What?" she echoed with a smile. "Aren't there enough people there? Don't you need workers here more?"

"You haven't understood me. What I wanted to say was. . . ."

"I know what you wanted to ask," she said, interrupting him. "What really happened was that my husband was sent to the Party school to study."

"When?"

"Four days ago."

There was a little pause. He could think of nothing to say. Then Liu Yun said:

"You must let me introduce my daughter. She's a bit shy of strangers, but when she gets used to you you'll find she talks a lot. Little Chuan, this is Uncle Chou."

A low voice came from the direction of the *kang*. "How are you, Uncle Chou. . . ."

Chou looked at her properly. She had a little round face, with short bobbed hair, cut level with her ears. Her eyes, big and round, were frank, under intelligent brows like her mother's. She was dressed very neatly, in a little cotton-padded uniform cut down from an army coat by loving maternal hands.

"You can hear she's been brought up in southern Shantung! Listen to that accent," said her mother, looking at her with tender eyes.

"Nothing the matter with that! I like it," said Chou Hao. He turned to the child. "Do you think you're going to like it here, Little Chuan?"

Little Chuan looked at her mother. They both laughed. The child had an innocent chuckle. Then Liu Yun said:

"I think she likes it up here already. When we were at the county committee for a few days she used to go out to play by the sea all day long . . . she even forgot to come in for meals. Both her daddy and I had to complain about it."

"How did you take their criticism, Little Chuan?" asked Chou Hao, touched by the obvious happiness they took in one another.

Little Chuan didn't answer, but only laughed.

"She listens like a good girl, but she doesn't correct herself."

The little girl still smiled, looking from her mother to her new uncle.

"Are you going to school?" he asked.

"No," replied the mother. "I'm teaching her myself. I can't manage to send her to school when I'm always moving from place to place."

"Wouldn't it be better for her to go to school properly?"

"Oh yes, indeed it would. But now, when there's so much to be done, I don't see how I can send her. But it's not so bad as it might be—I was a teacher before."

"Oh, were you? I didn't know."

"Yes, I've been a school mistress," said Liu Yun. "I was doing secret work in a district in the occupied area. But a traitor gave me away in 1940, and I had to leave."

"I see," said Chou Hao absently. An idea had come into his head.

Next day immediately after breakfast Liu Yun came round again to Chou Hao's office to ask if her work had been decided yet.

Chou Hao did not reply immediately, but looked at her as if trying to find the answer in her eyes. Then he said, "Yes; it is decided."

He had been thinking it over all night and had changed his mind several times. Now, finally, when he spoke, he knew the answer himself.

"Sit down, Comrade Liu Yun," he said. He went over and closed the door, and then began to pace the room in silence. The sight of the child distracted him, and he sat her down on the *kang* and asked her if she'd had a good breakfast and whether she'd been warm enough in the night. Liu Yun could see he was worried about the decision—something about his face showed it. She knew from experience that her job was going to be a dangerous one.

"Well, Comrade Liu Yun," he said at length, seriously and slowly. "We have decided to send you to Lungshan to do secret work there. We know that you have done such work before and are experienced. The fact that you are a mother with a child will help, too, as you will not arouse

suspicion. But the decision is not final and we want to know what you think about it."

"Lungshan? That's the place we recaptured last month, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"I don't want to question your decision. You'll give me a letter of introduction to the local Party, won't you?"

"You won't need that!"

"Why not!"

Chou Hao laughed and then said: "There's no one to give it to! It's a 'blind' village. There's not a single Party member there!"

"Not a single Party member there?" Liu Yun repeated, very much taken aback. She was used to hardship and peril, but always together with her comrades. This would be the first time she had ever worked alone.

"I thought you might go and work there in the school," said Chou Hao, in a rather tentative tone. "You said last night you had done that before."

"Yes. That should be all right," said Liu Yun.

Chou Hao went over to her and sat down close.

"You must know, Comrade Liu Yun," he said, "it'll be very difficult there. The situation in the village is a very tricky one. It had the Kuomintang Eastern Shantung Administration Bureau there, and an army headquarters. It's a place of about three hundred households and we know for a fact there must be at least twenty households which had—and may still have—people in them who worked for the puppet troops, and at least thirty Kuomintang-ites, to say nothing of spies. That's only to be expected. The new base the enemy withdrew to is in Hsutsun Village, only thirty *li* away."

"I don't mind all that so much as the fact that I shall be on my own."

"Of course we've got plenty of supporters there. You should look for Li Feng-ying first — she's from a martyr's family. She'll be able to tell you more about the situation than I can. I reckon she'll be your first recommendation for Party membership, if you help her."

"What are my actual instructions from the regional committee?"

"Find out what the actual situation is as quick as you can — try to do it in three months — and as you go along prepare the ground. When we know more about it we shall be able to tell you what to do next. But you know yourself how to set about organizing a newly-liberated place — rousing the masses to action, stirring them up to fight against traitors and spies, and realize themselves how they've suffered. Then we shall want them to arm themselves, to have their own militia and local government."

Liu Yun nodded her head.

"I don't think you need keep it a secret that you've been one of our government workers. You're a stranger anyhow—they'll know that even if your accent didn't give it away. The traitors will spot you, so why

make a secret of it? Say you were once recruited by the county government to do copying work, and now you were wanted no more and so you have come to find a teaching job."

"When d'you want me to start? At once?"

"Yes, this afternoon. Comrade Wang, our security officer, will be back any moment, and he'll have more definite information for you. Of course you know it's very important to be alive to danger all the time. Have you got a revolver?"

"Yes."

Chou Hao hesitated for a moment, and then said, "I don't know what we ought to do about the child."

"What, my Little Chuan? I shall take her with me, of course. We've never been parted from each other. I shouldn't have an easy mind if she wasn't with me."

She left that afternoon with her daughter. Chou Hao walked to the edge of the village with them. Little Chuan was walking happily along, holding her mother's hand, and now and again bending down to pick the early spring blossoms by the path. When they halted to say good-bye she suddenly spoke up — she had been silent till then.

"Good-bye, Uncle Chou! Come and see us. Mummy and I will make pancakes for you."

"I'll come! Mind you're a good girl and study properly," said Chou Hao. "Good-bye. Take care of yourself." He smiled as he spoke, but when they turned to go on their way a shadow came over his face. He looked thoughtfully after them. He was worried about the safety of the child. Last night he had known the risk for the mother, but now there was the child to be thought of as well.

III

At the beginning of March Chou Hao decided to go to Lungshan to see how things were going. He got there about midday, and found the village was silent and the streets deserted. The enemy had made it a desolate spot: there were burned-out, ruined houses everywhere, and the streets were full of debris. There were little thatched shelters against some of the walls, pathetic little houses which gave no protection from the merciless winds and rain of spring. Chou Hao went up to an old man who was sitting warming himself in the sun and asked him where the school was. It was in an old ruined temple at the southern part of the village, he was told. He went there and found it very dilapidated. The walls were crumbling; the window-lined walls in two of the classrooms were broken right out, and the gaps were filled with sorghum stalks. Yet despite the ruins and desolation there was some sign of order being brought about.

He could hear no sound of life, but from the east room smoke was rising from a chimney. Chou Hao walked over and opened the door. There was Little Chuan, all by herself, cooking the rice. When she heard the door open she turned round. Her face lit up when she saw who it was and she jumped up, still clutching the stick she had been using as a poker.

"Oh good! It's you, Uncle Chou!" she cried.

Chou gave her a hug and settled down to talk to her.

"You're the cook, I see! Where's your mother?"

"She's gone out to see someone."

"Do you know who she's gone to see?"

"She goes down to the village, always. She goes there every night, even on Sundays."

Chou Hao sat back on his heels and looked around. It seemed to be the room they lived in. There was a *kang* in the southern corner, and a small baggage roll on it. A stove was standing by the side of the *kang*, and in the middle of the room was a small writing desk.

"Is this where you live?" he asked.

"M'm!"

"Why didn't you go to Li Feng-ying's?"

"Auntie Li has asked us there several times, but we didn't go."

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

A burning straw dropped out of the stove just then, which Little Chuan promptly stamped out. Then she remembered her duties to a guest and said, "Uncle Chou, please sit down. Are you thirsty? Will you have some boiled water?"

Chou refused with a wave of his hand and sat down on the *kang*.

"Little Chuan," he said, watching her as she fed more straw into the fire and stirred it with her stick, "do you like this place?"

"Not at first, but now I do."

"What do you like now?"

The child did not reply at once but only smiled. Then she said, "Well, Uncle, that hill in the west is so lovely!"

"Aha! You've been there then?"

"Yes, I went with Little Ying. The yellow jasmine's out, and there's a huge March snow tree in full bloom. It smells lovely; you can smell it right down at the foot of the hill."

"Did you see the graves of the martyrs?"

"Yes, under the March snow flower. Little Ying told me that one of them was a woman. Is that true, Uncle Chou?"

He nodded his head. How well he remembered that girl martyr — a nurse in the Independent Regiment, who had sometimes seemed a child still, yet at times was so serious. And the grave of his own comrade-in-arms, Kao Chien, was there, too. It must be a year now since they were

killed. Yes, the March snow flower has come to life again, but those two were sleeping eternally in the green hill.

Chou sighed. "How are you both getting along these days?" he said.

The child looked at him but did not know what to say. Chou asked another question.

"Does your mother get any pupils at school?"

"Yes, sixty-four came, all standards together, up to fourth. Mummy teaches them on her own. I go to school here too. I'm in the second form."

"Have you got any textbooks?"

"No, mother writes out the lessons for us."

"Who's in charge of the school? Someone from the village?"

Little Chuan fired up. "The superintendent's a horrible man who's called Kung Ching-teh. He worked for the Japanese and was the superintendent then. Mummy says he's a despot. He's an awful bully, too. He doesn't like mummy, and won't give her grain and firing. One day last week he didn't give us any food."

The pot on the stove came to the boil and the child raked the fire lower. Then she swept up the ashes.

"What made him give it you in the end?" asked Chou.

"Mummy didn't argue to begin with, but when he absolutely refused to give us any, mummy said she would have to go back to the regional committee and then he gave in at once."

"When?"

"He sent it in the afternoon, and made silly excuses, the slimy thing, saying it wasn't his fault, but the fault of the people who delivered the grain. Mummy says that wasn't true, and that it *was* his fault. I think he is a bad man."

"What makes you think so?" asked Chou, pulling the little girl close to him.

"He behaves just like the landlord did in the village we lived in in southern Shantung!" The little girl wriggled. "Uncle Chou, d'you know they pasted up a nasty thing on the wall?"

"What kind of nasty thing?"

"A paper with words on it. It was stuck on the wall outside the classroom."

"What happened to it?"

"It's here." Little Chuan opened the drawer of the desk, pulled out a piece of paper and gave it to Chou. It was a poster which said, "Those who know nothing should not come here to teach! They are just wasting the people's food!"

"Who saw the poster?" he asked, folding it up carefully.

"I did, when I went to fetch water before breakfast. I told mummy and she took it down."

"What did she say?"

"She didn't say anything, but only laughed, but when we were eating breakfast she told me that there were some very bad people here, and that I must be very careful, because she did not know what they would do."

"She was quite right," said Chou. His heart ached as he looked at the child. "We must all be careful, Little Chuan. There are too many bad people in this village."

"Uncle Chou."

"Yes?"

"You know, that superintendent asked me all sorts of questions when mummy sent me to his house to get straw."

"What did he ask you?"

"Questions about mummy."

"What did he want to know?"

"He asked me what she was doing and what she did before. He pretended to be kind and said mummy was very good."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him mummy used to work as a clerk in the county government and that she was always writing and copying something and that when the staff was cut down she came here to teach."

"That's a good girl! Who told you how to answer questions like that?"

"You did!" Little Chuan looked at him pretending to be very serious. "I heard you tell mummy!" Her half-serious, half-teasing face captured him and he picked her up and began twirling her round and round, crying: "You little imp, you little imp. . . ."

"Uncle! Uncle! You're making me giddy!" she cried, delighted.

At this moment Liu Yun came in. When she saw Chou she was surprised and pleased.

"Oh good!" she said. "That's fine. I had just decided I would have to come and see you."

Chou put the child on the floor, and settled down for a serious talk.

"How are you getting on with your investigations?"

"Not bad. I've just come back now from a household in the poor peasant end of the village — the west end."

"Yes, we've got to get among our own people. They're the only answer. Tell me, why do you live here? Why didn't you go to Li Feng-ying's?"

"It's easier here as far as the school is concerned, but we shall be moving to her home in a few days."

"I don't think you should wait any longer. This place is too lonely."

"I think we're all right," said Liu Yun. "I don't think they suspect anything. How long can you stay now? I've got quite a lot to tell you."

Chou looked at Little Chuan with a smile.

"You've got a very good little reporter here, you know. I've heard quite a bit about things in general—about the poster, and the difficulty

with food. Shall I go and have a talk with that superintendent? I rather feel we shall have to go on doing business with him for the moment."

"I don't think you need; I've been able to manage him so far. I'm pretty sure he's a key figure, you know."

"I think you're right. But you must be careful not to alarm him before we've mobilized the masses, and really got them going. Keep a close eye on him and find out everything you can, however small, so that we'll be able to hit accurately and well when we do hit. Have you heard from your husband?"

"No."

The food was ready, but Chou would not eat with them. He had to go and see a poor peasant, Kung Pen-tsai, he said. Liu Yun had him in mind as a possible chairman of the local peasants' national salvation association when they got it going, and they had a few more words before Chou left.

"I think you're right," he said. "We must start bringing on our functionaries as fast as we can. It's a very important part of this preparatory work." He got up to go. "Shall I have your report this evening at Li Feng-ying's?" he said. "I must go tomorrow, and I'd like to go to the martyrs' graves before I go." He took up his little bundle and walked over to the door, but stopped half-way and looked at Little Chuan.

"You've got a nice little daughter," he said. "I've got very fond of her already."

Liu Yun smiled fondly. "If you like her I'll give her to you," she said teasingly. "I'm beginning to feel that she's rather a burden to me."

"D'you hear that, Little Chuan?" Chou asked the child, bending down slightly. "How does that suit you?"

Little Chuan winked at her mother. "I'd like it," she said promptly. "I'll come back with you tomorrow!"

The mother chuckled as she turned to Chou. "Now you've got yourself into trouble!" she said. "How are you going to get out of that?"

"It's quite all right," said Chou, smiling too. "It so happens that we need a cook in the regional office, and I think this young cook you've trained will do."

Little Chuan saw Chou to the gate and whispered in his ears, "Uncle Chou, when you go to the martyrs' graves tomorrow, may I come with you?"

"All right. I'll come and fetch you tomorrow."

"We'll tease my mum and say I'm going to the regional office with you."

"Fine. Let's do that."

Chou went to the west village and talked to some of the peasants he knew. In the evening Liu Yun reported fully on the situation and received further instructions. They could speak openly now, as Little Chuan had gone to visit her friend Little Ying.

Chou went to the school early the next morning, before the classes had begun. The yard of the forlorn old temple echoed with the happy chatter and laughter of the children.

Chou greeted Liu Yun and told her he must be going. Little Chuan ran up and said, "Mummy, I'm going with Uncle Chou."

Their plot worked well, and the mother smiled and said, "Run along then, and be the cook for them," and off Little Chuan went with Chou, holding his hand as he went down the path.

Liu Yun stood watching by the door, her smile lingering on her face. As they went on without halting the smile faded and she called out, "Little Chuan, stop teasing your Uncle Chou! Come back! It's time for class."

Little Chuan had been turning round to look at her mother, and now when she called out, she giggled and said to Chou, "Just listen to mum, Uncle. She still thinks I'm teasing you. I think I'd better run back and tell her what I'm really doing now, or else she'll be coming after us."

Chou stopped, and Little Chuan dashed back, said something pleadingly, and, when her mother finally nodded, ran back joyfully.

"She says I can go, but I'm not to be too long, and she wants you to bring me back to the edge of the village," she shouted to Chou as she came.

"That's all right. I'll bring you back here and hand you over safely to her," said Chou Hao, taking her hand again. "Your mum can't do without you, eh, Little Chuan?"

"That's what everybody says," said Little Chuan, holding Chou's hand tightly. "But what it really is, is that I can't get along without my mum even for a day. Once, it was when we were still in the south of Shantung, she went to a meeting and left me with Aunt Chou. She said she was coming back in two days but she didn't come back for ages — four days. It was dreadful!"

"Did you cry?"

Little Chuan hung her head and kicked at a loose pebble.

"You cried, didn't you? Cried so much that Aunt Chou was worried stiff, I bet."

"Who said so? I never! I only cried twice and that was when I was waiting at the edge of the village for mum to come."

"Huh, I bet you cried three more times when you went to bed."

"No, no, only once," Little Chuan protested.

"All right, we'll say only once. Then what? Did your mum come back after that?"

"Um! She came back on the fourth evening, when I was already in bed."

"And you burst into tears when you saw her, didn't you?"

"Who told you? Did mum?"

"No. I just happen to know."

"That wasn't real crying! You couldn't hear me cry!"

The early spring sunshine was beginning to warm up the countryside; a fresh, earthy smell emanated from the newly-ploughed soil. They were going up beside a twisting mountain stream bubbling across smooth round pebbles. The ground was already green, and wild flowers danced in the spring breeze. Now and then a late group of wild geese crossed the bright blue sky, calling as they went.

As they neared the foot-hills, a gust of wind brought a sweet fragrance to them. "There, Uncle Chou, can you smell it? That's the March snow flower."

"Yes! It does smell sweet!"

They paused a minute before they climbed the hill.

"That woman comrade was killed only last year, Little Ying told me."

"Yes . . . only last year."

"Did you know her, Uncle Chou?"

Chou nodded sadly. Little Chuan looked at him, and said nothing more.

The mountain path ran through a pine grove now. The trees rustled and murmured like the sea, a quiet, solemn sound. The martyrs' graves were in a little clearing half-way up the hill, surrounded by thick pines. In the centre stood a March snow tree in full bloom; underneath it were a number of graves.

Chou Hao stood silent, looking. Memories surged through his head: those hard difficult days, the bitter struggles and his dear, dear comrades-in-arms. . . . Kao Chien, with his pale, lean face, that sturdy fighter, Li Hsiao-pao, and that young nurse with her big eyes and short hair . . . very like Liu Yun in many ways. Little Chuan would look like her when she was bigger. . . . It seemed only a few months ago that she was living in the room next to the regional committee office and they could hear her singing in the twilight in her low, clear voice:

In the north, on the broad plains,
A young lass carries a gun.
She carries a spray of flowers,
To give to her dead mother. . . .

It was hard to believe that now she was lying quietly under that March snow tree and that her song and her laughter had gone for ever. Chou unconsciously moved his arm as if to drive off those memories, and turned to Little Chuan. "Let's sit down a bit, Little Chuan," he said.

They sat down on a stone slab under a tall pine. The south wind murmured in the pine grove and the sunlight flickered through the pine needles, making curious patterns on the grass.

"Is that the one, Uncle Chou?" asked Little Chuan, pointing to the grave nearest the March snow tree.

"You mean — hers?"

"Yes. What was she like?"

"She was a Communist. Oh, I suppose you want to know what she looked like? Well, she looked rather like you, short hair, big eyes and always in a cadre's suit."

"Where did she come from? Did you know her family?"

"She came from north of here, very, very far away. Her mother gave her life for the revolution, too, a long time ago."

"Her mother, too?" Little Chuan asked in wonderment.

"Yes."

Little Chuan was quiet for a long time. After a pause she asked, "What are Communists like, Uncle Chou?"

"Just like ordinary people."

"They all work in the army, don't they?"

"Who told you that?"

"Mum said so in one of her classes. She said they are all very brave in battle."

"That's right; they are very brave."

"How do they become Communists?"

Chou Hao touched Little Chuan's hair caressingly.

"I don't quite know how to explain it to you, Little Chuan. You'll be able to understand it when you get bigger."

Little Chuan stared at Chou, her big eyes still questioning.

Chou stood up. "Let's go back. Little Chuan," he said. "It's getting near noon, and your mum will begin to worry if we're late." Little Chuan sprang up and Chou took her hand. They came out of the pine grove and stood on a big rock looking down the hill. Below them low hills spread into the distance, flanked by little twisting streams. Villages dotted the valleys. Behind them the range rose sharply like a screen. "How lovely it is here," said Little Chuan. "Being so high up makes me feel I've grown years older."

IV

The rising tension made the days pass swiftly. It was one day in May when Chou Hao was in the market town where he usually met his cadres and had just finished hearing the reports when the door suddenly opened, and Little Chuan came in.

"Why, it's Little Chuan! What have you come here for?" said Chou in surprise jumping off the *kang*.

Little Chuan made no reply but stood there taking something out of her inside pocket with some difficulty. Finally she handed him an envelope with great care.

"Mother told me to bring this to you," she said.

Chou Hao held the letter in his hand, in no hurry to open it. He laid a fatherly hand on her shoulder, and shook her slightly. "How did you get here, Little Chuan?" he asked.

"Uncle Kung brought me here."

"Where's he gone now?"

"He's gone to sell his hay at the market. He said he'll come on here later."

"You walked all the way here?"

"Yes," she said with a nod, adding quickly, "but I shall ride his donkey on the way home."

"So you've walked thirty *li*!" said Chou Hao picking her up and putting her down on the *kang*. "Why did you have to come? Couldn't Uncle Kung bring this?"

"Mother said it was very important. She wanted to bring it herself but there wasn't anyone to take her place at the school."

Chou Hao opened the letter. There were two applications for membership into the Party, one from Li Feng-ying and one from Kung Pen-tsai, and a detailed report on the work in the village.

"Fine, fine!" exclaimed Chou Hao as he read. "Little Chuan, do you know what this is about?"

Little Chuan looked at him with large, questioning eyes and shook her head.

"Very good. Little Chuan, you're a very good girl. What you brought is really very important. You've got a wonderful mother."

Little Chuan glowed with pleasure, Uncle Chou said her mother was wonderful! And she herself had done something too, bringing this urgent letter! Only her mother or herself could have delivered it.

Chou Hao tucked the letter into his pocket and sat down on the edge of the *kang*, pulling Little Chuan over to him.

"How are you getting on nowadays, you and your mother?" he said.

"We're all right. We've moved to Aunty Li's."

"When did you do that?"

Little Chuan cocked her head and thought it over. "Nearly a fortnight ago now," she said. "It was the day after they threw stones through the windows that we moved."

"What! Who threw stones at you?"

"Some bad people. Mother and I had just gone to bed when there was a crash and a big stone hit our window. Mother quickly pushed me into the corner behind her." Little Chuan told the story very animatedly. "Then there came another bang, and a big stone broke the frame. Mum told me not to be afraid, but I wasn't. Mother really said it because she was going to fire at them. She shot once, bang! and all the bad people ran away!"

"Has anything else happened?"

"I don't think so." She thought for a moment. ". . . Oh yes, there're eighty-two pupils now . . . and the superintendent is behaving better," she said. "He's always saying nice things to mother now, but mother still says he's a bad lot."

"Your mother's right, Little Chuan. He is a bad lot, really bad."

"We passed him today, coming in. He was in a cart and as soon as he saw me he smiled and said, 'And where are you going? Come and get in my cart.' He told his driver to pick me up and put me in the cart."

The smile on Chou Hao's face vanished as he watched Little Chuan.

"But I didn't want to go in his cart. He stopped and made a fuss and ordered me to get in. Uncle Kung stopped too, and watched me, so I told a lie, and said I was going to Litsun Village to see Little Ying—you know Little Ying, Uncle. She was the one who sat outside our door that day. She's a friend of mine. 'That's right,' Uncle Kung said. 'I'm taking her there.' Well, that road won't take a big cart, so he gave in and started his cart again. I don't think he believed us, though, because he called out, 'Little Chuan, if there's anything you want to buy, come and look for me in the market. Ask for the Everlasting Happiness Shop! You'll find me there.' "

Chou Hao stood up and, clasping his hands behind his back, paced to and fro. "It seems as if the scoundrel is on his guard . . . " he muttered to himself.

"What did you say, Uncle Chou?"

"Nothing, Little Chuan. You did the right thing. You're a good girl."

The door opened and the regional security officer, Wang, came in.

"Look at this, Old Wang," said Chou Hao, giving him the letter. "It's Liu Yun's report from Lungshan, and it just about confirms everything we guessed. It's quite clear now that that scoundrel *is* the head of the traitors. What d'you think? I reckon it's time we moved into action." He tapped the two applications for the Party, which he still held. "There's another militant centre set up," he said.

Uncle Kung Pen-tsai came in later, and talked things over with Chou. Chou wrote a letter which he gave to Little Chuan, saying, "Little Chuan, give this to your mother. Be sure you take great care of it, whatever you do."

The child took the letter and put it away in an inside pocket, and did her coat up with great care. She felt proudly through the coat at the stiff envelope inside.

Chou saw them to the edge of the village and lifted Little Chuan on to the donkey.

V

Two days later the regional committee called a meeting. They went over Liu Yun's report carefully, approved of the two applications and decided that a Party branch could be started there. The preparatory work had been well done, they decided. A proper study of the actual situation had been made, and the ground laid for the masses themselves

to build up their association, recognize and deal with the traitors and speak out their bitterness. The time was ripe to establish their own political power, set up their defence forces and get rid of the landlords who had collaborated with the enemy.

Chou went himself over to Lungshan to carry out the decisions reached.

A tremendous struggle ensued. The people were organized and armed. Mass meeting after mass meeting was held. Six or seven of the worst, most tyrannical landlords were up for trial before the people, and two with criminal records were referred to the regional authorities. A village government was elected. Lungshan turned over to the people and power was in their hands for the first time in all their age-long years of suffering.

But in the heat of the struggle, the worst landlord-bully, superintendent Kung Ching-teh, escaped.

Quite a large group of enthusiastic and progressive peasants stood out and rallied round the Party. It was possible to enlarge the Party organization and elect a new branch committee. In the new committee Liu Yun was elected secretary and Li Feng-ying and Kung Pen-tsai committee members.

The most important stage of the work was over, and Chou made preparations to return to the regional committee office. Before he went he said to Liu Yun, "We've made a good start, but it'll take a lot more hard work before we can say we've consolidated our victory. This village happens to be the outpost of our territory in this direction, and you may be sure the enemy won't stay quiet. There may be really bitter struggles ahead. We shall be leaving you here to go on with the work."

"Right."

"What will you do? Give up teaching, now that there's no need to do it as a cover?"

"No, I don't think so. I like the children; they're used to me, and truth to tell, I'd find it very hard to leave them. But apart from that, I think it will help our work. But I hope you'll be able to send someone else here to assist me. There are over a hundred and fifty students now, you know."

"Well, it's up to you if you want to go on doing it. We'll think it over and find someone to send."

Little Chuan went right out to the outskirts of the village with Chou when he left. During the two months of intensive work, while Chou had been directing things in the village, Little Chuan had been his runner, and constantly by his side. They were going to miss one another now. . . .

Chou got to a turn in the path, and turned to look back at her. She was still standing there, watching him. When she saw him turn she waved her straw hat.

VI

As autumn drew on, the air became cooler and flock after flock of wild geese began their flight southward. On the hills and fields the autumn insects chirped lustily.

External conditions brought problems. The enemy organized an armed band and began raiding the surrounding districts, attacking only under cover of night, murdering and plundering, hoping to overthrow the people's political authority and military power along the border.

In some of the nearby villages the Party organizations and armed units were broken up. Lungshan was right in the line of battle now.

The night attacks became more frequent and fierce. Chou Hao personally led the region's military units and the militia into action in the more crucial areas.

One day towards the end of September, Chou Hao called a meeting of all armed cadres from the frontier areas. It was still going on late at night, when the door was opened violently and a panting messenger rushed in with an urgent dispatch. Chou tore it open. As he read it his face changed colour.

"The military commander will take over the meeting," he said briefly, and hurried out. He took four comrades and they galloped off to Lungshan. The message had been to say that Lungshan was under enemy attack.

The five horses raced swiftly along the path round the hill, the cold night wind whistling in their ears. The horses' hooves raised showers of sparks on the stones.

They got to a point where Lungshan was in sight. Something was burning fiercely, and sporadic shots could be heard.

Chou had his revolver ready as they swooped down on the village. The streets were deserted, and they headed towards the fire, which was in the western section of the village. Shouts came to their ears, and black figures of people struggling to put out the fire could be seen.

Chou reined in his horse and called to a lad carrying water.

"What's happened?"

The sound of their horses had alarmed the villagers again, but when they saw who it was they swarmed around. Everyone tried to talk at once.

"They've kidnapped the leader of the peasants' association and teacher Liu Yun!"

"They set fire to his house!"

"They tried to burn Li Feng-ying's house but they didn't succeed."

"Where is the leader of the militia?" shouted Chou.

"After the enemy, with his men!"

Chou dug his heels into his horse's flanks and started after them, but as he reached the west end they met the village head and some militiamen. Chou stopped to speak to them.

"What's the news?"

It appeared that the enemy had retreated to Hsutsun Village. Whether they had taken the captives there he didn't know. The militia chief and the leader of the self-preservation corps were still out searching the hills. It was the superintendent, Kung Ching-teh, who had led the attack. Someone had heard him shouting.

Chou Hao could not speak for some time. Then he banged his hand down on his thigh. "The bastards!" he cried. "I'll get that bastard Kung Ching-teh!"

He told the village head to see that the guard around the village was strengthened, and then turned and galloped back to Li Feng-ying's.

The flames had been put out, but a few wisps of smoke could still be seen curling off the roof in the moonlight, and people were hurrying about in the courtyard. Chou leapt off from his horse and strode into the house.

The battered door was lying on the floor, and the only light was a dim oil lamp.

Some women were huddled together, whispering.

The shadow of a child suddenly moved towards him and clutched his jacket.

"Oh Uncle Chou, Uncle Chou . . . " the child's voice was hoarse and quavering.

Chou grasped her shoulders. He wanted to say something but no words came.

The women stopped whispering and there was complete silence for a moment. Then Li Feng-ying ran over. "Oh, Chou Hao! Thank heavens you've come!" she cried.

A hubbub arose again with some people asking what had happened and some telling their stories. Chou sat down and waited for them to quiet down. Then he asked Li Feng-ying to tell him as shortly as possible what exactly had happened.

Li Feng-ying said it must have been about midnight, when she had gone to sleep, that she was woken by Liu Yun shaking her. Liu Yun said that someone was climbing in over the wall. As she spoke they heard someone trying to force the door.

Liu Yun fired at the door, and almost simultaneously shoved a bundle into her hands and told her to take it, get Little Chuan and escape through the back window. The enemy began firing then. Feng-ying tried to make Liu Yun come too, but she refused, and told her again to escape with the child. She said she would get out afterwards, but if they went together, they would none of them escape.

The door was already half down, and they were at the front window. Liu Yun fired again. Li Feng-ying grabbed Little Chuan and jumped through the window at the back with her. She heard the door give way as they jumped, but Liu Yun was still firing. Li Feng-ying and Little

Chuan climbed over Aunty Lu's wall and escaped into the western yard where they hid in a hay stack.

The militia had rushed up when they heard the firing and grappled with the attackers. After a time she heard someone shouting that the enemy had retreated. She gave the bundle to Little Chuan to look after and told her to stay where she was, and went back to see what had happened. The house was on fire and the neighbours and militia were trying to get it under. She ran through the flames but there was no sign of Liu Yun, nothing but a pool of blood by the *kang*. She burst out crying. Little Chuan had followed her unobserved and when she saw that her mother had gone, and Li Feng-ying was in tears, the poor child realized what had happened. They had a hard time trying to calm her and stop her going to look for her mother.

It was nearly dawn when she finished telling her story, and the first cocks were crowing. A cold wind blew through the gaping window frames. The people in the room stood silent in the flickering lamplight. Little Chuan was dazed and just clung to Chou Hao, a sob escaping her now and again. More cocks crowed. Groups of militiamen straggled in but there was no news yet.

It was full daybreak when the leader of the self-preservation corps burst in. The captives had been found near the martyrs' graves.

By his expression and voice Chou knew that they had been found dead. He got up, gently shook Little Chuan awake and led her outside. The others followed him. They found more people waiting. They exchanged a few words in a whisper and then followed him towards the hill.

Just before they got to the martyrs' graves, Chou handed the child to Li Feng-ying and told her to sit and rest a minute. Little Chuan was choking with sobs and wanted to go with him. He tried to calm her, and said gently, "Little Chuan, you're always a good girl. Won't you do what I tell you now?" She looked at him, her eyes full of tears, struggling with herself. Then she walked slowly over to the side of the path and sat down on the frost-covered bank. She knew what it meant, and burst into a paroxysm of sobbing.

Chou went on with the others to the martyrs' graves. What a ghastly sight confronted them! The peasants' association leader was tied to a pine tree and Liu Yun to the March snow tree. They were both dead, brutally murdered.

Chou stood there, his head bowed, among the militiamen and the soldiers and peasants. Then they roused themselves and laid the martyrs to rest. Liu Yun was buried where she lay, next to the nurse, under the March snow tree.

The autumn day was clear and warm. There was no breath of wind and the pines were silent. Little Chuan was still sobbing hopelessly as she piled stones into a headstone for her mother, and planted two young pines at the head of the grave.

When all was ordered, Chou Hao and the militiamen fired a farewell volley over the graves, the sharp sound breaking the silence of the brooding pines and echoing from the valleys.

It was heart-breaking work to persuade Little Chuan to leave the grave. The poor child seemed like another person, so pinched and pallid was she, with her face all eyes. Chou took her down to Li Feng-ying's house. Little Chuan gave Chou the bundle her mother had told them to take when they escaped. In it, among the Party documents, was a little diary. The short notes in it revealed Liu Yun's brave heart, the heart of a revolutionary. Between two of the pages was a single flower, the snow-white blossom of the March snow flower.

"I will keep this notebook for you, Little Chuan. I'll give it to you when you grow up," Chou said.

He thought it would be best to take her back to the regional committee office with him. Together with Li Feng-ying they put together Liu Yun's scanty possessions.

Chou Hao held a meeting of all the village cadres and it was well after noon before they left. Just outside, a group of children ran out of a grove of date trees and surrounded Little Chuan. They had no words, but just looked at her, their eyes full of tears.

"Go back home, children," said Chou Hao, after a minute or two. "Go back and study hard. We shall none of us forget your teacher Liu. Little Chuan is coming with me, but you'll see her again in a few days."

The children made way for them, but made no other move. They watched till Little Chuan was out of sight.

VII

Chou Hao took Little Chuan round to a good comrade, Aunty Chou, who lived near the office. It was where the young nurse had stayed.

He listened to a report from the head of the regional armed forces, and then, though it was already dark, went over to Aunty Chou's.

Little Chuan was standing by the door, her eyes full of tears, staring at the far-away hills in the west where her mother lay.

Chou took her hand, and sat her down on the door-step. Little Chuan leant against him. He could feel her trembling. He did not know whether she was cold or shocked, but he put his jacket round her and smoothed her hair.

"Little Chuan," he said gently. "I've written to your father. I expect he'll come and fetch you in a few days."

Little Chuan burst out crying again when she heard her father mentioned.

Chou was silent for a while. Then he took out the diary from his pocket and said, very low, "Little Chuan, your mother wrote something here for you."

Little Chuan looked at him and tried to control her sobs. Chou looked through the pages till he found the place he wanted. "It's here," he said. "Your mother wrote this: 'I've been worrying what Little Chuan will grow up like. My clever, warm-hearted little girl is maybe not quite strong enough for this life. How will she come through? Will she be able to play her part? I hope I shall be able to strengthen her. May victory come soon, so that she will grow up in happy and peaceful days!' "

Chou stopped reading and closed the diary. He looked into Little Chuan's eyes.

"Little Chuan," he said, "do you understand what your mother said?"

She seemed to be in deep thought but said nothing.

"You must always remember your mother's words," he went on. "You must be strong, as strong as she was." He took out his handkerchief and wiped her tear-stained face.

"Do you know what happened to that young nurse?" he went on. "Her mother was killed by the enemy when she was about your age. As soon as her mother was buried, she joined the Eighth Route Army. She avenged the death of not only her mother but of other mothers, too. Later on she joined the Party. . . . Little Chuan, you know what your mother was?"

Little Chuan shook her head.

Chou spoke slowly and carefully. "She was a Communist, too. A very good one."

The girl looked at him and her eyes shone suddenly as if she were remembering the stories her mother told her about Communist Party members. At last she said:

"Mother never told me she was a Party member. . . ."

Chou stood up. He took Little Chuan by the hand and they walked silently into the house.

VIII

Since then Chou saw that Little Chuan was making a great effort to control her sorrow. In the early days she still went by herself to the riverside and looked at the western mountains and cried, but gradually she cried less often, and her innocent smile came back. But there was a tinge of deep, serious feeling behind it — not like most children. Whenever Chou was back at his office, Little Chuan would go and talk to him. She talked about a lot of things, particularly about the young nurse, but she never once mentioned her mother. Chou hesitated to mention her himself, for fear of upsetting her. Then, one evening Little Chuan unexpectedly asked him:

"Uncle Chou, when did my mother join the Party?"

"Many years ago. She was only twenty-two or twenty-three."

"Twenty-two or twenty-three . . . " the child echoed.

Chou thought Little Chuan had better go on at school. At first he had planned to send her to her father, but then he heard from the father that he had not finished his training yet, and his future work was not settled. The place where he was training was not very safe, and the father thought Little Chuan should not go there. Instead he asked Chou to take care of her. Chou was very willing to do this. He loved the child, and felt he would like to do anything he could as a tribute to her mother. Besides, the child had become an inseparable part of his life.

IX

The hard struggle went on for another winter. When the fields grew green again it eased up a bit. The Party organizations and the people's armed forces in the villages which the enemy had managed to destroy were restored again, and the district armed detachments were drawing near Hsutsun Village, the enemy's main strong point locally.

Early in March it was decided that Hsutsun Village should be taken.

Tension rose again in the regional committee. Little Chuan felt something unusual was in the air. She felt she had to ask what was happening. "Uncle Chou, is the enemy coming to attack us again?" she blurted out.

"No, Little Chuan! I promise you, no!" said Chou. "There's nothing for you to worry about. Put your mind into your studies!"

"But what are these militiamen here for? And the troops from the county?"

"You know you shouldn't ask about such things. You'll know everything in a few days."

It was the night of the sixteenth. The wind from the sea blew softly over the hills. The wild geese were flying north again. The militiamen, the stretcher-bearers and the transport corps were gathered at the regional committee. Sentries were posted round the village and the streets were full of excited, hushed people, their cigarettes flickering in the dusk. Chou came out and gave the final instructions to the leaders of the various outfits, dismissed them and stood there alone looking into the darkness, waiting for zero hour. He was full of excitement. If this battle went well it would mean a new era for the region. They must succeed, and succeed with one fierce blow. All the hardships they had suffered, all the blood their comrades had shed in the last six months, must be paid for. He grasped his rifle so tightly that he hurt his hand.

Suddenly he felt a tug at his arm. It was Little Chuan.

"Uncle Chou," she asked, "are we going to attack Hsutsun Village tonight?"

"What makes you ask that?" asked Chou sharply.

"Uncle Liu from Lungshan has come as a stretcher-bearer."

Chou Hao thought for a moment. Then he leant down and said gravely, "Yes, Little Chuan, we are. That beast who killed your mother is there. Tonight we'll avenge her."

"Uncle Chou, I want to come with you."

"What good can you do? You must go to bed, my child, and wait to see me tomorrow."

"Oh no, Uncle Chou! I do want to come, Uncle Chou!" she begged again.

But Chou was quite firm. She stood, hesitant, for a moment, obviously wanting to say something, but finally she turned away and vanished in the darkness.

The attackers went forward silently along the road to the west. Chou went in front. The night was still; they passed several villages and then reached Lungshan, and left it, too, behind. As they climbed up the mountain path, a cool breeze came up bringing with it a sweet scent. "Oh, the March snow flower is blossoming again!" Chou said involuntarily.

They attacked at two o'clock, and the battle was over within an hour. Most of the puppet soldiers surrendered without a fight but in one compound there was stubborn resistance. Chou broadcast to them for half an hour but they would not listen and kept up their fire.

"Comrades," Chou Hao shouted to his men. "If they won't surrender, we'll have to get rid of them resolutely." His men were ready and he had hardly finished speaking when the attackers, throwing their grenades, rushed in through the thick smoke.

When they broke through, they found a group of some ten who held up their hands. Chou Hao, rifle at the ready, spoke to them sternly:

"Come on, now! Where's your leader, Kung Ching-teh?"

"He was here just a moment ago."

They lit torches and searched the compound. In one corner they found Kung Ching-teh, dead. So may all such perish!

They began to sort out prisoners, dead, and wounded. Chou Hao with the stretcher-bearers went on to the first-aid post at Litsun Village.

It was set up in an old temple. They found some wounded soldiers lying in a dimly-lit room, being looked after by a bustling group of women. Chou Hao saw there was a little girl among them. He went over to stop her and found it was Little Chuan.

"What are you doing here, Little Chuan?" he said in astonishment.

She went red. "I came with Uncle Liu," she said in a whisper.

"That was quite wrong of you," Chou Hao said angrily.

Little Chuan hung her head and twisted the hem of her jacket. Big tears trickled down her cheeks. Some of the women had come over and one of them said, "Comrade Chou, who is this child? She must be worn out the way she's been working tonight. She's been a great help."

Chou Hao was already feeling sorry he had spoken so sternly. He had forbidden her to come because he was afraid of anything happening to her. He would have felt guilty all his life if she had been hurt. But she had not really done anything wrong, and he knew he should not have scolded her. She had so much grief and anger stored in her little heart. . . .

"Don't cry, Little Chuan," he said, wiping her eyes tenderly. "Let me tell you some good news. Your mother's murderer is dead!"

Little Chuan was silent. Then she suddenly ran out, in tears, her hands over her face.

By full daybreak all was over. The soldiers marshalled the prisoners, and the stretcher-bearers carried the wounded eastward. Chou and Little Chuan rode back at the rear.

The early sunlight was warm, and the sky was beautiful. A cuckoo flew by, crying loudly.

As they climbed up the hill over Lungshan Village, the south wind brought the fragrance of the March snow flower. Little Chuan turned to Chou Hao and said, "Uncle Chou, I'd like to go to see my mother!"

Chou looked at her in silence, and pulled his horse over towards the pine trees on the right of the road.

They came to the martyrs' graves. Chou dismounted, helped Little Chuan down and tethered the horses to a pine tree. They went together to the clearing, to the March snow tree.

It was in full bloom where the sun caught it, giving out a heavy yet fresh fragrance. Snowy-white petals had fallen on the two graves. The grass was green on Liu Yun's grave and the young pines Little Chuan had planted had new green tips which waved in the wind.

Little Chuan stood silent in front of the grave. Then she stepped forward, and kneeling down by the mound, whispered, "Mother, your enemy is dead."

X

In April, Chou Hao was transferred to another region where the struggle was still intense, so that he could not risk taking Little Chuan with him. He decided it would be best for her to go back to Li Feng-ying at Lungshan, which was now safe and well consolidated. Li Feng-ying had all the time wanted Little Chuan to come to her and Little Chuan herself loved the place.

So he took Little Chuan over there, and saw her settled in. Before he went to the other region he went back to say good-bye. Little Chuan carried his bag for a long way — over a mile from the village. He said good-bye by a mountain stream. Her eyes were full of tears, but she managed to smile and said, "Uncle Chou, when will you be back?"

"Quite soon. I'll come back as soon as the job's finished."

He jumped across the stream, climbed up the mountain ridge, and turned back to have a look. Little Chuan was still standing there. He signalled at her to go home, but she did not move. He gave a last, long look and then went over the ridge.

But it so happened that he never did come back to that region, but was transferred further and further away. He often wrote back to ask how she was. In the autumn he heard from Li Feng-ying that Little Chuan's father had taken her, and, shortly afterwards, that Li Feng-ying was also transferred. That was his last news of Little Chuan.

More than ten years passed. Though he had to travel from place to place, and was in struggle after struggle, he never lost Liu Yun's diary, whatever else he had to throw away. One day, he told himself, he would find Little Chuan again and give it to her. But it seemed fated to be otherwise and he almost lost hope.

XI

But Chou Hao did not see his Little Chuan — now Li Shu-chuan — until four days later, four days in which it was not easy for him to control his emotion. He deliberately waited till the Party committee had admitted Little Chuan to the Party.

And now. . . . The door opened, and a slim girl in a blue and white printed dress stepped in. It was difficult to believe that this was the child he remembered so well — only her big eyes gave a glimpse of the old Little Chuan.

Chou strode forward, his hand outstretched.

"Congratulations, Comrade Li Shu-chuan," he said. "You have been accepted as a candidate member of the Chinese Communist Party."

An ecstasy of joy overwhelmed her; she stood quite still, unable to speak.

"And," Chou Hao went on, "on this memorable day, I want to give you a memorable present." He took the diary off his desk and handed it to her.

Little Chuan was a bit puzzled. She turned the pages over. When she saw what it was she changed colour. What memories it brought back of her childhood! — her dear mother's love, the agony of parting, the war, the hardships, the village and the fragrant March snow flower. . . . She pressed it to her heart and her voice quivered. "Where did you get this?"

"I've been keeping it for you. I promised you that I would keep it for you until you grew up. I've looked for you for more than ten years, and today I've found you."

"Oh, you are. . . ."

The Party secretary looked at her in silence.

"Uncle Chou! . . ."

A few big tears fell on the diary. But Little Chuan smiled through them, and did not drop her head. The Party secretary watched her tenderly. That young and joyful face, those resolute and confident eyes! To him it brought the fragrance of the early-blossoming March snow flower.

Translated by Chang Yang-wu

THE YOUNG HUNTER

Kuan Yu

It was the season when, in the north of China, snow-flakes were carpeting the boundless countryside in a downy white quilt. But here, in south China, on a tall, tall mountain, the pine woods with their undergrowth of bushes were still freshly green. On the terraced hillsides, the first crop had been harvested, and the newly-sown buckwheat and rape were already showing green again.

Here, by these hills, where it was spring all the year round, lived the Yi people in their stockade villages amidst the green forests. They had water laid on by long bamboos which ran from the clear springs on the mountain top. In one village a few young men were leisurely washing at the end of one such pipe. Young lasses in heavily embroidered clothes, their glossy black plaits pinned up on the top of their heads, were out on the flat roofs spreading beans to sun under the golden sunlight. The lads passing by, their eyes on the girls, laughed and called to them and exchanged snatches of songs.

Not everyone was in the village that day because a lot of the youngsters were up on the hillside getting the ground ready for more buckwheat, while the lasses were in the woods collecting leaves to make compost, or gathering pine cones.

Beyond the terraced fields was a group of young people from the local farming co-op working on a piece of fallow land with ox-drawn ploughs. Under the glorious golden sunlight a white vapour emanated from the upturned earth. The young workers were cheerful and happy, wiping the sweat off their brows and throwing out challenges to one another as they moved busily to and fro.

One of the young men, broad and thick-set, with a round face, big eyes, heavy dark eyebrows and a firm chin, shaded his eyes with one hand and looked up at the sun. He unyoked his plough and dumped it down under a tree, and, rubbing the earth off his hands, strolled slowly over to a grassy bank and sat down. His ox, its halter still round its neck, also wandered off, lazily swishing its tail, and settled in the mud embankment of the field chewing the leaves of a wild tea bush. The young man gave no heed to his ox but took a deep draught from the

earthenware tea-pot, so eagerly that the tea ran down his chin and splashed his shirt.

A few minutes later his comrades, still working, noticed he was slacking and someone called out, "Hey, there, Posupo! It's not time yet for the break."

"Really, Posupo," chimed in another, "how can you take time off like that when everyone else is working!"

But Posupo sat as firm as a rock, completely ignoring their sallies. Finally the young brigade leader had to go over to him. "Posupo," he said, "we have ears to hear with, and hands and feet for work. The co-op was started by all of us; you have a share in it too."

Posupo gave the brigade leader a look, stretched himself, and yawned. Then he deliberately lay back again, his head on his arms, and said, swinging a crossed leg, "Oh, come now, brigade leader, don't nag so. I'd let things go if I were you. Really, you *are* a stickler for rules. I reckon I'll pitch in with another brigade tomorrow, then you won't be able to get at me."

"You'll have to keep the usual labour discipline whichever brigade you join."

"I've finished my stint. I've got the right to rest, haven't I?" Posupo argued defiantly.

The brigade leader gave a grunt of annoyance. "Look," said he pointing to a nearby stretch, "they've nearly ploughed up to the stone marker. How much have you done, if I may ask?"

"Why don't you pull out a hair and measure the length?"

The other lads still at work began shouting, "Posupo, don't play the clown. Remember we are all members of the co-op."

Just then a group of girls came down the path, chattering and giggling. Posupo didn't bother to answer the lads but looked at the girls with great interest and picked up his mandolin. With his eyes on them he sang:

The lass trips up the mountain path,
Her ear-rings clinking.
The blossoms by the stream colour her slippers,
The rainbow clouds round the peak, her gown.
Ah . . . sweet lass,
Come, sing with me.
The mountains are beautiful,
Unbosom your heart to me,
Happy days are long.
Ah . . . good lass,
Listen to my mandolin,
And know what's in my heart.

Painting in the traditional style By WU CHANG-SHIH
Golden Harvest (230 cm. × 61 cm.)

He finished but the girls didn't smile nor did they sing in answer. There was a short silence, while the girls whispered together, and then one of them acted as spokesman. "Listen, Posupo! You mustn't blame us for not singing with you. The fact is you're only good at talking and playing the mandolin. When it comes to working you don't do nearly so well." Posupo flushed and felt his temper rising. She hadn't finished though. "Posupo, don't forget yourself, gallivanting round. It's your turn to watch the crops tonight. Mind you don't let the wild beasts get you." Without any further notice the girls trooped off, gayly talking to one another.

Posupo was very much put out. He felt as though he had bitten on a hidden stone in an ear of sweet corn. Besides, he feared, his friends would laugh at him. He put the mandolin down, smoothed his wet shirt front, ran his fingers over his hair and scratched his ear in embarrassment. Even his companions felt uncomfortable about the girls refusing to sing with Posupo; they felt they had all lost face. Casting sidelong looks at one another, they hung their heads. The brigade leader too felt abashed and sat down with a face full of woe. No one said anything for a while and then the brigade leader said, "Posupo, you'd better get back to work." Posupo got up slowly, and glancing up at the sun remarked, "Oho, the sun is already overhead. It's time for the break now, anyway." As he spoke the gong sounded for the midday break. The young people unyoked the oxen and tied them up safely, put the ploughs together and sat down in a circle to drink tea.

"Posupo, your tricks don't work any more," said one young fellow, rather sternly. "You'd better not try singing to the girls in the future."

"I can work better than you, at least," said Posupo, not a bit subdued. "If I wanted to work hard for three days I could pound stones to dust."

"Huh! I like to hear you talking of breaking stones! Why, you'll soon be a proper good-for-nothing," jeered one of the others.

Posupo couldn't take that. "What do you mean, good-for-nothing," he said angrily. "Your tongue's as hot as pepper. Mind it doesn't burn you."

The brigade leader was still angry. "Just my luck to get your sort in my brigade," he said.

"All right! Throw me out of the co-op, then!" cried Posupo, in a rage.

That was more than enough for the brigade leader. He seized Posupo's arm and said, "Come on, then. We'll go to the lass Ahti and see what she has to say."

Ahti was quite young—a few years younger than Posupo—but she was secretary of the Youth League branch and a member of the co-op managing committee. She was Posupo's next-door neighbour, and he had been head over heels in love with her for some time, though he had never said anything openly.

Posupo knew at once that the brigade leader hoped to bring him down from his conceit, but he pretended to be quite unperturbed. "I don't care!" he said. "Let's go to Ahti if you like. She's just an old prig. I know you all think she's as good as a queen, a phoenix, and she herself sets her heart on the heights, but as far as I'm concerned she's only a sparrow!" He was ready to go on with such bluster when he realized that one of the lads was nodding to someone behind him, and heard him say, "Hallo there, Ahti." Posupo whipped round. It was Ahti herself standing quite nearby. His heart missed a beat. He had only spoken out of bravado and wished he could take the words back; he could have jumped into a pond with remorse!

Ahti had been picking up pine cones in the hills, and was by chance coming their way. She blushed when she heard what Posupo said, bit her lip and gave him an icy stare, but she didn't lose her composure. She greeted the others as if nothing had happened and said, "Isn't it time you went home for your rest? There's plenty to be done this afternoon."

The group scattered, to put away their ploughs and untie the oxen, all but Posupo who burst out with, "Where's my animal!"

Everyone looked round. "Why the hell didn't you tie it to something? There's that deep gorge right behind us," someone said.

Everyone bustled round confusedly: the brigade leader was particularly agitated. Ahti suggested they should split up and cover the ground systematically; they did this and the whole group, very anxious, spread over the hillside, calling down curses on Posupo in between calling for the animal. Posupo was the most alarmed, and was looking high and low and calling frantically.

In the end Ahti herself saw the lost ox first. It had reached a patch of rape some distance away, and had eaten a whole row of young green shoots. They all came up, very angry at the damage: Posupo came in for some hard words, and even some shaken fists.

Ahti was as angry as anyone, but she controlled her temper and calmed them all down. "Time you went back for your rest," she said. "Our loss isn't really big, we'll re-sow this afternoon." Then she turned to Posupo. She wasn't so gentle with him, and said quite sternly, "You really are too careless. Why can't you think what you're doing?"

Posupo gritted his teeth and glared, and in his temper picked up a stick and gave the ox several blows. The poor animal winced in pain and blue marks appeared on its back. Ahti caught his arm, crying out, "Posupo! Are you crazy?" The others rushed to the rescue, all angry. "Doing this to a co-op animal! That's collective property." "You shouldn't beat an ox like that even if it were your own!"

"Ahti, take him out of my brigade!" roared the brigade leader, justly furious.

"I don't want to be in your beastly brigade, anyhow," Posupo retorted.

The brigade leader really meant it. Almost breathless with rage, he formally demanded that Ahti should transfer Posupo at once. His team backed him up vehemently.

Ahti quietened them down and sent them back to the village. Then she turned to Posupo, and found him sitting dejectedly on a rock, looking into space, his chin in his hands. "Come on, Posupo," she said, softly touching his shoulders. "You haven't got anyone to get your meals for you. You should get down there early."

Posupo sprang up, and took both Ahti's hands in his. "Dear Ahti! Everyone calls me a good-for-nothing, and the lasses won't even answer my songs! You look at my work properly and say a just word."

Ahti saw he was really upset. She thought for a moment and then said, slowly, "Let's go back and talk it over."

They went back to Posupo's home, and Ahti lit a fire, set some cornbread wrapped in leaves to warm, and filled the kettle hanging over the fire. Posupo felt the warmth spread and turned grateful eyes on Ahti. They worked together on these domestic tasks and she said, gently, "Posupo, you know you were in the wrong today. You shouldn't have taken it out on a poor animal."

"I know. I was quite wrong," said Posupo, shamefacedly. "But it was enough to make anyone mad, the way they were running me down."

"You can't blame them, you know. It's quite true you do neglect the co-op's work. It is a fault of yours."

"Now don't you begin listening to what they say!" said Posupo, jumping up in agitation. "You, of all people, must know that I get very high work-points."

"You could get far more if you weren't always gadding about."

"After all, the landlords have been overthrown and we've got our own land. The mountains and rivers are there for my pleasure, and the hills and valleys are mine to roam. Why should anyone want to stop me?"

Ahti frowned a little when she saw him so defiant. "Posupo," she said patiently. "If you lock up a diamond in a chest, it doesn't matter how big it is—it's no more use than a dead twig. You're like that—the way you don't use yourself fully."

Posupo took this very badly. He flared up and with one kick sent the hassock at his feet spinning. "I'm not going to have you joining in and looking down upon me too," he said, glaring at Ahti.

"You can't stop me," said Ahti, pricking him on purpose. "It's true. You *are* a good-for-nothing."

Deflated, Posupo sat down in agony. "Oh, Ahti," he said, "why do you listen to their tales about my vices? You must agree with them, really, otherwise you wouldn't be talking like them."

"You're quite right. I *am* like the others; I'm going the way everyone is going. Where you go depends on you," she said. As she spoke

she walked to the door. Posupo stretched out his arm, "Oh, Ahti!" She turned, and said as a final word, "There's a good deal to be done this afternoon. You ought to get back early. I've got to go out this evening."

"Which brigade shall I work in?"

"Mine for the time being." She went out.

Posupo sat there woodenly for a few minutes. Then he got to his feet and chopped some wood which he flung on the fire. As he squatted by the hearth he could feel his heart fluttering as if there were something crawling up and down it. He felt stupefied, as though he'd drunk too much.

He looked around him: The walls were clean and new, with skins hanging on them. A shotgun hung on one wall, and in one corner there was a pile of nuts and some tools. The table and benches in the middle of the room were good new ones, too; he had got them bit by bit over the last few years. He had everything he needed, as far as creature comforts were concerned, but it was not enough. He felt lonely. "If only my mother was alive!" he muttered to himself with a sigh. "I could at least have someone to say what's in my heart." He felt more and more sorry for himself.

There he was, twenty-five. He could not remember his father—he was driven so hard by a landlord that he had drowned himself in the black pool, a few months before Posupo was born. His mother had died from privation and heart-break when Posupo was sixteen.

Posupo grew to manhood. He was tall and strong, and had always had a quick temper. In the old days before liberation he would never rent even an inch of land from the landlords, but made do with what he could get from hunting in the woods. He used to take the game and sell it in the market town for wine. When he failed to catch anything he lived on berries and weeds. When the busy time came on the farms he used to help in the fields, and hire himself out for temporary jobs. When the Kuomintang government was press-ganging people into its army, he fled into the mountains and lived there. In fact, he was like an unbroken colt.

Before the land reform, Ahti had been seized by a landlord as payment for rent arrears. When Posupo heard of it he picked up his gun, gathered a group of young men, and rushed to ambush the kidnappers. They caught them in a mountain pass. Posupo sprang out, and held up the landlord; he was in such a fury that the landlord was scared out of his wits and fell on his knees begging for mercy. His gangsters shook in their shoes, and had to give her up.

During the land reform Posupo was so excited he had no proper night's sleep for months. He was very active in struggling against the landlords and was always the first to chase fleeing brigands. When the co-op was founded, he was the first to join. He so burst with joy that his songs and mandolin playing were famous.

But he wasn't long in the co-op before he began to feel a growing discontent. He grumbled constantly about many of the new ideas, and the many rules and regulations which restricted his freedom. He opposed any new system, in fact. "That sort of thing's all nonsense," he used to say. "We all want to do well, don't we? We don't have to have all these fiddling rules." From that he went on to ignoring the rules. When the production brigades were formed he did not choose to join any particular one, but just floated around to the brigade where the prettiest girls were. He was a very good worker, when he cared to be, and could carry 200 catties to others' 100, and plough 7 *mou* to the usual 5. He was extremely complacent about himself, and thought he could beat anyone at anything. When he felt in the mood he would work with tremendous zest for a couple of days, and then slack off; at other times he would go hunting or hang around drinking. Last spring when he was sent to buy seeds in the market town, he stayed there for several days, going to the theatre every night. The co-op nearly missed the sowing season because he came back so late with the seed. Then, when they were busy with the autumn harvest, he threw himself into work with real fervour for the first three days and did more than anyone else, for which he was highly praised. But on the fourth day he shot a brace of pheasants and went off to the town to sell them. When the co-op decided to set up an attendance system Posupo spoke vehemently against it. "This isn't a school, you know," he said. "Why d'you want to start this sort of thing for us adults?" His whole casual attitude was generally condemned.

As he sat there alone his heart felt as heavy as though a stone was weighing it down. He told himself that he wasn't so bad; in fact, he could do things as well as anyone—look how everyone used to admire and praise him. What made them look down on him now—even Ahti! She was ambitious, he thought—her eyes looked higher than the mountain, and her heart wandered as far as a bird. Yet, he thought, there *are* tall trees as well as short ones in a forest. She's got a choice—but what does she really want?

He was still sitting, thinking, when he remembered that they had got to re-sow that patch of rape that afternoon, and there was more ploughing to be done. He swallowed a handful of cornbread hastily, gulped down some tea, banked up the fire, and went out. He deliberately went slowly.

As he walked along he saw the marketing and supply co-op team coming back, their horses' bells tinkling merrily, bringing in salt, cloth, farm tools and bales of other goods. He was hailed for a distance by the man in charge, an old crony Young Pine. "Hey, Posupo! Come and give us a hand. We've got a lot of stuff this time."

Posupo lost his slowness and ran over joyfully. "Oh, Young Pine, I've been wanting you to come back! You've been gone ages. D'you know you left me without a companion to drink with?"

"Well, I'm back now. We'll have a proper drink today. Come on, give us a hand to get the stuff unloaded."

The two young men and the drivers began unloading.

There was plenty to do, and the sweat was dripping down their backs by the time the store was full of goods. Young Pine was very enthusiastic, and pointed out all the stuff they had bought. "Look at this—and this! Everything you can want: flowered cotton from the Tientsin mills, rubber shoes from Shanghai, and see this! Smoked bacon from Szechuan. Doesn't it smell good. . . ."

Posupo was as excited as his friend, and poked around, looking at this and picking up that, full of admiration. He pulled out the bolts of cotton to have a good look, and then chucked them back in the wrong place. Young Pine made no attempt to stop him—he was used to Posupo. The things that most took Posupo's fancy were the new-style iron tools. He couldn't take his eyes off them, and his hand strayed to them as a child's towards new toys.

"This is a machine to thresh maize, see?" said Young Pine. "From now on we shan't have to blister ourselves threshing it by hand." He set the machine up on a wooden stand, pulled over a sack of corn-cobs from the corner, and began feeding them in, turning the handle as he did so. Immediately, a stream of maize kernels poured out.

Posupo was delighted. He pushed Young Pine aside and began turning the handle himself. He was fascinated at seeing the heap of kernels mounting, and was quite carried away, stripping his coat off and really working hard, his whole body engaged until he was streaming with sweat. Young Pine left him to enjoy himself and went off to fry a bit of bacon, which he took upstairs, and then came down again to fetch his friend. "Stop that, now, Posupo," he said. "Come on and drink with me. . . . I've got good Kweichow Maotai."

For days now Posupo had been eagerly waiting for Young Pine to come back and drink with him, but at the moment he was thoroughly enjoying himself and had no desire to stop. "I don't think we ought to," he said, "they say we're a couple of topers as it is—and we have made a mess of things when we've been drinking together, you know."

Young Pine made a face. "We grew up together, didn't we? We've more or less lived hand in hand all our lives. When a man's got good wine he shares it with his best friend, you know. Come on."

Posupo was really dying for a drink, but on the other hand he couldn't bear to part with his toy. "I'm afraid I'll get drunk and hold up the co-op work," he said.

"What does one afternoon matter? You can start being enthusiastic tomorrow and make up for any time you lose today."

Posupo thought Young Pine had a point there, and besides, he knew he was very able; surely, if he did as much as two the next day no one

could criticize. He hesitated a moment and then said, "All right, but I'm going to do another thousand turns of this. You stay and count."

"Nothing doing," Young Pine argued. "A thousand turns will take the whole afternoon. I'm not going to wait that long."

They compromised at a hundred turns and Young Pine counted for him. But when the hundred was done Posupo begged for another, and Young Pine, unable to contain his impatience, marched upstairs by himself. He came down in a few minutes with a cup of wine which he held under Posupo's nose. It smelt wonderful, and Posupo closed his eyes and took a thirsty sip. The strong spirit made him feel completely carefree. He managed to drag himself away, not without some reluctance, and followed Young Pine upstairs.

They really settled down to drink in earnest, gossiping away like long-lost friends and draining cup after cup of wine.

"I suppose you know you're well known as a drunkard, Young Pine? There are even some people who say that about me!"

"Oh, let'em say it. Everyone who can drinks in our village! Even respectable Aunty Tao's nickname is Wine-pot."

"But she's a model worker in child-care. She only drinks when she has no responsibilities."

"Wait till tomorrow," said Young Pine, with half-closed eyes, "I shall throw myself into work with real fervour and become one of those models myself." He filled Posupo's bowl again.

Posupo took a full mouthful, and as his face flooded with a dark purple colour he said, "Young Pine, you know what the old chairman likes to say, 'The industrious rely upon today; the lazy ones wait for tomorrow.' "

"There's not a whole day left. First thing tomorrow I'll start, you see."

"I must have heard that a hundred times before. Always tomorrow."

Young Pine ignored this remark and took up his bowl of wine. "Come on, drink! You can't enjoy a drink alone any more than playing a mandolin by yourself gives you a companion. Here, to you. . . ."

They were sitting drinking bowl for bowl when they heard Ahti calling for Posupo up the village. The two lads stopped to listen. Posupo took another sip of wine and grumbled, "There's Ahti calling. I bet she wants me to work. She thinks she's got me tightly under control."

"Don't take any notice of her. Have another bowlful."

"That's all very well, but I've been transferred to her brigade for the time being. She's very strict on work; I'll have to go, I'm afraid." He stood up and wiped his mouth.

"Are you scared of her? It's only half a day, anyway."

Ahti's voice came nearer. She was obviously at the entrance of the storeroom by now. Young Pine lost his head and wanted Posupo to hide. Posupo was still wavering when his friend grabbed him by the neck and stuffed him under the counter out of sight, throwing in one of the wine bowls after him.

Ahti came upstairs. Young Pine hastily wiped his mouth and sat against the counter in front of Posupo, and regarding Ahti with a roguish eye.

"Is Posupo here?"

"No! Haven't seen him."

Ahti looked round the room with some suspicion. "What a drunkard you are!" she said. "Your new goods are scattered all over the place downstairs, and here you are drinking, instead of sorting them out."

"What does a little drink matter for once? You come back tomorrow and see how well I can work."

"You'd do better to go down right now and clear the stuff up. Why put it off till tomorrow?"

Young Pine had no real answer. "All right," he said tamely. "Just let me finish this bowl."

Ahti glanced round the room again and said, with a sigh, "You and Posupo really make a pair."

Young Pine made a face. "A pair, eh? I'll present you with a length of ribbon, and tie one end to you and the other end to him—we'll see who's a pair then. . . ."

"Oh, you!" Ahti flushed and ran downstairs.

Posupo scrambled out with his clothes all dusty, and straightened himself. He beat the dirt off rather crossly. "You really are lazy, Young Pine," he said. "You can't have dusted under there for heaven knows how long—it nearly suffocated me."

"Forget it. Ahti's gone, and we can go on with our drinking."

They went back to their wine but Posupo felt ill at ease. "I shouldn't have listened to your wicked scheme," he said. "How ever shall I be able to face Ahti?"

"Never fear. When you see her tomorrow just slap your chest and challenge her to compete with you."

"Compete in what? Nobody wants me, not even Ahti. They're going to throw me out of the co-op." He was getting maudlin, and took another gulp to drown his sorrows.

Young Pine became meditative too. After some thought he suddenly brightened, and said with a grin, "Listen, brother, we're going to extend our trade to the other hill. I don't see why you shouldn't come and work in our marketing co-op."

"Really?"

"Why not? The manager of the district marketing co-op is Brother Lung. He's an old pal. You've only to ask him."

Hope stirred in Posupo's breast. "Will you phone Brother Lung tomorrow and ask him for me? I don't mind what I do—I'll peddle for the villages at the back of the hill if he wants me to."

"Oh, it'll work out all right. We need more hands, anyway."

They refilled their bowls and felt more cheerful. By the time Posupo took up his mandolin they were not only feeling gay but were well on the way to being drunk. Young Pine joined in with his flute and they frolicked about, singing. Song followed dance, interspersed by another round of drinks until at last they flopped down on the bed dead to the world.

When Posupo woke up the next morning the sunlight was streaming through the window. Outside, there was a terrific din of people shouting; something out of the ordinary must have happened. Posupo heard someone say, "That useless wretch, Posupo!" Suddenly he remembered that the buckwheat seeds were being sunned on the roof the day before, and that he was meant to have been the co-op night watchman. He ran down and went over to the sunning roof, only to find that the sparrows had got all the buckwheat. Everything came back to him now, and he dashed off in a panic to look at the terraced fields.

Even before he got there he could see an agitated knot of people; as he got nearer he could see that several *mou* of rape, the day before a stretch of fresh green, was now disorderly and desolate, with huge patches of brown earth showing where some animals had trampled it during the night.

He stopped dead, a cold sweat coming out on his forehead and hands. He felt all in, as though he had just come through a fierce battle. The co-op members there glared at him, their faces set and angry. One young chap was already ploughing the field again, but Ahti was nowhere in sight. Posupo sat down miserably on a rock. His heart was thumping.

The co-op chairman came over, his moustache quivering with fury. "What's this, Posupo?" he said. "The co-op's like a family. If something stops you doing your work you should let us know about it. If you couldn't watch the crops last night, you could at least have told someone."

Beads of perspiration ran down Posupo's face and he flushed crimson. "I got drunk," he faltered weakly.

He had hardly got the words out when a young girl said, in a clear, sharp voice, "Posupo, it takes many hands to plant a forest and a common enterprise should be loved by all. See what a state this field's in! You'd better look to your way of thinking."

It was as if a flood-gate had been opened; a stream of voices poured out. The young people, cross and red-faced, vied for their turn to speak. All of them criticized Posupo, some for not caring about the collective interest and some for breaking labour discipline. There was such a buzzing in Posupo's ears that he felt his head was going to burst.

One of the girls was in tears as she spoke. Planting herself in front of him, she recounted all the old grievances they held against him: the matter of the seeds last spring, the time he had drifted off at the busiest time of the year, his general carelessness at work. She finished up with the worst thing: "Posupo may call himself a co-op member, but his heart is not in the co-op."

One voice followed another. All of them were like fuel on the fire in Posupo. No one had a good word to say. He felt as if numerous scabs on his body were being probed open. The more they said the angrier he got, until he could bear it no longer. He jumped up. "I'm going!" he shouted. "I'll get a wild boar and have meat for three days. I shan't starve—I can satisfy my belly with herbs from the forest."

"Oh, Posupo!" remonstrated the chairman. "That's no way to live! Who wants to live on herbs nowadays?"

"I'm not afraid of poverty or hunger. With my two hands I can easily turn the whole globe round."

"Fine. You just try," said the chairman, turning away.

"Posupo," shouted someone. "Don't be so wilful. If you wish to leave it's for you to decide."

"You'll see," Posupo shouted. "The sun casts its rays on all the trees in the hills, but each has its own way of growing. I am young and strong. I'll be able to get to socialism." He turned round and walked away. Secretly he was in a panic. He decided to go and tell his troubles to Ahti; she must be told, he felt, that it was the others who made it impossible for him to remain in the co-op, and how unkind and mean they were.

At Ahti's door he met her mother and her tear-stained face stopped him from going in. With finger outstretched she said, "How you have the face to come here is beyond me. Ahti's been attacked by a leopard." She stood right across the doorway and would not let him enter.

Posupo could see that the house was thronged with people, all of them looking anxious. The old woman's eyes were red. Something terrible must have happened. His heart was gripped by an icy hand and everything went black for a moment. Pulling himself together, he said imploringly, "Aunt, I must see her. Even if the beast had killed her I must see her."

"Oh no, you don't," said Ahti's mother, stopping him. "It's all because you're careless. Every time it's your turn to watch the crops, Ahti had to get up in the middle of the night to make sure everything was all right. Last night she got back from her meeting a little after midnight and went out to see how things were. The leopard got her almost as soon as she had crossed the threshold." She broke down, and could not continue.

"Luckily Li Ta-sheng was with her, or there wouldn't be any Ahti now, nor any crops," put in a neighbour.

Posupo could not bear it, and pushed his way in. There was Ahti on the bed, with two doctors dressing her wounds. When she saw Posupo, she bit back her moans and said weakly, "You'd better go away. We'll fare better without you."

Posupo stood meekly by her bedside, his heart thumping wildly; he was afraid to ask how bad she was, yet he felt he must find out. One of

the doctors saw how he was feeling, and said, "She's got a nasty flesh wound on the shoulder, but she'll be all right in a few days."

"Oh, Ahti, I'll do whatever you tell me from now on. Please get well quick. You must get well."

The doctors would not let him stay and he went with repressed feelings. He had barely left when the heat of anger in his breast overcame him: it was as though he were immersed in boiling water. His eyes felt as though they would burst out of his head. He blamed himself for the carelessness which had brought trouble to his comrades, and he cursed the wild animals for wounding Ahti and damaging the crops. He recalled the wild boar he had caught that spring, with a good dozen catties of taro in its stomach! Hatred filled his heart until he was shaking with wrath. He was boiling to do something, to destroy some of the trouble-makers anyway and revenge Ahti. He dashed home, his hands working, pulled down his shotgun and a bag of shot, and pushed some food into his pockets. Then he closed his door with a bang, and headed straight for the dark forest in the hills. . . .

Two days went by with no sign of him.

There was plenty of talk. The co-op members knew he had gone hunting, and although they had faith in his skill and courage they were afraid for him. Had he taken enough food? Supposing heavy rains made him lose his way? So they talked, as they re-ploughed the trampled land and re-sowed. They waited with excitement for Posupo's return.

The third morning was calm and sunny. A search party of the young hunters in the co-op was organized, and went off to look for Posupo. The girls, singing and laughing, went up the hill as usual to collect compost.

Ahti recovered quickly. By the third morning she was well enough to busy herself with helping some of the new members to study, and then, just before noon, to make her way up to the hills to look for compost. She went through the patch of newly-planted trees to the dark old forest where the intertwining leaves almost screened the sky. Flecks of sunlight danced on the carpet of fallen leaves. Ahti eyed this with pleasure. Lots of good compost here! She wandered on, thinking of Posupo rather anxiously, hoping he was not in too much danger. He was so headstrong and wilful. She knew she must be very tactful in trying to help him improve so he would return to the co-op and put his heart into the common cause.

She had not gone far when she heard cheerful, laughing voices. Then she saw the hunters with their dogs. They were carrying game, and four of them had a dead leopard between them. Its battered head was a gruesome sight.

"Hallo, Ahti!" someone called as they saw her. "Found a new source of compost?"

"You seem to have done well," she called back.

"We didn't kill it! Posupo did."

And sure enough, there was Posupo, marching in the rear, covered with mud. He had slept two nights in the hide, and his hair looked like it—tousled like a bird's nest. He was overjoyed at seeing Ahti up and about again and rushed up to her. "Oh Ahti! You really are brave!"

Ahti pushed him away shyly, whispering, "Posupo, even the birds of the air preen themselves and keep their nests in order—you're wilder than an animal!"

"Hey! I've only been out two days this time! Two days, and you grumble!" said Posupo plaintively.

They all walked down towards the village together, with Ahti hanging on Posupo's words like a child, wanting to know every detail of his exploit.

Posupo's eyes glowed. He told her everything that happened to him in the woods, and elaborated his battle with the leopard with some exaggerations. His eyebrows dancing and his face alive, he could hardly pause to take breath, so eager was he to tell her all about it. What a pity she couldn't have been there to witness his valour when he slew the leopard! Ahti listened submissively, her eyes shining and mouth parted, hardly daring to breathe for suspense. Her small fists were clenched and she unconsciously shook one as if she, too, was battling with a wild beast.

Somehow neither of them felt tired; both seemed to have forgotten what had happened earlier, so intoxicated were they by the joy, laughter and excitement of the moment. The villagers had already heard that a leopard had been killed, and they were met before they reached the village by a crowd, men and women, old and young. Posupo felt he was back in his old status. He thrust out his chest and held his head proudly. Ahti felt proud too; she nestled closer to him and inwardly felt like putting her head on his shoulder and murmuring a few words of praise, but of course she did no such thing. Instead she faced him gravely. "Posupo," she said, "in the old days when we planted four seeds of grain, nature took one, pests devoured one, and wild animals destroyed one: we ourselves got very little. But it's not like that now."

"Of course it's not," cried Posupo. "We can move mountains now, and drain seas."

"Oh Posupo, don't brag," went on Ahti determinedly. "Before us lies a new road—we're going to build a happy, prosperous life. How do *you* think it's going to be done?"

The question came so suddenly Posupo hardly knew how to answer it. His mind went back to two days ago. He looked across at the terraced field which had been trampled; though it had been re-sown there were barren patches among the green shoots, as glaring as a stain on a piece of bright satin. This was the result of his carelessness. He hung his head in shame and fidgeted with his gun-strap.

Then Ahti's mood changed. Her fingers played with her sash and she looked, too, at the green field without seeing it. Neither spoke. Posupo

was bursting to tell Ahti the thousand and one things that were in his heart and gently placed one hand on her shoulder. Ahti cried out in pain. Posupo snatched his hand away, remembering that her wounds were due to him. The thought was agony. They were among the villagers now, and Ahti turned to speak to someone, and he quietly left her.

Everyone was on the hillside, rejoicing, but Posupo went home by himself. His heart, however, remained up there, and from time to time a vision of the rape field so badly trampled flashed before his eyes. He thought of the wound on Ahti's shoulder, the buckwheat seed eaten by the sparrows and all the troubles he had brought on the co-op . . . they weighed on his mind like a great stone. He felt cold and lonely, and got up to light the fire; he made some tea and warmed some cornbread. When he had eaten he went off to the marketing co-op.

It looked very different from usual. All the goods were properly arranged, and Young Pine was busily cleaning. The goods that used to be piled up here, there and everywhere were neatly stacked under the counters, and Young Pine was surpassing himself with energy, sweating profusely and taking no rest.

He called out enthusiastically when he saw Posupo. "Well done, well done! You did a good job, getting that leopard."

"Did you ask Brother Lung about my coming into the marketing co-op?"

"Yes, but it's no good, no good at all," said his friend with a sigh, shaking his head. "Directly you went, Brother Lung came over to check up on my work, and gave me a hell of a talking-to—told me I wasn't behaving at all like a public servant, not even as well as a proper young man should."

"Yes, but did you ask him about me?" Posupo said.

Young Pine sighed. "It's no use, I tell you. Brother Lung said if you don't do your work well in the agricultural co-op, you can't expect to manage a marketing co-op."

Posupo sank down on a hassock in despair. "That's the end! Even he doesn't believe in me any more."

"No, it's not that he doesn't believe in you. He really thinks very highly of you. He said he'll work in the marketing co-op, and you should stay in the agricultural co-op. He'd like to compete with you."

"What do you mean, compete? My old co-op doesn't want me any more." Posupo really felt quite lost by now.

"Why don't you go and talk it over with Ahti?" Young Pine said sagely. "Do what I did. If you correct yourself when you've done wrong, you can stand up again."

Posupo paced up and down the room feeling lost and worried, not knowing what to do. After a long pause, he said pleadingly to Young Pine, "Come with me to see Ahti. You can put in a good word for me."

Young Pine looked extremely uncomfortable. "To tell the truth, Posupo, I'm too ashamed to face Ahti. She came and criticized me yesterday. Told me that it was really my fault that those wild animals ruined the crops."

"It wasn't! It was mine. Why should you be responsible? I'll make up for it all."

"Well, it *was* my fault you got drunk," said Young Pine candidly. He really seemed very repentant.

Such a frank attitude towards faults seemed to Posupo like a reflection on him. In fact he knew exactly what Young Pine felt like. It made him feel very uncomfortable. Wherever he went, it seemed he met with reproaches. Without another word he left Young Pine. He must go and find Ahti, he decided, although he had no idea what he was going to say when he saw her. After all, he himself had asked to quit the co-op; was it for him to open his mouth now? The more he tried to think how to save face the more troubled he felt.

At Ahti's door he ran into a group of young people carrying several new farm tools; they looked very exciting, like the ones he'd seen in pictures. The others were talking loudly about disk harrows, ox-driven pumps, double-wheeled double-disk ploughs . . . all familiar names. A wave of excitement swept over him: he forgot himself and rushed up to the group, and the next minute his hands were on the disk harrow, turning and twisting it happily. The others pushed him away, saying with annoyance, "Don't mess around like that, Posupo. You know nothing about these things and you'll break something."

"I suppose you people are the only ones who know anything about them, eh?" Posupo flared up again.

The young men took no notice, but asked Ahti's mother where Ahti was. They were really taking the tools to the co-op, and had brought them round to show to Ahti. Ahti was still disobeying the order to stay home and rest, it seemed. She had gone to the hillside to plant walnuts. The group went after her and Posupo followed them.

Ahti had already planted a few hundred walnuts; she was beginning a tree nursery and hoped to have seedlings to transplant by the following spring. She was trying to draw out more rows with one hand, and finding it rather difficult. Posupo's heart was torn: he ran up and snatched the spade away. The others came up and dragged her off to see the new farm tools. They went off talking excitedly, giving no thought to Posupo.

Posupo, left by himself on the bare mountain, went on with the job, thrusting in the spade with vigorous, angry twists, his mind still on Ahti; it seemed the mere thought of her gave him strength—the kind of strength he had discovered in her. Ahti, a model worker three times in the past years; Ahti, who took the lead and started a group of youngsters digging an irrigation ditch and a number of new ponds; Ahti, who got the people to plant the hillside with young trees. . . . When he remembered the wound

on her shoulder he could have hit himself. And yet she had been so forgiving, had not said a word of reproach; the more he pondered the angrier he felt with himself. He used to think it didn't matter much if he were casual about work; he never dreamed something like this could happen as a result. He visualized the leopard leaping at Ahti and shuddered so fiercely that he broke out in a cold sweat and dropped the spade. With heavy steps he began to go slowly down the hillside. He could hear snatches of song from people working, and the children calling to the cattle. For some reason, he did not know what, these familiar sounds seemed particularly sweet and dear that day. Down on the road was a crowd in a festive mood; men and women, old and young, all in their holiday best, leading be-ribboned oxen dragging ploughs garlanded with flowers; they chattered and sang, led by drums and cymbals, flutes and pipes. Even the dark old mountain forests echoed back the sounds. He wondered what was happening until he realized it must be the new members celebrating their admission into the co-op. There was one white-haired old grandad, who started to strum his mandolin and dance to it. From where Posupo was he could hear what he sang:

Tall is the Yi mountain . . .
The sun hangs on green rocky peaks,
While dark pines float above coloured clouds.
Huge is the Yi mountain . . .
Stretching across the horizon,
Reaching as far as the sky:
The old man has lived eight thousand years,
By the watershed amidst white clouds.
In these thousand years,
No water flowed between the rocks
And no bird sang in the woods,
The old man's song died unheard in the hills.

Now red flags flutter on the hillside,
Fresh blossoms bob and smile in joy,
Across the grounds which we work together,
Priceless treasures grow;
Wherever man co-operates with his fellows,
Crops grow even among rocks.
I cross the stone bridge with my old friend,
While the red sun shines over the hill top,
By the field a confidence is whispered:
The co-op way is surely good.

He finished, and his listeners clapped. Posupo found himself joining in the applause too. His mood changed completely. He was excited and happy, thinking of the co-op's wonderful future. He used to dream that

he, with his people, could build their homes and their country, and now it was all slowly coming true: happiness awaited them round the corner. He could hold back no longer, and ran down to the road to join in the procession, shouting. As they got near the cultivated fields close to the village, he saw the ruined patch again. This jolted him back, and he remembered he had left the co-op and was on his own. The thought was like a physical blow. Everything seemed black once more, and he stood stock-still by the field, feeling lost.

* * *

Night came. The moon hung low in the east over the hills, its silvery light glittering on the fields and whitening the pine needles.

To celebrate the enlargement of the co-op, the villagers had built bonfires on the hillside and everyone had gathered together for a dance under the moon. Wagging their heads, the old people played their pipes and their Yi violins: the hills were full of happy song and laughter.

Posupo sat at the back of the circle, his head hanging and his mandolin lying idle. He was still brooding; his troubles seemed to be as interminable as the light rain of autumn, gentle but endless. Someone called on Ahti to sing. This brought him out of his reverie. Ahti went forward and stood by the fire, her cheeks all rosy and bright, the rings in her ears flashing, her red embroidered slippers shining in the glow. The co-op chairman began an accompaniment on his mandolin. Ahti's song was her own:

A young lad rides across the hilly path,
Powerful and strong,
A good singer and mandolin player as well.
But . . . his eyes rest on the mountain tops
His heart flutters in the clouds,
His tongue seems longer than the rainbow,
He thinks he is unique.
Ah, my brave lad!
Open your eyes and look round.
There are other brave men in the hills
As many as the stars in the firmament,
Countless numbers, all of them bright.
Our cause shines like a flower, blooming everywhere,
Our happiness will last for ever and ever.

Ahti finished and the chairman stood up. "Come now, lads!" he said paternally. "Who's going to answer her?"

"Posupo! Let Posupo sing," cried Young Pine. The idea was greeted by handclaps. But although Posupo knew that Ahti's song was aimed at him, he couldn't open his mouth, but continued to sit with his head bowed. Some of the young men went up and dragged him over to Ahti's

side by the fire, but Posupo still hung his head like a bride, unable to utter a single word.

The old chairman patted him on the shoulder. "Posupo, you have such courage when you hunt down leopards! How is it you're not brave enough to sing a song?" Posupo still remained silent.

Still smiling, the chairman produced a bright new shotgun and said formally, "Dear friends! Posupo killed a dreadful menace to our village, a leopard, and we have decided to present him with a shotgun." Together with the gun he gave Posupo the price of the leopard skin, which had been sold to the state local products store. There was thunderous applause.

"I've done nothing to deserve this," Posupo muttered, feeling as though he were in a dream. He looked at his audience. They seemed friendly enough.

"Come on, Posupo, take the gun. You can't be a hunter without a good gun, you know," said the chairman. Ahti had not moved. Now she whispered in his ear, "Say something, Posupo."

There was a long pause. Then he managed to get some words out. "Comrade chairman," he said, "I'm really grateful for this, but after all, it was only my duty to do it, you know."

"Yes, but it was a very good thing for us that you did," shouted someone in the crowd. There was a shout of agreement.

Posupo flushed with pleasure, and his lips trembled. He could not speak. Eight or nine years ago he had killed another leopard, he remembered, but then he had taken the skin to the town and sold it for two pints of maize. That had been taken by bandits on the way back, and he had been half beaten to death into the bargain. He felt his eyes become moist. He gripped the chairman's hands, as he said with great sincerity, "Comrade chairman, I want to come back to the co-op."

"Come back?" the chairman hesitated. "That depends on how everyone feels about it." Posupo turned round to the crowd, and said, with an imploring note in his voice, "Friends, let me come back. I was to blame for many things in the past."

Everyone looked at his neighbour, but there was no answer. Posupo felt he could not hold the tears back. He clutched the chairman again, and said with great emotion, "Uncle, take me back again. Though I don't know how to use the new farm tools, and I'm very ignorant, I do want to learn."

"If you come back, Posupo," said Ahti, her eyes intent on him, "you must never again behave the way you used to, you know."

"I was all wrong. From now on I'm going to be a good member of the co-op."

At this there was loud applause. The people welcomed him back. Another announcement followed. "Friends, one of the most important

things we have to do in winter is hunting. We have organized a co-op hunting brigade, and Posupo is to be the leader."

"Oh! I'm not sure that I can be a leader," said Posupo uneasily. "Hadn't you better think it over, and elect someone else?"

"No. You're the best." "It ought to be Posupo!" "We're all agreed on that," came the response. There was a general clapping of hands.

Posupo still felt himself unworthy and wanted to back out, but Ahti spoke up. "Accept the job, Posupo. It's an important job in the winter season and we trust you to do it well." Posupo waved his gun at the full length of his arm, up and down, and then pulled his mandolin round from his back. "Agreed. Now let me sing," said he. Then he coughed, waved one hand and sang:

Fire-light dances on the hills,
The moon wanes and again waxes.
The golden advice of my friends
Shines brighter than moonlight,
Feels warmer than fire-light.
A good horse never backs,
Posupo will go with you all,
Forward for ever!

Winter came. Posupo, on a white pony, his shining gun across his back, led the hunting brigade deep into the forest to get game. Down in the village the sound of firing could be heard, and the villagers occasionally caught a glimpse of the hunters and their dogs up in the mountains. Then towards evening they would return with their catches, and Posupo led on his white horse, singing, with his mandolin under one arm.

Hunting sheds had been put up in the fields, and at night Posupo would sit by the fire with Ahti, while the game they got during the day was cooked. The other lads and lasses danced and sang round the fire. . . .

Spring drew on; the pines had new green tips and the tall palm-trees again spread out their cool shade. The crops came up once more on the terraced fields and the hills turned emerald.

One night, Posupo was sitting by the fire outside the hunting shed as usual, waiting for Ahti, but no one appeared for a long time. With his gun on his back, he walked about a little, then returned to the fire to sit by himself. Strumming the mandolin softly he murmured Ahti's name and suddenly heard a suppressed giggle behind his back. There was Ahti, an ancient bow on her back.

"Posupo, I've done some calculating. Do you know we've had over a thousand birds this year already? That's a really good winter harvest for the co-op," she burst out eagerly.

"Let that be my contribution to the co-op in honour of my return. We must work even harder for a good spring harvest."

Ahti slipped the old bow off her shoulders and said, "Posupo, this was left me by my father. I want you to have it."

"Thank you."

Ahti sat beside Posupo, and looked at him with a smile. Her eye lighted on a tear on his coat, so she brought out her needle and thread and mended it. They chatted comfortably as she worked and time flew so fast that the moon was dropping westward when she suddenly stood up to go, saying, "I'm going away tomorrow, to the state farm to study. I must go home now, if I've got to make an early start."

Posupo was very moved by the news. He could remember Ahti all her life, from when she was still a little girl, and how the tears used to stream down her tiny face. He remembered how the landlord beat her, leaving great marks all over her little body—the same landlord who later tried to take her. And now Ahti was a model worker; the state was looking after her. She would go on and make more progress; honours would come to her. Then he realized what it really meant to him. The news was so sudden that he only now felt terribly sad; they had lived near each other since they were both small and had never been separated for more than a few days. Now that she was leaving he realized how precious the time was they spent together, and asked with trepidation, "When will you be back?"

"Next spring."

Posupo stared at her fixedly. Neither of them said anything. After a while Ahti brought out a sash she had embroidered and presented it to him. "This is for you. I have embroidered our future into it."

It was a red satin sash, embroidered with golden thread which glittered in the moonlight. Posupo hardly looked at it—Ahti was walking away. It dawned on him only then that he had so much to tell her, there was their future life together to discuss, and he still had not told her his feelings. And now there was hardly time left for it. He must go after her. She was already behind a small grove and out of sight. . . .

Translated by Tang Sheng

CRESCENT MOON*

Lao Sheh

Yes, I've seen the crescent moon again — a chill sickle of pale gold. How many times have I seen crescent moons just like this one, how many times. . . . It stirred many different emotions, brought back many different scenes. As I sat and stared at it, I recalled each time I had seen it hanging in the blue firmament. It awakened my memories like an evening breeze blowing open the petals of a flower that is craving for sleep.

* * *

The first time, the chill crescent moon really brought a chill. My first recollection of it is a bitter one. I remember its feeble pale gold beams shining through my tears. I was only seven then — a little girl in a red padded jacket. I wore a blue cloth hat Mama had made for me. There were small flowers printed on it. I remember. I stood leaning against the doorway of our small room, gazing at the crescent moon. The room was filled with the smell of medicine and smoke, with Mama's tears, with Papa's illness. I stood alone on the steps looking at the moon. No one bothered about me, no one cooked my supper. I knew there was tragedy in that room, for everyone said Papa's illness was. . . . But I felt much more sorry for myself. I was cold, hungry, neglected.

I stood there until the moon had set. I had nothing; I couldn't restrain my tears. But the sound of Mama's weeping drowned out my own. Papa was silent; a white cloth covered his face. I wanted to raise the cloth and look at him, but I didn't dare. There was so little space in our room, and Papa occupied it all.

Mama put on white mourning clothes. A white robe without stitched hems was placed over my red jacket. I remember because I kept breaking off the loose white threads along the edges. There was a lot of noise and grief-stricken crying, everyone was very busy; but actually there wasn't much to be done. It hardly seemed worth so much fuss. Papa was placed in a coffin made of four thin boards; the coffin was full of cracks. Then five or six men carried him out. Mama and I followed

*This story was written by the author in the thirties.

behind, weeping. I remember Papa; I remember his wooden box. That box meant the end of him. I knew unless I could break it open I'd never see him again. But they buried it deep in the ground in a cemetery outside the city wall. Although I knew exactly where it was, I was afraid it would be hard to find that box again. The earth seemed to swallow it like a drop of rain.

* * *

Mama and I were both wearing white gowns again the next time I saw the crescent moon. It was a cold day, and Mama was taking me to visit Papa's grave. She had bought some gold and silver "ingots" made of paper to burn and send to Papa in the next world. Mama was especially good to me that day. When I was tired, she carried me piggy-back; at the city gate she bought me some roasted chestnuts. Everything was cold, only the chestnuts were hot. Instead of eating them, I used them to warm my hands.

I don't remember how far we walked, but it was very, very far. It hadn't seemed nearly so far the day we buried Papa, perhaps because a lot of people had gone with us. This time there was only Mama and me. She didn't speak. I didn't feel like saying anything either. It was very quiet out there. On that yellow dirt road there wasn't a breath of sound.

It was winter, and the days were short. I remember the grave — a small mound of earth. There were some brown hills in the distance, with the sunlight slanting on them. Mama seemed to have no time for me. She set me down on the side and embraced the head of the grave and wept. I sat holding the hot chestnuts. After crying a while, Mama burned the paper ingots. The ashes swirled before us in little spirals, then lazily settled back on the ground. There wasn't much wind, but it was very cold.

Mama began to cry again. I thought of Papa too, but I didn't cry for him. It was Mama's pitiful weeping that brought tears to my eyes. I pulled her by the hand and said, "Don't cry, Mama, don't cry." But she sobbed all the harder and hugged me to her bosom.

The sun was nearly set and there wasn't another person in sight. Only Mama and me. That seemed to scare Mama a little. With tears in her eyes she led me away. After we had walked a while, she turned and looked back. I did too. I couldn't tell Papa's grave from the others any more. There were nothing but graves on the hillside. Hundreds of small mounds, right to the foot of the hill. Mama sighed.

We walked and walked, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. We still hadn't reached the city gate when I saw the crescent moon again. All around us was darkness and silence. Only the crescent moon gave off a cold glow. I was worn out. Mama carried me. How we got back to the

city I don't know. I only remember hazily that there was a crescent moon in the sky.

* * *

By the time I was eight, I had learned how to take things to the pawnshop. I knew that if I didn't come back with some money, Mama and I would have nothing to eat that night — Mama would never send me except as a last resort. Whenever she handed me a small package it meant there wasn't even thin gruel in the bottom of our pot. Our pot was often cleaner than a neat young widow.

One day I was sent to the pawnshop with a mirror. This seemed to be the only thing we could spare, though Mama used it every day. It was spring, and our padded clothes had just been placed in hock. I knew how to be careful. Carrying the mirror, I walked carefully but quickly to the pawnshop. It was already open.

I was afraid of that pawnshop's big red door, afraid of its high counter. Whenever I saw that door, my heart beat fast. But I'd go in just the same, even if I had to crawl over the high door-sill. Taking a grip on myself, I would hand up my package and say loudly, "I want to pawn this." After getting my money and the pawn ticket, I would hold them carefully and hurry home. I knew Mama would be worried.

But this time they didn't want the mirror. They said I should add another item to it. I knew what that meant. Putting the mirror in my shirt, I ran home as fast as my legs could carry me. Mama cried; she couldn't find anything else to pawn. I had always thought there were a lot of things in our little room. But now, helping Mama look for a piece of clothing to raise some money on, I saw that we didn't have much at all.

Mama decided not to send me to the pawnshop again, but when I asked her, "Mama, what are we going to eat?" she cried and gave me her silver hairpin. It was the last bit of silver she had left. She had taken it out of her hair several times before, but she had never been able to part with it. Grandma had given it to her when she got married. Now Mama gave it to me — her last bit of silver — to pawn together with the mirror.

I ran with all my might to the pawnshop, but the big door was already shut tight. Clutching the silver hairpin, I sat down on the steps and cried softly, not daring to make too much noise. I looked up at the sky. Ah, there was the crescent moon shining through my tears again.

I wept for a long time. Then Mama came out of the shadows and took me by the hand. Oh, what a nice warm hand. I forgot all my troubles, even my hunger and disappointment. As long as Mama's warm hand was holding mine, everything was all right.

"Ma," I sobbed, "let's go home and sleep. I'll come again early tomorrow morning."

Mama didn't say anything. After we had walked a while I said, "Ma, you see that crescent moon? It hung crooked just like that the day Pa died. Why is it always so slant?"

Mama remained silent. But her hand trembled a little.

* * *

All day long, Mama washed clothes for people. I wanted to help her, but there wasn't any way I could do it. I would wait for her; I wouldn't go to sleep until she finished. Sometimes, even after the crescent moon had already risen, she would still be scrubbing away. Those smelly socks, hard as cowhide, were brought in by salesmen and clerks from the shops. By the time Mama finished washing the "cowhide" she never had any appetite.

I would sit beside her, looking at the moon, watching the bats flit through its rays, like big triangular water-chestnuts flashing across beams of silver then quickly dropping into the darkness again.

The more I pitied Mama, the more I loved the crescent moon. Gazing at it always eased my heart. I loved it in the summer most of all. It was always so cool, so icy. I loved the faint shadows it cast upon the ground, though they never lasted very long. Soft and hazy, they soon vanished, leaving the earth especially dark and the stars especially bright and the flowers especially fragrant. Our neighbours had many flower bushes. Blossoms from a tall locust tree used to drift into our courtyard and cover the ground like a layer of snow.

* * *

Mama's hands became hard and scaly. They felt wonderful when she rubbed my back. But I hated to trouble her, because her hands were all swollen from the water. She was thin too; often she couldn't eat a thing after washing those stinking socks. I knew she was trying to think of a way out. I knew. She used to push the pile of dirty clothes to one side and become lost in thought. Sometimes she would talk to herself. What was she planning? I couldn't guess.

* * *

Mama told me to be good and call him "Pa" — she had found me another father. Mama didn't look at me when she told me this. There were tears in her eyes, and she said, "I can't let you starve!"

Oh, so it was to keep me from starving that she found me another Pa? I didn't understand much, and I was a little afraid. But I was kind of hopeful too — maybe we really wouldn't go hungry any more.

What a coincidence! As we were leaving our tiny flat, a crescent moon again hung in the sky. It was brighter and more frightening than I had ever seen it before. I was going to leave the small room I had

grown so accustomed to. Ma sat in a red bridal sedan-chair. Ahead of her marched a few tootling musicians who played very badly. The man and I followed behind. He held me by the hand. The crescent moon gave off faint rays that seemed to tremble in the cool breeze.

The streets were deserted except for stray dogs that barked at the musicians. The sedan-chair moved very quickly. Where was it going? Was it taking Mama outside the city, to the cemetery? The man pulled me along so fast I could hardly catch my breath. I couldn't even cry. His sweating palm was cold, like a fish. I wanted to call "Ma!" but I didn't dare. The crescent moon looked like a large half-closed eye. In a little while, the sedan-chair entered a small lane.

* * *

During the next three or four years I somehow never saw the crescent moon.

My new Pa was very good to me. He had two rooms. He and Ma lived in the inner room; I slept on a pallet in the outside one. At first I still wanted to sleep with Mama, but after a few days I began to love "my" little room. It had clean whitewashed walls, a table and a chair. They all seemed to belong to me. My bedding was thicker and warmer, too.

Mama gradually put on some weight. Colour came back to her cheeks, and the scales left her hands. I hadn't been to the pawnshop in a long time. My new father let me go to school. Sometimes he even played with me. I don't know why I couldn't bring myself to call him "Pa" — I liked him a lot.

He seemed to understand. He used to just grin at me. His eyes looked very nice then. Mama would privately urge me to call him "Pa." I didn't really want to be stubborn. I knew it was because of him that Mama and I had food to eat and clothes to wear. I understood all that.

Yes, for three or four years I don't recall seeing the crescent moon; maybe I saw it and don't remember.

But I can never forget the crescent moon I saw when Pa died, or the one that rode before Ma's bridal sedan-chair. That pale chill light will always remain in my heart, shiny and cool as a piece of jade. Sometimes when I think of it, it seems as if I can almost reach out my hand and touch it.

* * *

I loved going to school. I had the feeling that the schoolyard was full of flowers, though, actually, this wasn't so. Yet whenever I think of school I think of flowers. Just as whenever I think of Papa's grave I think of a crescent moon outside the city — hanging crooked in the wind blowing across the fields.

Mama loved flowers too. She couldn't afford them, but if anyone ever sent her any, she pinned them in her hair. Once I had the chance to pick a couple for her. With the fresh flowers in her hair, she looked very young from the back. She was happy, and so was I.

Going to school also made me very glad. Perhaps this is the reason whenever I think of school I think of flowers.

* * *

The year I was to graduate from primary school, Mama sent me to the pawnshop again. I don't know why my new father suddenly left us. Mama didn't seem to know where he went either. She told me to continue going to school; she thought he'd probably come back soon.

Many days passed and there was still no sign of him. He didn't even write. I was afraid Mama would have to start washing dirty socks again, and I felt very badly about it.

But Mama had other plans. She still dressed prettily and wore flowers in her hair. How strange! She didn't cry; in fact she was always smiling. Why? I didn't understand. For several days whenever I came home from school, I'd find her standing in the doorway. Not long after, men began to hail me on the street:

"Hey, tell your Ma I'll be calling on her soon!"

"Young and tender, are you selling today?"

My face burning like fire, I hung my head till it couldn't go any lower. I knew now, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I couldn't question Mama, no, I couldn't do that. She was so good to me, always urging, "Read your books, study hard."

But she was illiterate herself. Why was she so anxious for me to study? I grew suspicious. But then I would think — she's doing this because she has no way out. When I felt suspicious, I wanted to curse her. At other times, I would want to hug her and beg her not to do that kind of thing any more.

I hated myself for not being able to help Mama. I was worried. Even when I graduated from primary school, what use would I be? I heard from the girls in my class that several of the students who graduated last year became concubines; a few, they said, were working "in dark doorways." I didn't quite understand these things, but from the way my classmates spoke, I guessed it was something bad. The girls in my class seemed to know everything; they loved to whisper about things which they knew perfectly well were not nice. It made them blush, yet, at the same time, look quite self-satisfied.

My suspicion of Mama increased. Was she waiting for me to graduate, so that she could make me — ? When I thought like this, I didn't dare go home. I was afraid to face Mama. I used to save the pennies she gave me to buy afternoon snacks, and go to physical training class on an empty stomach. I was often faint. How I envied the

other kids, munching their pastries. But I had to save money. With a little money I could run away if Mama insisted that I—

At my richest, I never managed to save more than ten or fifteen cents. Even during the day, I used to gaze up at the sky, looking for my crescent moon. If the misery in my heart could be compared to anything physical, it should be that crescent moon — hanging helpless and unsupported in the grey-blue sky, its feeble rays soon swallowed up by the darkness.

* * *

What made me feel worst of all was that I was slowly learning to hate Mama. But whenever I hated her, I couldn't help remembering how she carried me piggy-back to visit Papa's grave — and then I couldn't hate her any more. Yet I had to. My heart . . . my heart was like that crescent moon — only able to shine a little while, surrounded by a darkness that was black and limitless.

Men constantly came to Mama's room now; she no longer tried to hide it from me. They looked at me like dogs — drooling, their tongues hanging out. In their eyes I was an even tastier morsel than Mama. I could see it.

In a short time, I suddenly came to understand a lot. I knew I had to protect myself. I could feel that my body had something precious; I was aware of my own fragrance. I felt ashamed; I was torn by one emotion after another. There was a force within me that I could use to protect myself — or destroy myself. At times I was firm and strong. At times I was weak, defenceless, confused.

I wanted to love Mama. There were so many things I wanted to ask her. I needed her comforting. But it was just at that time that I had to shun her, hate her — or lose my own existence.

Lying sleepless on my bed and considering the matter calmly, I could see that Mama deserved to be pitied. She had to feed the two of us. But then I would think — how could I eat the food she earned that way?

That was how my mood kept changing. Like a winter wind — halting a moment, then blowing fiercer than ever. I would quietly watch my fury rising within me, and be powerless to stop it.

* * *

Before I could think of a solution, things became worse. Mama asked me, "What about it?" If I really loved her, she said, I ought to help her. Otherwise, she couldn't continue taking care of me. These didn't seem like words that Mama could speak, yet she said them. To make it even clearer, she added:

"I'm getting old. In another year or two, men won't want me even if I offer myself for nothing."

It was true. Lately you could see the wrinkles on Mama's face no matter how much powder she used. She no longer had the energy to entertain a lot of men; she was thinking of giving herself to only one. There was a man who ran a steamed bread shop who wanted her. She could go to him right away. But I was a big girl now. I couldn't trail after her bridal sedan-chair like I did when I was a child. I would have to look after myself. If I would agree to "help" Mama, she wouldn't have to go to him. I could earn money for us both.

I was quite willing to earn money, but when I thought of the way she wanted me to do it, it made me shiver. I knew next to nothing; how could I peddle myself like some middle-aged woman? Mama's heart was hard, and the need for money was harder still. She didn't force me to take this road or that. She left the choice to me. Either help her, or we two would go our separate ways. Mama didn't cry. Her eyes had long since gone dry.

What was I to do?

* * *

I spoke to the principal of my school. She was a stout woman of about forty, not very bright, but a warm-hearted generous person. I was really at my wit's end, otherwise how could I have said anything about Mama. . . . Actually, I didn't know the principal very well, and every word I spoke seared my throat like a ball of fire. I stammered and took a long time to get out what I had to say.

The principal said she was willing to help me. She couldn't give me any money, but she could give me two meals a day and a place to live — I could move in with an old woman servant who lived at the school. She said I could help the scribe with his writing — but not right away, because I still needed more practice with my handwriting.

Two meals a day and a place to live — that settled the biggest problem. I didn't have to be a burden to Mama any more.

Mama didn't ride in a bride's sedan-chair when she left this time. She simply took a rickshaw and went off into the night. She let me keep my bedding.

Mama tried not to cry as she was leaving, but the tears in her heart gushed out after all. She knew I couldn't come to see her —her own daughter. As for me, I had forgotten even how to weep properly — I sobbed open-mouthed, the tears smothering my face. I was her daughter, her friend, her solace. But I couldn't help her. Not unless I agreed to something I just couldn't do.

After she had gone, I sat and thought. We two, mother and daughter, were like a couple of stray dogs. For the sake of our mouths, we had to accept all kinds of suffering, as if no other parts of our bodies mattered, only our mouths. We had to sell all the rest of us to feed our mouths.

I didn't hate Mama. I understood. It wasn't her fault; it wasn't wrong of her to have a mouth. The fault lay with food. By what right were we deprived of food?

Recollections of past troubles flooded back on me. But the crescent moon that was most familiar with my tears didn't appear this time. It was pitch dark, without even the glow of fireflies. Mama had disappeared into the darkness like a ghost, silent, shadowless. If she were to die tomorrow, she probably couldn't be buried beside Papa. I wouldn't even be able to find her grave. She was my only Mama, my only friend. And now I was left alone in the world.

* * *

I could never see Mama again. Love died in my heart, like a spring flower nipped by frost. I practised hard with my writing so that I could help the scribe copy minor documents for the principal. I had to become useful—I was eating other people's food. I couldn't be like the other girls in my class, who did nothing but watch others all day long — observing what other people ate, what they wore, what they said. I concentrated on myself. My shadow was my only friend. "I" was always in my mind, because no one loved me. I loved myself, pitied, encouraged, scolded myself. I knew myself, as if I were another person.

My body changed in a way that frightened and pleased me, yet left me puzzled. When I touched them with my hand it was like brushing against delicate, tender flowers.

I was concerned only with the present. There was no future; I didn't dare to think too far ahead. Because I was eating other people's food, I had to know when it was noon and when it was evening. Otherwise I wouldn't have thought of time at all. Without hope there isn't any time. I seemed nailed down to a place that had no days or months. When I thought of my life with Mama, I knew I had existed for fifteen or sixteen years. My schoolmates were always looking forward to vacations, festivals, the New Year holiday. What had these things to do with me?

But my body was continuing to mature. I could feel it. It confused me. I couldn't trust myself. I knew I was growing prettier. Beauty raised my social stature. That was a consolation—until I remembered that I never had any social stature to begin with; then the consolation turned sour. Still, in the end, I was proud of my good looks. Poor but pretty! Suddenly, a frightening thought came to me—Mama wasn't bad looking either.

* * *

I hadn't seen the crescent moon for a long time. Even though I wanted to see it, I didn't dare look. I had already graduated and was still living at the school. In the evenings I was alone with two old servants—a man and a woman. They didn't quite know how to treat

me. I was no longer a student, yet I wasn't a teacher; nor was I a servant, though in some ways I resembled one.

At night I walked alone in the courtyard. Often I was driven into my room by the crescent moon. I hadn't the courage to face it. But in my room I would picture it, especially when there was a slight breeze. The breeze seemed able to blow those pale beams directly to my heart, making me recall the past, intensifying my forebodings of tragedy. My heart was like a bat in the moonlight — a dark thing in spite of the light; black — even though it could fly, still black. I had no hope. But I didn't cry. I only frowned.

* * *

I earned a little money, knitting for some of the girl students. The principal let me. But I couldn't make much because they knew how to knit too. The girls only came to me when they were too busy to do it themselves. Still, my heart felt lighter. I even thought—if Mama could come back, I could support her.

When I counted my money, I knew this was just an idle dream. But it made me feel better anyhow. I wished I could find her. If she would see me, she'd surely come away with me. We could get along, I thought. But I didn't altogether believe this myself. I was always thinking of Mama. Often, I saw her in my dreams.

One day I went with the students on an outing in the country. On the way back, because it was getting late, we took a shortcut through a small lane. There I saw Mama! Outside this steamed bread shop was a big basket with a large wooden object in it painted white to look like a steamed bread. Mama sat by the wall, pulling and pushing a lever that blew up the fire in the oven. While we were still quite a distance away I saw Mama and that white wooden steamed bread. I recognized her from the back. I wanted to rush over and embrace her. But I didn't dare. I was afraid the students would laugh at me. They wouldn't let me have such a Mama.

We came closer and closer. I lowered my head and looked at her through my tears. She didn't see me. The whole group of us brushed by her. Intent on pulling the bellows' lever, evidently she didn't see a thing.

When we were far beyond her, I turned around and looked back. She was still plying that lever. I couldn't see her features clearly; I had only the impression of a few stray locks hanging down over her forehead. I made a mental note of the name of the lane.

* * *

It was as if a little bug was gnawing at my heart. I had to see Mama or I'd have no peace.

Just at this time, a new principal was appointed to the school. The stout lady who was leaving told me I'd better start making other plans.

As long as she remained she could give me food and lodgings, but she couldn't guarantee that the new principal would do the same.

I counted my money. Altogether I had two dollars and seventy some odd cents. This would keep me from starving for the next few days. But where was I to go?

There was no point in sitting around worrying. I had to think of something.

Go see Mama—that was my first idea. But could she let me stay with her? If she couldn't, it might provoke a quarrel between her and the steamed bread seller; at least it would make her feel very badly. I had to think of things from her viewpoint. She was my Mama, and yet she wasn't. We were separated by a wall of poverty.

After mulling it over, I decided not to go to her. I had to bear my own burdens. But how? I didn't know. The world seemed very small —there was no place for me and my little roll of bedding. Even a dog was better off. He could lie down anywhere and sleep. I wouldn't be permitted to sleep on the street. Yes, I was a person, but a person was less than a dog.

What if I should refuse to leave? Would the new principal drive me out? I couldn't wait for that. It was spring. I saw the flowers and the green leaves, but I felt no breath of warmth. The red of the flowers and the green of the leaves were only colours to me; they had no special significance. Spring, in my heart, was something cold and dead. I didn't want to cry, but the tears flowed from my eyes.

* * *

I went job-hunting. I wouldn't go to Mama. I wouldn't depend on anyone. I would earn my own food.

Hopefully, I searched for two whole days. But I brought back a harvest of only dust and tears. There was no work for me to do. It was then that I truly understood Mama, really forgave her. At least she had washed smelly socks. I wasn't even able to do that. Mama took the only road that was left. The learning and morality the school had given me were just jokes, playthings for people with full stomachs and time to spare. The students wouldn't permit me to have a Mama like mine; they sneered at women who sold themselves. That was all right for them; they got their meals regularly.

I practically made up my mind—I would do anything, if only someone would feed me. Mama was admirable. I wouldn't kill myself—although I had thought of it. No, I wanted to live. I was young, pretty, I wanted to live. Any shame would be none of my doing.

* * *

Thinking like that, it was as if I had already found a job. I dared to walk in the courtyard in the moonlight. A spring crescent moon hung

in the sky. I saw it and it was beautiful. The sky was dark blue, without a speck of cloud. Bright and warm, the crescent moon bathed the willow branches with its soft beams. A breeze, laden with the fragrance of flowers, blew the shadow of the willow branches back and forth from the bright corner of the courtyard wall to the darkened section. The light was not strong; the shadows were not deep. The breeze blew tenderly. Everything was warm, drowsy, yet gently in motion. Below the moon and above the willows a pair of stars like the smiling eyes of a fairy maiden winked mischievously at that slanting crescent moon and those trailing branches. A tree by the wall was a galaxy of white blossoms. In the moonlight, half the tree was snowy white, half was dappled with soft grey shadows. A picture of incredible purity.

That crescent moon is the beginning of my hope, I said to myself.

* * *

I went to see the stout lady principal again, but she wasn't home. A young man let me in. He was very handsome, and very friendly. Usually, I'm afraid of men, but this young man didn't frighten me a bit. I couldn't very well refuse to answer his questions — he had such a winning smile. I told him why I wanted to see the principal. He was very concerned. He promised to help me.

That same night, he came and gave me two dollars. When I tried to refuse, he said the money was from his aunt—the stout principal. She had already found me a place to live, he added; I could move in the next day. I was a little suspicious at first, but his smiles went right to my heart. I felt it was wrong to doubt a person who was so considerate, so charming.

* * *

His smiling lips were on my cheek, and I could see the crescent moon, smiling too, upon his hair. The intoxicated spring breeze had blown open the spring clouds to reveal the crescent moon and a pair of spring stars. Trailing willow branches stirred along the river bank, frogs throbbed their love songs, the fragrance of young rushes filled the spring night. I could hear water flowing, bringing nourishment to the tender rushes so that they might quickly grow tall and strong. Young shoots were growing on the moist warm earth; every living thing was absorbing spring's vitality and giving off a lovely perfume.

I forgot myself; I had no self. I seemed to dissolve into that gentle spring breeze, those faint moon beams. Suddenly, a cloud covered the moon. I had lost the crescent moon, and myself as well. I was the same as Mama!

* * *

I was regretful, yet eased. I wanted to cry, but was very happy. I didn't know how I felt. I wanted to go away and never see him again. But he was always on my mind, and I was lonesome without him.

I lived alone in a small room. He came to me every night—always handsome, always tender. He provided me with food, he bought me clothing. When I put on a new gown, I could see that I was beautiful. I hated the clothes, but I couldn't bear to part with them.

I didn't dare to think; I was too indolent to think. I drifted about in a daze, rouge on my cheeks. I didn't feel like dressing up, yet I had to. There was no other way to kill time. While putting my finery on, I adored my image in the mirror; then, when I finished, I hated myself.

Tears came easily to my eyes now, though I managed not to weep. My eyes—always moist and glistening—looked lovely.

Sometimes I would kiss him madly, then push him away, even curse him. He never stopped smiling.

* * *

I knew there was no hope from the start. Any wisp of cloud could cover a crescent moon. My future was dark.

Sure enough, not long after, as spring was changing to summer, my spring dream ended.

One day, just about noon, a young woman came to see me. She was very pretty, in a vapid, doll-like way. The moment she entered the room she began to weep. There was no need for her to say anything; I knew already.

She hadn't come to raise a row, nor did I want to quarrel with her. She was a simple, honest sort. Crying, she took my hand. "He deceived us both!" she said.

I had thought she was also a "sweetheart." But no, she was his wife. She didn't berate me. She just kept repeating, "Please let him go!"

I didn't know what to do. I felt very sorry for the young woman. Finally, I consented and, at once, she was all smiles. She appeared to be completely guileless, and quite naive. All she knew was that she wanted her husband.

* * *

I walked the streets for hours. It had been easy enough to agree to what that young woman had asked, but what was I to do now? I didn't want the things he had given me. Since we were parting, I ought to make the break complete. But they were all I had to my name. Where was I to go? Would I be able to eat that day? His gifts at least were worth a little money. Very well, I'd keep them. I had no choice.

Quietly, I moved away. Though I had no regrets, there was an emptiness in my heart. I was like a lone and drifting cloud.

I rented a small room. Then I went to bed and slept right around the clock.

* * *

I was good at economizing. Since childhood I had known how precious money was. I still had a couple of dollars, but I decided to go out and look for a job immediately. Though I had no great hopes, it seemed like the safest course.

But job-hunting hadn't become any easier just because I was a year or two older than last time. I kept trying, not that I thought it would do any good, but because I felt it was the proper thing to do.

Why was it so hard for a woman to earn a living? Mama was right. She took the only road open to a woman. Though I knew it was waiting for me, not far off, I didn't want to take that road yet.

The more I struggled, the more frightened I became. My hope was like the light of a new moon; in a little while it would be gone.

Two weeks later, just as I was about to give up, I stood in a line of girls in a cheap restaurant. The restaurant was very small; the boss, who was looking us over, was very big. We were a rather attractive bunch — all primary school graduates, but we waited for that great broken-down tub of a boss to pick one of us as if he were an emperor.

He chose me. Though I wasn't the least grateful, at the moment I couldn't help feeling good. The girls all seemed to envy me. As they left, some had tears in their eyes. A few cursed under their breath— "How can women be worth so little!"

* * *

I became the small restaurant's Second Hostess. I didn't know anything about waiting on tables and I was rather scared. The First Hostess told me not to worry—she didn't either. She said the waiter took care of that. All the hostess had to do was serve tea, hand out damp face cloths and present the bill at the end of the meal.

Strange. First Hostess wore her sleeves rolled up to her elbow, but the white linings were quite spotless. Tied to her wrist was a fancy handkerchief embroidered with the words "Little Sister, I love you." She was always powdering her face, and the lipstick on her big mouth made it look like bloody ladle. When lighting a cigarette for a customer, she would press her knee against his leg. She also poured the drinks; sometimes she took a sip herself. To some customers she was very attentive; others she would completely ignore. She had a way of batting her eyes and pretending she didn't see them. It was up to me to look after the ones she neglected.

I was afraid of men. I had learned from that little experience of mine — love or no love, men were monsters. The customers at our restaurant were particularly repulsive. They put on a great show of grabbing for the bill. They played noisy drinking games and ate like pigs. They picked fault over the smallest trifles, and cursed and raged.

While serving them tea or handing out face cloths, I kept my head down and blushed. They talked to me and tried to make me laugh. But

I wanted nothing to do with them. At nine o'clock, when my first day's work was over, I was worn out. I went to my little room and lay down, without even taking my clothes off, and slept until the next day. When I awoke, I felt better. I was self-supporting, earning my own keep. I reported for work very early.

* * *

When First Hostess showed up, after nine, I had already been on the job two hours. Contemptuously, but not altogether unkindly, she explained, "You don't have to come so early. Who eats here at eight o'clock in the morning? And another thing, droopy puss, don't always be pulling such a long face. You're supposed to be a hostess, not a pallbearer. Keep your head down like that all the time and nobody'll order any extra drinks. What do you think you're here for? You're dressed all wrong, too. Your gown should have a high collar—and where's your chiffon handkerchief? You don't even look like a hostess!"

I knew she meant well. If I didn't smile at the customers, I'd lose out and so would she, for we all split the tips equally. I didn't look down on her; in one sense, I even admired her — she knew how to earn money. Playing up to men—that was the only way a woman could get along.

But I didn't want to imitate her, though I could see clearly enough that the day might be coming when I would have to be even more free and easy than she to earn my food. But that would be only when all other means failed. The "last resort" was always lying in wait for us women. I was just trying to make it wait a little longer.

Angrily, I gritted my teeth and struggled on. But a woman's fate is never in her own hands. Three days later the boss warned me — he'd give me two more days; if I wanted to keep the job, I'd have to act like First Hostess. Half in jest, First Hostess also dropped me a hint:

"One of the customers has been asking about you. Why don't you quit holding back and playing so dumb? We all know the score. Hostesses have married bank managers — there've been cases. We're not so cheap. If we're not too prissy, we can ride around in a goddam limousine with the best of 'em!"

That burned me up. "When did you ever ride in a limousine?" I queried.

Her big red mouth opened so wide with surprise, I thought her jaw was going to drop off. Then she snapped, "None of your nasty lip. You're no lily-arsed lady. You wouldn't be here if you were!"

I quit. I took my pay—a dollar and five cents—and went home.

* * *

The final shadow had taken another big step towards me. To avoid it, I first had to come closer to it. I didn't care about losing the job, but I was really afraid of that shadow. I knew how to sell myself. Ever

since that affair, I understood quite a bit about relations between men and women. A girl had only to relax her hold on herself a little, and the men would sense it and come running. What they wanted was flesh; when they had satisfied their lust, they would feed you and clothe you for a time. Afterwards, they might curse and beat you, and cut off your income.

That's the way it is when a girl sells herself. At times she's very content. I've known that feeling myself. It's all sweet love talk for a while; later you become depressed and ache all over. When you sell yourself to one man, at least you get words of love and bliss. But when you're on sale to the general public, you don't even get that. Then you hear lots of words Mama never used.

The degree of fear was different too. Though I just couldn't accept the advice of First Hostess, I wasn't quite as afraid of a private affair with one man. Not that I was thinking of selling myself. I had no need of a man — I was less than twenty. I only thought that it might be fun to go around with one. How was I to know that as soon as I went out a few times with a new friend he would demand what I feared the most!

It was true I had once abandoned myself to the spring breeze, and let a young man have his will. But later I knew he had taken advantage of my innocence, hypnotized me with his honeyed words. When I awoke, I realized it was all an empty dream, with nothing to show for it but a few meals and some new clothes. I didn't want to earn my food that way again. Food was a proper practical object that should be earned in a proper practical way. But if that proved impossible, a woman had to admit she was a woman, and sell her flesh.

More than a month passed. I still was unable to find a new job.

* * *

I ran into some of my old classmates. A few had gone on to middle school; some were just living at home. I wasn't much interested in them. Talking with them, I could see that I was cleverer than they. In school, they used to be the smart ones. Now the tables were reversed. They seemed to be living in a world of dreams. All very smartly turned out, they were like merchandise in a store. Their eyes shone when they met a young man and their hearts seemed to melt in a poetic reverie.

Those girls made me laugh, but I had to forgive them. Food was no problem to them; it's easy to think of love when your belly is full. Men and women weave nets to ensnare one another. The ones with the most money have the biggest nets. After bagging a few prospects, they leisurely take their pick. I had no money. I couldn't even find a quiet corner to weave my net. But I had to catch someone, or be caught myself. I was clearer on such matters than my ex-classmates, more practical.

* * *

One day I ran into the doll-faced young wife again. She greeted me as if I were one of her dearest friends, but there was some confusion in her manner.

"You're a good person," she stammered, very earnest. "I was sorry later I asked you to let him go. I would have been better off if he stayed with you. Now he's found himself another. He's gone away with her and I haven't seen him since!"

Questioning her, I discovered that she and he had married for love. Apparently she still loved him, but he had run off again. I was sorry for the little wife. She was still dreaming; she still believed that love was sacred.

I asked her what she was going to do now. She said she had to find him, that they were mated for life. But suppose you can't find him? I asked. She bit her lips. She had parents and in-laws; she was under their control. She envied me my freedom.

So someone actually envied me. I wanted to laugh. My freedom —what a joke! She had food, I had freedom. She had no freedom, I had nothing to eat. We both were women, both were frustrated.

* * *

After meeting the little doll-face, I gave up the idea of selling myself to one man. I decided to play around; in other words, I was going to use "romance" to earn my meals. I couldn't be bothered about moral responsibility any more when I was hungry.

Romance would cure hunger, just as a full stomach was necessary before you could concentrate on romance. It was a perfect circle, no matter where you started from.

There wasn't much difference between me and my classmates and the little doll-face. They had a few more illusions; I was a bit more straightforward. There is no truth more vital than the empty stomach.

I sold my meagre possessions and bought myself a complete new outfit. I didn't look bad at all. Then I entered upon the market.

* * *

I had imagined I could play at romance, but I was wrong. I didn't know as much about the world as I had thought. Men weren't trapped quite that easily. I was after the more cultured types, men I could satisfy with a kiss or two. Ha-ha, they didn't go for that line, not one bit. They wanted to take advantage the very first time we met. What's more, they only invited me to see a movie, or go out for a walk, or have some ice-cream. I still went home hungry.

The so-called cultured men never failed to ask what school I graduated from, what business my family was in. It was plain enough — they didn't want you unless you had something to offer. If you couldn't bring

them any real gain, the best they were willing to give was ten cents worth of ice-cream in exchange for a kiss.

It was strictly a cash on delivery proposition. The doll-faces didn't understand this, but I did. Mama and I both understood. I thought of Mama a lot.

* * *

They say some girls can earn a living playing at romance. But I just didn't have the capital; I had to drop the idea. For me it had to be straight business. My landlord ordered me to get out. He was a respectable man, he said. I didn't even give him a second glance. I moved back to the small flat where Mama and my first new Papa used to live. This landlord didn't say anything about being respectable. He was much nicer and more honest.

Business was very good. The cultured types came too. As soon as they found out I was for sale, they were willing to buy. With this kind of arrangement they got their money's worth, with no reflection on their social status.

When I first started I was very scared. I wasn't yet twenty. But after a couple of days I wasn't afraid any more. I could turn them limp as sacks of wet sand. They were pleased and satisfied; they advertised me to their friends.

By the end of several months, I knew a lot. I learned to size a man up the first time we met. The rich customer would always inquire about my background, and make it plain that he could afford me. Very jealous, he would always want me all to himself. Even in brothels he wanted to monopolize — because he had money.

To that type of man I wasn't very courteous. If he raged I didn't care. I could quiet him down by threatening to go to his wife. Those years at school weren't spent in vain. I didn't scare easily. Education has its advantages. I was convinced of that.

Some men would show up with only a dollar in their hands, terrified of being cheated. To this sort, I would explain the terms of our transaction in careful detail. They would then meekly go home and get some more money. It was really a scream.

The worst of the lot were the small-time punks. Not only didn't they want to spend any money, but they were always trying to make something on the deal—stealing half a pack of cigarettes, or a small jar of cold cream. It was bad policy to offend these boys—they had connections. Get tough with them, and they put the cops on you.

I didn't offend them. I played them along until I got to know an official on the police force, then I finished them off one by one. It's a dog-eat-dog world; the worse you are the better you make out.

Most pitiful of all were the young student types, with only a dollar and a handful of small change clinking in their pockets, nervous per-

spiration standing out on their noses. I pitied them, but I took their money just the same. What else could I do?

Then there were the elderly men—all quite respectable, some of them grandfathers. I didn't really know how to treat them. But I knew they had money; they wanted to buy a little happiness before they died. So I gave them what they were after.

These experiences taught me to recognize the true nature of money and man. Money is the more powerful of the two. If man is an animal, then money is his gall.

* * *

I discovered I had caught a disease. It made me so miserable I wanted to die. I rested, I strolled about the streets. I longed for Mama. She could give me some comfort. I thought of myself as someone who hadn't long to live.

I went to the little lane where I had last seen her plying the bellows' lever. But the steamed bread shop had closed down. No one knew where they had moved to. But I persisted. I simply had to find her. For days I roved the streets like a ghost. It was no use. I wondered whether she was dead, or whether the shop had moved to somewhere outside the city, maybe hundreds of miles away.

In this gloomy frame of mind, I broke down and cried. I put on my best clothes, made up my face, and lay down on my bed and waited for death. I was sure I wouldn't last long.

But I didn't die. There was a knock at the door. Someone had come looking for me. All right, show him in. With all my strength, I gave him a full charge of my infection. I didn't think I was wrong. The fault wasn't mine to begin with.

I began to feel a little better. I smoked, I drank, I behaved like an old hand of thirty or forty. There were dark circles under my eyes, my hands were feverish. I didn't care. Money was everything. The idea was to eat your fill first; then you could talk about other things.

And I ate not badly at all. Why not have the best! I had to have good food and nice clothing. That was the only way I could do a little justice to myself.

* * *

One morning as I sat draped in a long gown—it must have been about ten o'clock—I heard some footsteps out in the courtyard. I had just got out of bed. Sometimes I didn't get dressed until noon. I had become very lazy lately. I could sit around like this for an hour, sometimes two, thinking of nothing, not wanting to think of anything either.

The footsteps approached my door, softly, slowly. I saw a pair of eyes peering in through the door's small glass panel. After a moment, they vanished. I sat listless, too lazy to move. A few minutes later,

the eyes came back again. This time I recognized them. I got up and quietly opened the door. "Ma!"

* * *

What happened next I can't exactly say. Nor do I remember how long we cried together. Mama had aged terribly. Her husband had gone back to his native village, sneaking away without a word. He didn't leave her a cent. She sold the shop's few implements, gave the store back to the landlord and moved into a cheap room.

She had already been searching for me over half a month. Finally, she thought of coming to her old flat, just on the off chance that she might run into me. Sure enough, there I was. She hadn't dared speak to me. If I hadn't called her, perhaps she would have gone away again.

When we stopped crying at last, I began to laugh hysterically. What a farce! Mother finds daughter, but daughter is a whore. In order to bring me up, Mama had been forced to become one. Now it was my turn to look after her, so I would have to remain one.

This oldest profession is hereditary — a woman's speciality!

* * *

Though I knew that words of comfort were just empty talk, I was hoping to hear them from Mama's mouth. Mama was always good at fooling people, and I used to take her cajolery as consolation.

But now she had forgotten how to do even that. She was scared stiff by hunger, and I didn't blame her.

She began checking through my things, questioning me about income and expenses, apparently not the least troubled by the nature of my work. I told her I was sick, hoping she would urge me to rest a few days. Nothing of the sort. She said she'd buy me some medicine.

"Are we always going to remain in this business?" I asked her. She didn't answer.

Yet, in a way, she really loved me and wanted to protect me. She fed me, looked after my health. She was always stealing glances at me, the way a mother watches a sleeping child.

The only thing she wouldn't do for me was tell me to quit my profession.

I knew well enough—though I wasn't too pleased about it—that aside from this, there was nothing else I could do. Mama and I had to have food and clothing—that decided everything. Mother and daughter or no, respectable or no, the need for money was merciless.

* * *

Mama wanted to look after me, but she had to stand by and watch me be ruined. Though I wanted to be good to her, sometimes she was very annoying. She tried to run the whole show—especially where

money was concerned. Her eyes had lost their youthful shine, but the sight of money could make them gleam again. She acted like a servant when there were customers around, yet if any man should pay less than the agreed price, she'd curse him and call him every name under the sun.

It made things awkward for me. Of course, I was in business for money, but that didn't mean we had to curse people. I knew how to be rude to a customer, but I had my own methods. I brought him around easy. Mama's way was too crude; she offended people. From the point of view of money, that was something we shouldn't do.

Maybe I was young and naive. Mama only cared about money, but she had to be that way; she was so much older. Probably in another couple of years I'd be the same. A person's heart ages with the years. Gradually, you get to be hard and stiff—like silver dollars.

No, Mama didn't stand on ceremony. If a customer didn't pay in full, she'd keep his brief-case, or his hat, or anything worth a little money like a pair of gloves or a cane. I hated rows, but Mama was right. "We have to make every dollar we can," she said. "In this racket, you age ten years in one. Do you think anybody will want you when you look seventy or eighty?"

Sometimes, when a customer got drunk, she'd drag him out to a lonely spot and strip him of everything, right down to his shoes. The funny thing was the man never made a fuss about it afterwards. Maybe he didn't know how it happened, or maybe he caught pneumonia from the exposure. Or maybe, remembering how he got into that state, he was too embarrassed to complain. We didn't care, but some people had a sense of shame.

* * *

Mama said we age ten years in one, and she was right. After two or three years I could feel that I had changed a lot. My skin grew coarse, my lips were always chapped, my eyes bloodshot. I would get up very late, but I always felt tired.

I was aware of these things, and my customers were even less blind to them. Old customers gradually stopped coming around. As to new customers, though I worked still harder to please them, they got on my nerves. Sometimes I couldn't control my temper; I'd rant and rave so, I didn't recognize myself. Talking nonsense became a habit with me.

My more cultured customers lost interest because my "charming little love-bird" quality—their favourite poetic phrase—was gone. I had to learn to behave like a streetwalker. Only by painting my face like a clown could I attract the uneducated customers. I spread my lipstick on thick, I bit them—then they were happy.

I could almost see myself dying. With every dollar I took in, I seemed to come closer to death. Money is supposed to preserve life, but the way I earned it, it had the opposite effect. I could see myself dying; I waited for death.

In this state of mind, I didn't want to think of anything. There was no need. I only wanted to live from day to day—that was enough.

Mama was the mirror of my coming self. After peddling her flesh for years, all that was left of her was a mass of white hair and a dark wrinkled skin. Such is life.

* * *

I forced myself to laugh, to act wild. Weeping a few tears would never have washed away my bitterness anyhow. My way of living had no attraction, but it was life after all, and I didn't want to part with it. Besides, what I was doing was not my fault. If death seemed frightening, it was only because I loved life so dearly. I wasn't afraid of the pain of dying—my life was more painful than any death. I loved life, but not the way I was living it.

I used to picture an ideal life, and it would be like a dream. But then, as cruel reality again closed in on me, the dream would quickly pass, and I would feel worse than ever. This world is no dream—it's a living hell.

Mama could see that I was feeling low, and she would urge me to get married. A husband would give me food, and she could get a cash payment for her old age. I was her only hope. But who would marry me?

* * *

Because I had known so many men, I forgot completely the meaning of love. I loved myself—no, I didn't even love myself any longer. Why should I love anyone else? Still, if I were to marry, I would have to pretend, to say that I loved him, that I was willing to spend the rest of my life with him.

And that is what I did say — to several men. I swore it, but none of them wanted to marry me. The rule of money makes men sharp. They were quite willing to have an affair with me. That was much cheaper than going to a brothel.

If it didn't cost anything, I guarantee all the men would say they loved me.

* * *

Just about this time, I was arrested. Our city's new chief of police is a stickler on morals; he wants to clean out all the unregistered brothels. The licensed women can go on doing business, because they pay tax.

After my arrest, I was sent to a reformatory where I was taught to work — washing clothes, cooking, knitting. But I already knew how to do all that. If I could have earned a living by any of those methods, I would have quit my own bitter profession long ago.

I told that to the people at the reformatory, but they didn't believe me. They said I was a loafer, immoral. They said that if I not only

learned to work, but also loved to work, I could become self-supporting, or find a husband.

They were very optimistic. I didn't share their confidence. They were very proud of the fact that they had "reformed" about a dozen women and found them husbands. For a two-dollar licence fee and a guarantee from a responsible shop-keeper, any man could come to the reformatory and pick a wife. It was a real bargain — for the man.

To me it was a joke. I flatly refused to be "reformed." When some big official came down to investigate us, I spat in his face. But they wouldn't let me go. I was a dangerous character. Since they couldn't reform me, they sent me to another place. I went to jail.

* * *

Jail is a fine place. It convinces you that there's no hope for mankind. Never in my dreams did I imagine any hole could be so disgusting.

But once I got here, I gave up any idea of ever leaving again. From my own experience, I know that the outside world isn't much of an improvement.

I wouldn't want to die here, if I had any better place to go. But I know what it's like outside. Wherever you die, it's all the same.

Here, in here, I saw my old friend again — the crescent moon. I hadn't seen it for a long time.

I wonder what Mama is doing.

That crescent moon brings everything back.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

CHINESE GHOST AND FAIRY STORIES OF THE THIRD TO THE SIXTH CENTURY

Hsu Chen-ngo

Between the end of the Late Han dynasty (A.D. 220) and the end of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (A.D. 581) China was divided into many kingdoms. There were constant wars and life was very hard for the people, the more so when nomadic races from the north invaded China and brought havoc to the old economy and culture. Then the rulers were extravagant and despotic, political life was corrupt, and the people were ground down. This can be considered the dark age of Chinese history. During such a period it was natural that men should become escapist and pessimistic, and this is why tales about ghosts and the supernatural enjoyed such a vogue.

Even before and during the Han dynasty there were books about supernatural wonders, such as the *Book of Mountains and Seas* and the *Story of King Mu*. The first was a record of strange things, including many early myths and legends, briefly and unsystematically related. The second was a legendary account of how King Mu of the Chou dynasty crossed the northern deserts, ascended the Kunlun Mountains and met the Queen Mother of the West. From the third to the sixth century there was a development of both traditions: there were records of strange things in distant lands reminiscent of the *Book of Mountains and Seas*, and accounts of miraculous occurrences similar to the *Story of King Mu*. Such tales were often used by shamans to deceive both rulers and ruled.

The literati of that period were also much addicted to the study of alchemy and the search for elixirs of life. Thus Chi Kang, a famous scholar of the third century, wrote an essay on prolonging life, while Keh Hung, a later scholar, wrote of many instances of success in alchemy. Indeed a whole section in the *Late Han History* by Fan Yeh is devoted to alchemists and their arts, which were evidently widely practised. This introduced a new note into the tales of the time, and anecdotes about elixirs and men who became winged immortals make these somewhat different from the earlier stories about distant lands and deities.

Another new influence was Buddhism. After its coming to China during the Han dynasty, Buddhism soon became popular. Scholars studied

Buddhist canons, and many people observed fasts and accepted the Buddhist faith. Belief in transmigration and retribution was also very prevalent; so some tales described miracles or piety rewarded, while others were actually written by Buddhists to propagate their faith. Wang Yen's *Occurrences in the Dark* belongs to this category.

A number of the literati believed in ghosts and spirits, and recorded all tales about them as the truth. Liu Yi-ching's *Records of Light and Dark* was a collection of this kind.

While discussing the origin of these tales of the supernatural, we should not forget their relationship to the life of that period. As already seen, from the end of the Han dynasty to the end of the Northern and Southern Dynasties the people of China were dissatisfied and dreaming of a better future. They resented the injustice under which they groaned. Hence the interest of these stories lies not only in their strangeness and romantic flavour, but also in the fact that they reflect the hopes and fears of that age. Although most of them were written by scholars belonging to the upper classes, they were generally based on folk tales. So they give a fairly faithful picture of their times, and sometimes express the feelings of the people. This was not their writers' intention, yet such was the case.

Some tales are clearly imbued with the spirit of revolt against tyranny. Two examples are *The Sword-Maker,* which describes how the sword-maker's son gave his life to avenge his father, and *Han Ping and His Wife* which relates how nobly Han's wife resisted the lure of wealth and luxury and would not yield to force. *The Merchant's Revenge* voices a strong protest against despotic rulers. Other tales raised other social problems of the time; for instance *Iron Mortar* shows how a ghost took revenge on the stepmother who had caused his death, and *The King of Wu's Daughter* is about a girl who died of a broken heart because she could not marry the man she loved. Thus problems inherent in the Chinese family system for the last two thousand years find expression in these ghost stories. Other tales like *The Powder Girl* and *The Lovelorn Spirit* have no clear message, but contain similar problems. The first is about a happy lover who died of rapture, the second about a girl whose spirit sought out her lover. At first sight these seem devoid of social significance, yet the high number of such stories in later dramas and romances show that they were produced by certain social conditions. In feudal society, as there was no free contact between men and women and no free choice in marriage, the people's natural desires were constantly thwarted. In their frustration they spun romantic tales which actually had their basis in real life.

So although the stories of this period are for the most part ghost stories or fairy tales, and the life they describe is usually that of the ruling

class, in many of them we can detect some real social significance, and to a certain extent they express the true feelings of the people.

Among them are folk tales still popular today. The hidden treasures in *The Haunted House,* for instance, and the snail maiden in *The Lady of the White Stream* are today the subject of stories which have more highly developed incidents but on the whole retain the original plots. Other tales have been expanded by later writers into famous works of literature. Thus *The Cedar Pillow* grew into the Tang dynasty romance *The Governor of the Southern Tributary State* and the Ming drama by the same name. *Han Ping and His Wife* later became the subject of a popular ballad discovered in the Tunhuang caves. *The Sword-Maker* was used by Lu Hsun in his story "Forging the Sword"* in *Old Tales Retold.* These are some of the best-known examples.

The tales of this early period bear little relationship to modern short stories, being slight anecdotes without complex plots or detailed descriptions. We must not underestimate their literary merits, however.

Though their characters are mostly fairies or ghosts, they appear most authentic and human, and talk and act like ordinary folk with genuine feelings. Thus *The King of Wu's Daughter* and *The Tientai Mountain Stream* are just as moving as human stories like *The Powder Girl.* Sometimes the writers use very simple language to create atmosphere and give the reader a sense of reality. In *The Tientai Mountain Stream* we read that after Liu Chen and Yuan Chao met the fairies, "They stayed on for six months. Then it was spring when the burgeoning flowers and trees and the chirping birds made them long for home." These simple touches make the reader feel that the events described must have taken place in our own world. Again in *The Dog as Go-Between,* although Huang Yuan is led by a dog to the girl whom he marries and their match is ascribed to fate, the narration is most convincing. This story ends: "And each year at the appointed time he caught a glimpse of her carriage gliding through the air." Only then does the atmosphere change, leaving us with a sense of mystery and wonder. These are merely a few examples of the skilful touches which repay careful attention.

The themes of some of the best of these stories are extremely well handled. Since these tales are all very short, the writer had to seize on essentials and emphasize them. Though *The Sword-Maker* and *Han Ping and His Wife* are only a few hundred words in length, the plots are not too simple, yet they are related with the utmost conciseness, the incidents are well-integrated, and they unfold quite naturally. So the impact is no less than in longer works. This is because the writers could grasp essentials and also laid stress on revealing the characters' feelings to increase the dramatic effect. For instance, in *The Serpent Sacrifice* the heroine's

*See *Chinese Literature,* No. 1, 1954.

courage is vividly portrayed, while in *Iron Mortar* a song expresses the dead boy's wretchedness. These touches reveal a high degree of art.

The ideas and plots of these stories have been absorbed into many poems, tales and dramas during the last thousand-odd years, and become an integral part of Chinese literature. They are also the source of many literary allusions, for subsequent writers frequently quoted phrases from them. Therefore a knowledge of these tales of the third to the sixth century helps us to understand and appreciate later Chinese writing.

A SELECTION OF EARLY GHOST AND FAIRY STORIES

The first three stories are from Tales of Marvels (列異傳), *attributed to Tsao Pi, Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty (186-226), who was a good scholar and a lover of literature. Most of the stories in this collection, however, were added by others during the Wei and the Tsin dynasties.*

The Haunted House

Chang Fen was a rich man of the principality of Wei. Suddenly falling into a decline, he sold his house to the Cheng family of Liyang. But after moving in, one after another they started falling ill and dying, so they in turn sold it to Ho Wen of Yeh.

One evening Ho sat with drawn sword on the beam in the main hall facing south. At the second watch,* he saw a man over ten feet high in a tall hat and yellow garment come in.

"Slender Waist!" called this apparition. "Why do I smell a live man here?"

"There is no one," came the answer.

Then another in a tall hat and green came in, and after him another in a tall hat and white. Both asked the same question and received the same answer.

When it was nearly dawn, Ho came down and, addressing "Slender Waist" as they had, asked:

"Who is the one in yellow?"

"Gold," came the answer. "Under the west wall of the hall."

"Who is the one in green?"

"Copper, five paces from the well in front of the hall."

"Who is the one in white?"

"Silver, beneath the pillar in the north-east corner."

"And who are you?"

"I am a pestle under the stove."

*About ten o'clock in the evening.

At daybreak Ho dug as indicated, and found five hundred catties of gold, five hundred of silver, and more than ten million copper coins. When he burned the pestle the house ceased to be haunted.

The Man Who Sold a Ghost

When Tsung Ting-pai of Nanyang was young, he met a ghost one night as he was walking.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"A ghost, sir. Who are you?"

"A ghost like yourself," lied Tsung.

"Where are you going?"

"To the city."

"So am I."

So they went on together for a mile or so.

"Walking is most exhausting. Why not carry each other in turn?" suggested the ghost.

"A good idea," agreed Tsung.

First the ghost carried him for some distance.

"How heavy you are!" said the ghost. "Are you really a spectre?"

"I am a new ghost," answered Tsung. "That is why I am heavier than usual."

Then he carried the ghost, who was no weight at all. And so they went on, changing several times.

"As I am a new ghost," said Tsung presently, "I don't know what we spectres are most afraid of."

"Only human spittle," replied the ghost.

They went on together till they came to a stream, and Tsung told the ghost to cross first, which he did without a sound. But when Tsung crossed he made quite a splash.

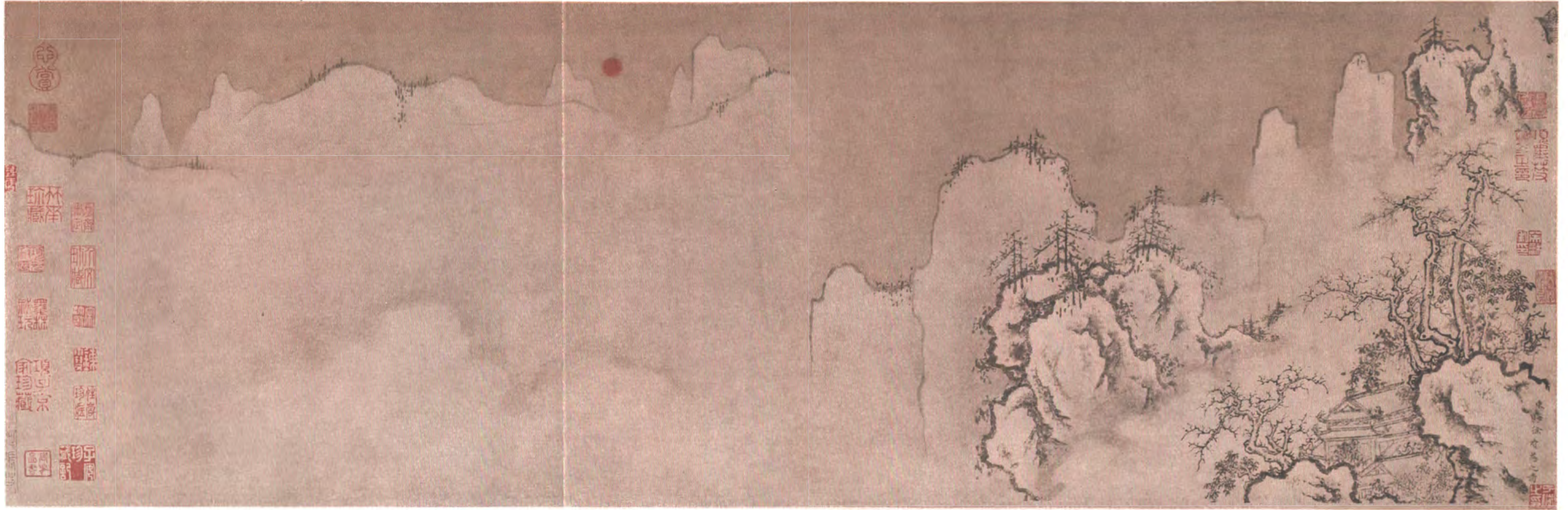
"Why do you make a noise?" inquired the ghost.

"I only died recently," replied Tsung. "I am not used to fording streams. You must excuse me."

As they approached the city, Tsung threw the ghost over his shoulder and held him tight. The ghost gave a screech and begged to be put down, but Tsung would not listen and headed straight for the market. When he put the ghost down it had turned into a goat, and he promptly sold it. But first he spat at it, to prevent its changing its form again. Then he left, the richer by one thousand five hundred coins.

So the saying spread:

Tsung Ting-pai did better than most—
Made money by selling a ghost.



Sunshine After Snow (29.8 cm. × 90.5 cm.) BY HSU PEN (Yuan dynasty, 1277-1368)

The Prince of Suiyang's Daughter

A scholar named Tan was still unmarried at forty, which distressed him deeply. One night he was studying the *Book of Songs* at midnight when a girl of about sixteen came in. Her beauty and splendour had no equal on earth, and she offered to be his wife. She warned him, though:

"I am no ordinary woman, so for three years you must not look at me by torchlight."

They married and had a son, and when the boy was two years old, Tan could contain his curiosity no longer. While his wife lay asleep he stealthily held a torch over her. From the waist up she was flesh like anyone else, but from the waist down she was nothing but dry bones! Just then his wife woke up.

"You have wronged me, husband!" she cried. "I was soon to have become a mortal woman. Why couldn't you wait for one more year instead of holding that torch over me?"

Tan made abject apologies.

"Now we must part for ever," she said in tears. "You must take good care of my son. If you are too poor to support yourself, come with me now and I shall give you a present."

He followed her into a splendid hall—a rare building richly furnished—where she gave him a robe made of pearls.

"You can live on this," she told him.

And she tore a strip from his gown to leave there.

Later Tan sold the robe to the prince of Suiyang for ten million coins. As soon as the prince set eyes on it, he said:

"That was my daughter's robe. This fellow must be a grave-robber."

He had Tan tried, and refused to believe him when Tan described what had happened. But upon going to inspect the grave, they found it unbroken. And when they opened it, under the coffin lid they discovered the strip of Tan's garment. They perceived that his son resembled the princess too. So at last the prince was convinced. Summoning Tan, he returned him the robe and made him his son-in-law, while the child was recommended for post in the palace guard.

* * *

The following seven tales are from the Records of Spirits (搜神記), *attributed to Kan Pao of the Tsin dynasty (280-316). The preface says that these stories were collected to prove the existence of spirits. This book has preserved many lovely and interesting tales from early times.*

The Jade Maiden

Hsuan Chao was secretary in the provincial government of Chipei. During the Chiaping period* of the Wei dynasty, he was sleeping alone one night when he dreamed that a goddess had come to him.

"I am a jade maiden from Heaven," she said, "a native of Tungchun named Cheng-kung. I lost my parents when I was a child, and the Heavenly Emperor, pitying my loneliness, has sent me to be your wife."

This dream was extremely vivid, and Hsuan marvelled at her more than mortal beauty. When he awoke he longed for her as if she were close at hand. So three or four nights passed.

Then one day she came to visit him in person, riding in a curtained carriage with eight maids in attendance dressed in embroidered silks, as lovely as winged fairies. She told him she was seventy, but she looked like a girl of sixteen. In her carriage were a wine-pot and dishes, five pieces of pale green glassware. The food and wine were exquisite, and as she shared them with Hsuan she said to him:

"I am a jade maiden from Heaven, sent to marry you. That is why I am here. It is not to repay former kindness, but because we were destined to be husband and wife. I cannot help you, but neither will I harm you. You can ride with me in swift carriages or on good steeds, you can share with me food and drink from distant lands, and always have clothes to wear. Since I am immortal I cannot bear you a son, but I will not be jealous of other women, and you can still marry according to the custom."

Thus they lived as husband and wife, and she presented him with a poem which began as follows:

Drifting high above fairy isles,
I wander over rocks and clouds;
The sacred herb grows without nourishment,
And its great virtue lasts to eternity.
Immortals do not descend to earth for nothing,
But to help men according to fate;
Accepting me will make your family prosper,
Offending me will get you into trouble. . . .

So the poem went on, but since it came to more than two hundred words we will not quote it all. She also made notes on the *Book of Change*,** attaching explanations to the hexagrams and sayings. These commentaries were logically reasoned and could also be used for divination, like Yang Hsiung's *Tai Hsuan* or Hsueh's *Chung Ching*. Hsuan could understand all her notes, and used them as oracles to divine the future.

*A.D. 249-253.
**An ancient classic containing oracles of the Chou dynasty.

When they had been married for seven or eight years, Hsuan's parents found him a wife. Then the jade maiden came to feast and sleep with him on certain days, coming in the night and leaving in the morning as swiftly as if on wings. Only Hsuan could see her. When he was alone people could hear talking, and her presence was felt though no one could actually see her. Later inquisitive friends questioned him, and the secret leaked out. Then the jade maiden took her leave of him.

"I am an immortal," she said. "I do not like others to know that I come to you. Now that you have been so careless and my secret is revealed, I shall not come back again. We have loved each other for many years, and now that we have to part, how can I help feeling sad? But what must be must be, so take good care of yourself!"

She bade her attendants bring wine and food, and took from a basket two sets of silk garments for him. She also gave him a poem. Then after a last embrace they wept and parted. She mounted her carriage silently and left swiftly as the wind. For days Hsuan pined for her and nearly fell ill.

Five years later, official business took Hsuan to Loyang. He was travelling west at the foot of Yu Mountain when he saw at a bend in the road a carriage with horses which looked like hers. When the carriage drew near, he found it indeed belonged to the jade maiden. She parted the curtains and they greeted each other with mingled joy and sorrow. Then she turned back and rode with him to Loyang, where they lived together again and renewed their love. They were still together by the Taikang period* of the Tsin dynasty, but she did not come every day. Only on the third of the third month, the fifth of the fifth month, the seventh of the seventh month, the ninth of the ninth month, and the first and fifteenth of the tenth month would she come to stay for the night and leave the next morning. Inspired by this story, the scholar Chang Hua** wrote a poem called *The Fairy Maid*.

Han Ping and His Wife

Han Ping, steward to Prince Kang of Sung, married a beautiful daughter of the Ho family. But the prince took her from him. When he protested, he was imprisoned and sentenced to hard labour on the city wall. Then his wife secretly wrote to him to say:

Rain, ceaseless rain,
Great the river, deep the water,
Yet there is sunrise in my heart.

*A.D. 280-289.
**A well-known scholar of the Tsin dynasty. This poem is lost.

This letter fell into the hands of the prince, who showed it to his followers, but no one could make out its meaning. Then the minister Su Ho said:

"The first line means that she is longing for him all the time, the second that they have no way of getting in touch, the third that she intends to take her life."

Then Han Ping killed himself.

His wife secretly tore her clothes. When the prince went up the tower with her, she threw herself from the top; and when his followers tried to seize her, her clothes tore away and she was dashed to death. On her belt she had left this message:

"Your Highness wished me to live, but your servant chose to die. Please bury me with Han Ping."

The prince was angry and refused her request, ordering the local people to bury her in a separate grave.

"You speak of your endless love," said the prince. "If you can make these tombs come together, I will not stand in your way."

Then within one day two great catalpa trees sprang up above the two graves. In ten days they grew to an enormous size, and their branches inclined towards each other, their roots intertwined together beneath the soil, and their twigs interwound above. And two love birds, one male and one female, stayed on these trees, not departing morning or night. They billed and cooed most plaintively, and uttered heart-rending cries. The people of Sung lamented the lovers' death and gave this tree the name "the tree of love." The southerners say the birds were the spirits of Han Ping and his wife. In Suiyang today there is a town named Han Ping, and people still sing of the lovers.

The Old Man and the Devils

Chin Chu-po of the principality of Langya was sixty. One night after drinking, as he passed Pengshan Temple, he saw his two grandsons coming towards him. They took his arms and helped him along for about a hundred paces, but then seized him by the neck and threw him to the ground.

"Old slave!" they swore. "You beat us up the other day, so today we are going to kill you."

Remembering that he had indeed beaten the boys some days ago, he pretended to be dead, and they left him alone. When he got home he decided to punish them. Shocked and distressed, the lads kowtowed to him.

"How could your own grandsons do such a thing?" they protested. "Those must have been devils. Please make another test."

He realized they were right.

A few days later the old man pretended to be drunk and walked past the temple again. Once more the two devils came to take his arms, and this time he seized them so that they could not escape. Reaching home, he put both devils on the fire, until their backs and bellies were scorched and cracked. He left them in the courtyard, and that night they escaped. Sorry that he had not killed them, about a month later the old man pretended to be drunk and went out at night again, taking a sword, unknown to his family. When he did not come back though it was very late, his grandsons were afraid that the devils might have caught him again, so they went to look for him. And this time the old man hacked his own grandsons to death.

The Serpent Sacrifice

In the province of Minchung in Eastern Yueh, Mount Yungling towers many miles high. In its north-west corner there was a huge serpent seventy to eighty feet long and so thick that it took a dozen men to encircle it. The local people went in terror of it, and many officers of Tungyeh and other adjoining districts were killed by it. Though they sacrificed oxen and sheep, they had no peace. Then someone dreamed — or some oracle predicted—that this serpent wanted to be fed with virgins of twelve or thirteen. The authorities were dismayed, but since the serpent continued to make trouble they began taking local girls to it, especially from the families of criminals. So every eighth month they made a morning sacrifice, setting down the girl at the mouth of the serpent's cave. And the serpent would come out to eat her.

This went on year after year until nine girls had been sacrificed this way. But when the order came down the tenth time, no girl could be found. Li Tan of Chianglo County had six daughters but no son, and his youngest daughter, Chi, offered to go. But her parents would not agree.

"My unhappy parents have six daughters only and no son," said Chi. "So they have no real descendant. We are not like Ti Yung* who was able to help her father. Since we cannot work to support them, but are simply a burden to them and no use at all, the sooner we die the better. Besides, my sale will bring in some money for my parents. Surely that is best!"

Still her parents could not bear to let her go. But in spite of this, Chi left home secretly. Having procured a sharp sword and a dog which could catch snakes, in the morning of the first day of the eighth month she went and sat down in the temple, taking her sword and her dog. She had first poured honey on several large rice cakes, which she put at the mouth of the cave, so presently the serpent came out. Its head was as big as a winnowing fan, its eyes like bronze mirrors two feet in diameter.

*A girl in the Han dynasty who offered to serve as a slave in place of her father.

When it smelt the fragrant cakes and started eating them, Chi loosed her dog which began worrying the monster, while she cut and wounded it in several places from behind. In pain the serpent fled, writhing, but did not get far before it died. Then Chi went into the cave and found the skeletons of the nine girls. She carried them out and said sadly:

"Because you were timid, the serpent ate you, poor things!"

Then she made her way leisurely home.

When the prince of Yueh heard this he made her his queen, appointed her father magistrate of Chianglo, and richly rewarded her mother and her sisters. Since then there have been no more monsters in Tungyeh, and the people have sung her praises to this day.

The Sword-Maker

Because Kanchiang Moya took three years to forge a pair of swords for the king of Chu, the king was angry and decided to kill him. One sword was male, the other female. Kanchiang's wife was about to give birth, and he said to her:

"I have taken three years to make these swords for the king, and he is angry. When I go there he will have me killed. If you give birth to a son, when he grows up tell him that if he goes out and faces the south hill he will see a pine growing on a stone with a sword in its back."

Then he took the female sword to the king. The king was in a rage, for he knew that there were two swords—one male and one female—and the female sword was here but not the male. So in a passion he killed the sword-maker.

Kanchiang's son was named Chih. When he grew up he asked his mother:

"Where is my father?"

"Your father took three years to make a pair of swords for the king of Chu," she told him. "The king was angry and killed him. But before he left home he bade me tell you that if you go out and face the south hill, you will find a pine growing on a stone with a sword in its back."

The son went out and faced south, but he saw no hill. All he saw was a pillar of pine wood on a stone base before the hall. He cut this open with his axe and found the sword. Then day and night he thirsted for revenge.

The king saw in a dream a boy with a brow one foot across who wanted to take revenge on him. He offered a reward of a thousand gold pieces for him. And when Chih heard this he fled lamenting to the mountains. There a stranger accosted him.

"You are young," he said. "Why should you wail so bitterly?"

"I am the son of Kanchiang Moya," replied the lad. "The king of Chu killed my father, and I want revenge."

"I hear the king has offered a reward of a thousand gold pieces for your head," said the stranger. "Give me your head and your sword, and I will avenge you."

"Very well," agreed the boy.

Then he killed himself and, standing upright, presented his head and the sword with both hands to the stranger.

"I shall not let you down," said the stranger.

Then the boy's body fell.

The stranger took the head to the king, who was very pleased.

"This is the head of a brave man," said the stranger. "You should boil it in a seething cauldron."

The king did as he said. But even after three days and three nights the head would not melt away. It leapt out of the boiling water and glared in anger.

"This boy's head will not melt away," said the stranger, "unless Your Majesty comes to look at it."

Then the king walked up, the stranger struck him with the sword, and the king's head fell into the boiling water. The stranger then cut off his own head, which fell into the water too, and all three heads melted and intermingled. So the flesh and the soup were divided into three portions, and buried in a place called the Grave of the Three Kings. This grave is in the county of Peiyichun in the principality of Junan.

The King of Wu's Daughter

Fu Chai, the king of Wu, had a gifted and beautiful daughter of eighteen named Yu. She was in love with a learned youth of nineteen named Han Chung. They exchanged secret messages and she promised to marry him. When Han went to study in the north, he asked his parents to arrange the marriage for him. But the king was angry and refused. Then the princess died of a broken heart and was buried outside the west gate.

Three years later Han returned and questioned his parents.

"The king was very angry and the princess died of a broken heart," they told him. "Now she is in her grave."

At that Han wept bitterly and prepared a sacrifice to mourn for her. Then the princess appeared from her grave and shedding tears said:

"After you left you asked your parents to approach my father, and we thought our wish would surely come true, but fate was against us — alas!"

With a sidelong glance, she hung her head and sang:

Crows were on the southern hill,
Nets upon the north were spread;
But the nets were set in vain,

Far away the birds have fled.
Fain would I have followed you,
But detractors barred the way.
Falling ill of grief, I died;
Under yellow earth I lay.
This was my unhappy fate,
Doomed to weep day after day.
Phoenix is the chief and queen
Which each feathered fowl reveres;
Phoenix, when it lost its mate,
Wept and mourned for three whole years.
Phoenix could not find a mate
Though bright songsters filled the skies,
So despite my humble looks,
I appear before your eyes;
And, though torn so far apart,
Still you keep me in your heart!

After this song she wept and cried, unable to control her grief, and begged Han to accompany her into the grave.

"The dead and the living must go different ways," said Han. "I fear this would not be proper. I had better not."

"I know the dead and the living go different ways," she replied. "But once we part we shall never meet again. Are you afraid that because I am a ghost I will harm you? I am asking you in all sincerity—why don't you trust me?"

Touched by her words, Han saw her back. In the grave they feasted for three days and three nights, and completed the rites of marriage. When he was leaving she gave him a pearl one inch across.

"My reputation was spoilt and my wish never came true," she sighed. "What more is there to say? Take good care of yourself, and if you pass our house give my regards to the king."

When Han left the grave he went to the king and told him what had happened. Fu Chai flew into a rage.

"My daughter is dead!" he exclaimed. "This fellow is lying to dishonour the dead! He is simply a grave-robber who has stolen this pearl and trumped up this story of a ghost. Arrest him at once!"

But the young man escaped and went back to the grave where he told the princess what had happened.

"Don't worry," she said. "I shall go to speak to the king."

Then she went to see her father, who was dressing. At the sight of her he was overcome with joy, sorrow and surprise.

"What has brought you back to life?" he demanded.

"When the young scholar Han Chung asked for my hand, you refused him," she replied, kneeling. "I had lost my good name and broken

my word, so I died. Recently he came back from far away, and hearing that I was dead prepared a sacrifice to mourn at my grave. I was so touched by his loyalty that I appeared to him and gave him that pearl. He is no grave-robber. Please do not punish him."

When the queen heard this she came out to embrace her child, and the princess vanished like a wisp of smoke.

Married to a Ghost

Lu Chung was a native of the principality of Fanyang. Thirty *li* to the west of his house was the graveyard of the Tsui family, one of whom had held office as imperial custodian. The day before the winter solstice when Lu was twenty, he went out in a westerly direction to hunt. He sighted a deer and struck it with an arrow so that it fell, but it struggled up again. Then Lu gave chase and pursued it for a long way. Suddenly, a few hundred yards ahead of him to the north, he saw a large, tiled mansion like a government office. The deer had disappeared. The guard at the gate called out at his approach.

"Whose house is this?" asked Lu.

"The house of the imperial custodian."

"I am too shabby to call on him," said Lu.

Then someone came out with an armful of new clothes.

"Our master presents you with these," he announced.

Thereupon Lu changed his clothes and went in to see the imperial custodian, to whom he introduced himself. After they had drunk and eaten several courses, his host said to Lu:

"Your father recently honoured our humble house by sending a letter to ask for my daughter's hand for you. This is why I invited you in."

He showed Lu the letter. And though Lu had been a child when his father died, he could recognize the writing. With tears he consented. Then the imperial custodian sent a message to the inner chambers that Lu Chung had arrived and his daughter should dress for her wedding. He bade Lu go to the east chamber. By dusk word came from within that the girl was ready. When Lu entered the east chamber, she had alighted from her carriage. They stood on the carpet and bowed together, after which Lu stayed the customary three days. Then Tsui said to him:

"You may go home now. I fancy my daughter has conceived. If she gives birth to a son, rest assured we will send him to you. If to a daughter, we will keep her ourselves."

He ordered his men to harness the carriage for Lu, who took his leave and went out. The imperial custodian saw him to the middle gate where they took hands and shed tears. Outside the gate, Lu saw a cart drawn by oxen with a driver in blue, and found the clothes he had worn before and his bow and arrows. Then a man was sent out with a suit

of clothes, which he gave to Lu with this message from his master: "We have just become related by marriage, and are very sorry that you are leaving so soon. Please accept this suit of clothes and set of bedding."

Lu mounted the cart which travelled as swiftly as lightning, and in no time he was home. When his people saw him, they did not know whether to be glad or sorry. Knowing that Tsui was dead and that Lu had been in a grave, they felt rather uneasy.

Four years later, on the third day of the third month, Lu was strolling by the stream when he saw two carts drawn by oxen approach through the water. As they neared the bank, all those who were with him saw them. Lu opened the door at the back of the first cart and found Tsui's daughter with a three-year-old boy. He was overjoyed to see her, and wanted to take her hand. But she raised her hand to point at the cart behind.

"You had better see my father," she said.

So he met the imperial custodian and greeted him. The girl gave the baby to Lu, and presented him with a golden bowl and a poem which read as follows:

Glorious the sacred herb,
So beautiful and bright,
Its splendour appears at the appointed hour,
And it is strange and rare;
But before its blossoming time
The summer frost withers it
And blights its splendour for ever,
So that it is lost to this world.
Who can know the will of Heaven?
Suddenly a wise man comes,
The meeting is short and the departure soon,
For all is ordained by the gods.
What gift can I give my beloved?
The golden bowl is for my son,
And I bid an eternal farewell,
Quite broken-hearted!

As soon as Lu took the child, the bowl and the poem, the two carts disappeared. When he carried the small boy home, everyone feared it must be a ghost and spat at it from a distance, but the child remained unchanged.

"Who is your father?" they asked.

It ran straight into Lu's arms.

At first all were amazed and felt forebodings, but then they read the poem and knew there was much mysterious traffic between the living and the dead.

Later Lu drove a cart to the market to sell the bowl. He asked a very high price, for he did not want to sell it so much as to find someone to identify it. An old woman slave recognized it, and went to tell her mistress:

"In the market I saw a man in a cart selling that bowl which was in Miss Tsui's coffin."

Her mistress was the girl's aunt. She sent her son to look at the bowl, and when he found that what the slave said was true he went to Lu's cart and introduced himself.

"Formerly my aunt married the imperial custodian and had a daughter," he said. "The girl died before her marriage, and my mother in her grief presented a golden bowl to put in the coffin. Can you tell me how you came by this bowl?"

Lu told him the story, and the young man was moved. He took the bowl back to his mother, who asked to see the dead girl's son. All the Tsui clansmen assembled, and when they found that the child looked like one of themselves yet resembled Lu as well, his case was proved.

"My niece was born at the end of the third month," said her aunt. "Her father said, 'The spring is warm and we hope the infant will prosper, so let us name her Wen-hsiu (warm and prosperous).' The name sounded like 'wedded in the grave' — that was surely an omen."

The boy grew into a talented man, and became a provincial governor with a two-thousand-bushel salary. All his descendants to this day have been officials, while one — Lu Chih — became famed throughout the empire.

* * *

This story comes from Records of Ghosts and Spirits (灵 鬼 志) *by a man named Hsun, who probably lived a little later or at about the same time as Kan Pao.*

Chi Kang and the Headless Ghost

Chi Kang was a man of noble character who liked to roam the country. Once travelling south-west of Loyang, he came to a station named Huayang a few dozen *li* from the capital, where he put up for the night. There was no one else there that day — he was all alone. The station stood on an old execution ground, and accidents often happened to those who lodged there, but Chi Kang, who had a clear conscience, was not afraid. At about the first watch* he started strumming his lyre, playing

*Eight or nine in the evening.

several tunes. He was an excellent player, and a voice from the emptiness called: "Bravo!"

Chi Kang stopped playing and asked: "Who are you?"

"I am a dead man," answered the voice. "I have been here for thousands of years. When I heard you playing so sweetly and harmoniously on your lyre, I could not help coming over to listen, as I used to love music too. Unfortunately I was killed unjustly and my body is mutilated, so I am not fit to be seen. But I greatly admire your playing and would like to watch you if you have no objection. Do play some more."

Chi Kang, having played again, beat his lyre with his hand and exclaimed: "It is growing late. Why don't you show yourself? Why should we care about appearances?"

Then the ghost appeared holding its head in its hand.

"After hearing you play, my heart feels light," it said. "I seem to have come to life again."

So they discussed their common interest in music, and the ghost spoke most lucidly and eloquently. Finally it asked Chi Kang: "May I borrow your lyre?"

Then Chi Kang let it play. Some of the tunes it played were common enough, but one piece called *Kuanglin San* was quite superb. Chi Kang learned this from the ghost, memorizing the whole of it within a few hours — a better melody than he had ever learned before. The ghost made him swear not to teach it to others and not to disclose the ghost's name. When dawn was about to break it said to Chi Kang:

"Although we met only this night, we have formed a thousand years' friendship. The long night is over — I must reluctantly leave you!"

* * *

The next two tales are from the Supplement to the Records of Spirits (搜神后記), *a book attributed to Tao Yuan-ming (365-427), the greatest poet before Tu Fu. At that time it was the fashion to write of ghosts and marvels, so it is not impossible that Tao Yuan-ming wrote some of these tales. Many of them, however, were written after his time.*

The Two Hunters

One day Yuan Hsiang and Ken Shuo of Yenhsien in the principality of Kuaichi went out hunting. After crossing many hills and ridges, they saw six or seven wild goats ahead, and gave chase. The goats crossed an

extremely narrow and steep stone bridge, and the hunters followed. Then they scaled a sheer red precipice, which was called the Red Wall Mountain. Water cascaded down it like a length of white cloth, and there was a cave in the mountain like an entrance. Entering this, they found a great plain within, where all the herbs and trees were sweetly scented. They discovered a hut in which two girls of about sixteen stayed. They were very beautiful and wore blue clothes. The name of one was Glistening Pearl, that of the other was. . . . The girls were pleased to see the hunters.

"We have been looking forward to seeing you for a long time," they said.

So they became husbands and wives.

One day the two girls went out.

"One of our friends has found a husband," they said, "and we want to congratulate her."

Their sandals tinkled as they went over the precipice. The two hunters, who were homesick, quietly slipped away; but the girls came back in time to discover them. They agreed to let the men leave, and gave them a pouch which they told them never to open. So the hunters went home.

One day some time after, when they were out, some of their household opened the pouch. It was like a lotus with layer upon layer of petals, and after they reached the fifth layer a small blue bird flew out. When the men came back and learned what had happened, it was too late to regret. After this, as they were out ploughing and their family sent them the noonday meal as usual, they were found lying motionless in the fields. When their relatives went up to look, they found they were only shells — like the skins shed by cicadas.

The Lady of the White Stream

During the reign of Emperor An of the Tsin dynasty there was a young man in the county of Hokuan named Hsieh Tuan, who had lost his parents when a child and had no kinsmen. He was brought up by a neighbour. By the time he was eighteen, Hsieh was a modest, decent fellow who would do nothing unlawful. He had just begun to keep house for himself, but had not yet married. All his neighbours were concerned for him and wanted to find him a wife, but had so far not succeeded.

Every day Hsieh retired late and rose early, working hard in the fields from dawn till dusk. One day near his hamlet he found a large snail as big as a three-pint pot, which he took home as a curiosity and kept in a jar for a couple of weeks. Then each time he went home from the fields he would find hot food and drinks and the fire ready lit. Thinking his

kind neighbour must have done this for him, after a few days he went over to thank him.

"That was not my work," said his neighbour. "You have no call to thank me."

Hsieh thought the good man had not understood him, so after the same thing had happened many times he questioned him again. The neighbour laughed and said:

"I know you have secretly taken a wife, and she is cooking for you. Why say it is my doing?"

Hsieh was quite dumbfounded, and could not understand this. One day he left home at cockcrow but came stealthily back during the morning and peeped through the fence. Then he saw a young girl come out of the jar and start lighting the fire in the kitchen. Upon going in to look for the snail in the jar, he realized it had changed into the girl. He walked into the kitchen.

"Where did you come from, young wife?" he asked. "And why are you cooking for me?"

The girl was most put out and tried to go back into the jar, but could not.

"I am the lady of the White Stream in the Milky Way," she told him. "The Heavenly Emperor took pity on you because you were all alone and lived such a virtuous life, so he told me to keep house for you for a time. In less than ten years you will become rich and find a wife, and then I should have left you. But now that you have surprised me for no reason, and seen my true form, I cannot stay here. I must leave you. You will do better, though, from now on, if you work hard on the land and make extra money by fishing and cutting wood. I shall also leave you this shell. If you use it as a grain container, you will never find it empty."

He entreated her to stay, but she refused. There was a sudden storm and off she flew.

Then Hsieh set up a shrine and sacrificed to this goddess at festivals, and though not very rich he had enough. Later his neighbours found him a wife, and he became a magistrate. The Temple to the White Lady is now at the roadside.

* * *

The next seven tales are from Records of Light and Dark (幽明录), *attributed to Prince Liu Yi-ching (403-444) of the kingdom of Sung, a good scholar who acted as patron to many men of talent.*

The Tientai Mountain Stream

In the fifth year of Yungping* in the reign of Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty, Liu Chen and Yuan Chao of Yenhsien went to Tientai Mountain to collect husks, but lost their way and could not find the road home. After thirteen days their rations were exhausted and they were dying of hunger, when they saw in the distance on the mountain a peach tree laden with fruit. Though it stood on a precipice over a fearful chasm and there was no path, they pulled themselves up by the creepers till they reached the top. After eating several peaches, their hunger abated and their strength returned. Coming down again, they filled their cups with water and were about to wash when they saw some fresh turnip leaves floating down from the gully. Then a wooden cup floated out with cooked sesame in it.

"There must be men living near by," they said.

So they swam upstream for two or three *li*, until they passed the mountain and came to a large stream.

By the stream were two divinely beautiful girls. They smiled when they saw the men coming with the cup.

"Mr. Liu and Mr. Yuan have brought back our lost cup," they said.

Liu and Yuan had never met these girls before, but since the latter called them by their names as if they were old friends, they greeted them cheerfully in return.

"Why have you been so long?" asked the girls.

They invited the two men to their home, which was a house with bamboo tiles. By the south and east walls stood two great couches hung with red silk curtains, and the curtains had bells attached to each corner and were woven with gold and silver. Waiting by each couch were some dozen maid-servants, to whom the girls gave this order:

"Mr. Liu and Mr. Yuan have been travelling in the hills. Though they had peaches to eat, they are still exhausted. Prepare a meal as quickly as you can."

Then they had cooked sesame, cured goat meat and beef, all of which tasted delicious. Wine was served after the food. Then a number of girls came in, each carrying several peaches.

"Congratulations on the bridegrooms' arrival!" they said, laughing.

During the drinking, music was performed. Liu and Yuan were both frightened and pleased. At dusk they were led to the couches, and the two girls came to them. Their sweet, tender voices made the men forget their sorrow.

After ten days when they wished to go home, the girls said: "It was your good fortune to come here. Why should you want to leave?"

*A.D. 62.

So they stayed on for six months. Then it was spring when the burgeoning flowers and trees and the chirping birds made them long for home, so they begged to be allowed to go.

"Your sins are drawing you away," said the girls. "What can we do?"

They summoned the other girls, thirty or forty in all, and after a feast with music they saw the two men off, showing them their homeward way.

When Liu and Yuan reached home, they found all their kinsmen and friends had died, the houses looked changed, and there was no one they knew. By dint of inquiries they found a descendant seven generations after them, who said that he had heard they had lost their way in the mountains and never returned.

In the eighth year of Taiyuan* of the Tsin dynasty, they left again and no one knows where they went.

The Dog as Go-Between

During the Han dynasty, Huang Yuan of the principality of Taishan was opening his gate one morning when he saw a black dog sitting outside keeping watch, as if it belonged to the house. Huang fastened a string to the dog and took it out on a hunt with some neighbouring lads. When evening approached and he saw a deer, he let loose the dog, which ran so fast that try as he might he could not catch up with it. After following it for several *li*, he reached a mountain cave. He went in and about a hundred yards further on came to a highway flanked with ash and willow trees, with walls on either side. Then Huang followed the dog through a gate. He found several dozen rooms within, filled with beautiful girls who were splendidly attired, strumming lyres, plucking harps, or playing draughts.

When he reached the north pavilion, he found three rooms with two maids in attendance. Upon seeing Huang, they looked at each other and smiled.

"This is the husband the dog has brought for Miao-yin," they said.

One maid stayed there while the other went inside. Soon four maids came out and announced that Madame Taicheng had this proposal for Mr. Huang:

"I have a daughter who has reached the marriageable age of fifteen, and fate has destined her to be your wife."

When night fell Huang was led inside to a hall facing south, with a lake in front of it. There was a pavilion in the lake, with entrances at the four corners. It was brightly lit and had curtains and couch inside. Miao-yin was a ravishing beauty, and her maids were pretty girls too.

*A.D. 383.

After the wedding was over, they feasted and went to bed. A few days later Huang wanted to go home, to announce his marriage to his family.

"Mortal and immortal are different," said Miao-yin. "We cannot stay long together after all."

The next day she took off her jade pendant as a parting gift for him, and shed tears by the steps.

"We cannot remain together," she said, "but my love for you is deep. Think of me on the first of each third month, and fast and purify yourself on that day."

The four maids saw Huang out, and in half a day he reached home. He longed for his fairy wife, and each year at the appointed time he caught a glimpse of her carriage gliding through the air.

The Powder Girl

A very rich family had an only son, to whom they were devoted. At the market one day he saw a beautiful girl selling powder made of white lead. He fell in love with her, but with no one to introduce him he had to make buying powder his pretext to go there. He went to her stall every day, and left without a word after making his purchase. After some time the girl became suspicious. Next time he turned up she asked him:

"What do you need all that powder for?"

He told her that he loved her but had not dared introduce himself, that because he longed to see her he had used this pretext. The girl was very touched, and they agreed to meet the next evening.

That night the young man lay in his room waiting for her; and at dusk, sure enough, she came. He was in raptures. Embracing her, he said:

"Now my wish is granted!"

Then in his ecstasy he died.

The girl was terrified and did not know what to do. She ran back to the powder shop. When it was time for breakfast, the lad's parents were surprised that he did not appear, and upon going to look they found him dead.

Before burying him they opened his cases and discovered over a hundred packets of powder, large and small, heaped there.

"It must be this powder that killed my son," said his mother.

She went to the market to buy powder from all the shops, and when she reached the girl's stall she found the same packaging. Then she laid hold of her and said:

"Why did you kill my son?"

At this the girl burst out crying and told the truth. The young man's parents did not believe her, though, and haled her to the court to accuse her of murder.

"I am not afraid to die," she said, "but let me see him once more and mourn over him."

The magistrate agreed.

She clasped the lad's body and wept bitterly.

"Alas that we should come to this!" she sighed. "But if there is a spirit after death, I shall die content."

All of a sudden the young man came back to life, and told what had passed. They became husband and wife and had many descendants.

The Magistrate and the Local Deity

Chen Chung, a native of Chungshan, was appointed magistrate of Yuntu. On his way to his post he had to pass the county of Hueihuai, where he was informed that the son of the local deity wished to call on him. Soon the deity's son arrived, young and handsome. They exchanged the usual courtesies.

"My father sent me here," said the young god, "because he wants to be allied to your noble house, and hopes you will take my younger sister in marriage. I have come to bring you this message."

"I am past my prime and have a wife already." Chen was taken aback. "How can I do such a thing?"

"My sister is young and remarkably beautiful. We must find a good match for her. How can you refuse?"

"I am an old man and I have a wife. It would not be right."

They argued back and forth several times, but Chen was adamant. The young god looked annoyed.

"Then my father will come himself," he said. "I doubt if you can refuse him."

He left, followed by a large retinue of attendants with caps and whips on both banks of the river.

Soon the local deity arrived in person with an equipage like a baron's. His carriage had a dark green canopy and red reins, and was escorted by several chariots. His daughter rode in an open carriage with several dozen silk pennants and eight maids before it, dressed in embroidered gowns more splendid than mortal eye has ever seen. They pitched a tent on the bank near Chen and spread a carpet, after which the local deity alighted and sat by the low table on a white woollen rug. He had a jade spittoon, a handkerchief box of tortoise-shell and a white fly-whisk. His daughter remained on the east bank, with eunuchs carrying whisks at her side and maids in front. The local deity then ordered his assistant officers — some sixty of them — to sit before him, and called for music. The instruments they used seemed to be of glass.

"I have a humble daughter dear to my heart," said the god. "Since you come of a virtuous and renowned family, we are eager to be connected with you by marriage. That is why I sent my son with this request."

"I am old and decrepit," replied Chen Chung. "I already have a wife and my son is quite big. So although I am tempted by this proffered honour, I must beg to decline."

"My daughter is twenty," continued the deity. "She is beautiful and gentle, and possessed of all the virtues. As she is now on the bank, there is no need for any preparation: the wedding can take place at once."

Chen Chung stood out stubbornly, calling the god an evil spirit. He drew his sword and laid it on his knees, determined to resist to the death, and refused to discuss the matter any further. The local deity flew into a passion. He summoned three leopards and two tigers, which opened their red mouths wide and shook the earth with their roars as they leapt at Chen. They attacked several dozen times, but Chen held them at bay till dawn when the god withdrew, thwarted. He left behind one carriage and several dozen men to wait for Chen, however. Then Chen moved into the Hueihuai County office. The waiting carriage and men followed him in, and a man in plain dress and cap bowed to him and advised him to stay there and not go any further.

Chen Chung did not dare leave until after ten days. Even then a man in a cap with a whip still followed him home. And he had not been home many days before his wife contracted an illness and died.

The Lovelorn Spirit

Pang Ngo of the principality of Chulu was a very handsome man. A daughter of the Shih family in that district fell in love with him at first sight, and when later she was seen calling on him his wife grew extremely jealous. One day, hearing the girl coming, she bade her maids tie her up and take her home; but on the way the young lady vanished like smoke. When the maids reported this to her family, the girl's father was astounded.

"My daughter has not left the house," he said. "How dare you slander us like this?"

But Pang's father watched his son carefully, and discovered the girl in his study one night. He seized her himself and went to the Shih family. When the girl's father saw her, he was amazed.

"I have just come from the inner rooms," he said. "I saw my daughter there working with her mother. How can she be here?"

He told his servants to call his daughter out, and the moment the real girl appeared the other vanished. The puzzled father told his wife to investigate, and the girl explained that after peeping at Pang Ngo once

when he was in their hall she had dreamed ever since of going to his home, and had been caught by his wife when she went in.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed her father. "When a spirit is deeply moved, it can assume any form it chooses. So what vanished was your spirit after all!"

The girl resolved not to marry anyone else. A year later, however, Pang's wife contracted a strange disease which proved incurable. Then Pang sent betrothal gifts to the Shih family and married their daughter.

The Cedar Pillow

The priest of Chiaohu Temple had a cedar pillow, which was in his possession for more than thirty years and had a small crack at the back. When Tang Lin of this county was travelling on business, he passed the temple and prayed for good fortune there. The priest asked if he was married, and told him to go into the hole in the pillow. He did so, and found vermilion gates, marble palaces and towers, more magnificent than any to be seen on earth. There he met Marshal Chao who found him a wife, by whom he had six children — four boys and two girls. Then he was recommended for the post of imperial librarian and promoted to the rank of imperial secretary. So he lived in the pillow with no thought of his home, until at last things went ill for him. Then the priest called him out, and he emerged. Though many years had passed within the pillow, only a short time had elapsed outside.

The New Ghost

A new ghost, who was very thin and haggard, came across an old friend of his dead for about twenty years, who looked fat and sleek. They greeted each other.

"How are you?" asked his friend.

"I am so hungry I cannot stand it," he said. "You must know all the tricks. Please tell me what to do."

"That's easy," said his friend. "So long as you work wonders men will be frightened, then they will give you food."

The new ghost went to the east side of the village, where he found a family of zealous Buddhists. There was a mill to the west of the house, and the ghost started turning this mill as if he were a man. Then the master of the house said to his children:

"Buddha has taken pity on our poverty and sent this ghost to turn the mill for us."

He brought up cartloads of wheat, until by night the ghost had ground dozens of bushels and had to leave, exhausted.

"You cheated me!" he swore at his friend.

"Try again," said his friend. "You'll get food."

Then he went to the west side of the village to a family of zealous Taoists. There was a mortar by the gate, and the ghost started pounding the pestle as if he were a man.

"Yesterday this ghost went to help so-and-so," said the householder. "Today it has come to help me. Let us carry grain to it."

He bade the maids winnow the grain, and by evening the ghost was worn out but still he received no food. When he went back that night he was furious.

"We are relatives by marriage, not ordinary friends," he accused the other ghost. "Why should you cheat me? I have helped men for two whole days but not got one bowl of food."

"You have just been unlucky," replied his friend. "It is hard to make an impression on Buddhists and Taoists. If you go and work wonders in ordinary families, you are bound to be given food."

Then the new ghost went to a house which had a bamboo pole at the gate. Going in, he saw women eating by the window. There was a white dog in the courtyard, and the ghost picked it up so that it seemed to be walking in the air. When the family saw this they were amazed, and said they had never seen such a wonder before. They consulted a fortune-teller.

"You have a hungry visitor," he told them. "If you kill the dog and put it with sweetmeats, wine and rice in the courtyard as a sacrifice, all will be well."

They did this, and the ghost made a hearty meal. After that it always took its friend's advice, and went on working wonders.

* * *

The two following stories are from the Supplement to the Tales of Chi (續齐諧記) *by Wu Chun (469-520) of the kingdom of Liang. Wu Chun was a good scholar, but all his other works have been lost.*

The Scholar by the Roadside

When Hsu Yen of Yanghsien was travelling in the hills of Suian, he came across a scholar of about seventeen or eighteen. The young man, who was lying by the roadside, said that his feet ached and asked for a lift in the goose cage which Hsu was carrying. Hsu thought he was joking. But the scholar got into the cage, which looked no larger than before while the scholar looked no smaller. He sat down quietly beside the two

geese, and they did not seem to mind him. Hsu carried the cage again, but did not find it any heavier.

Further on, when he stopped to rest under a tree, the scholar came out of the cage and offered to treat him to a meal. Hsu accepted with pleasure, and the scholar took from his mouth a copper tray laid with all manner of delicacies. The utensils were of copper, and the food had a rare taste and fragrance. After several cups of wine, the scholar said to Hsu:

"I have a girl with me. May I ask her to join us?"

"Certainly," replied Hsu.

Then from his mouth the scholar produced a girl of fifteen or sixteen, richly dressed and of surpassing beauty. She sat down and feasted with them. Presently the scholar was tipsy and went to lie down.

"Though I have married this man," said the girl to Hsu, "I really hate him. I have brought another man with me. Now that my husband is asleep, I shall call him out. Please don't say anything."

"Certainly not," agreed Hsu.

Then the girl produced from her mouth another young man of twenty-three or four, who looked intelligent and charming, and who began chatting with Hsu. Just then the scholar started to wake up, and the girl took a silk screen from her mouth to hide the new man. The scholar made the girl join him.

The newcomer then told Hsu: "Though that girl is fond of me, I don't care for her. I have brought another girl with me, and would like to see her now. Please don't let them know."

"Very well," agreed Hsu.

Then the second man took from his mouth a girl of twenty or thereabouts. They feasted and amused themselves for some time, till they heard the scholar stirring.

"Those two are getting up," said the second man.

Then he put the girl back into his mouth.

The first girl returned and told Hsu: "The scholar is getting up."

She swallowed her friend, and sat alone with Hsu.

Then the scholar came out and told him: "I am sorry I slept so long. You must have been bored sitting all by yourself. It is getting late now, so I will say good-bye."

At that he swallowed the girl as well as the utensils, leaving only the big copper tray for Hsu. This tray was some two feet across, and in parting the scholar said:

"I have nothing worth giving, but keep this as a souvenir."

During the Taiyuan period* Hsu was an adviser of the Imperial Library and showed the tray to Minister Chang San, who discovered from the inscription that it was made in the third year of Yungping.**

*A.D. 376-396.
**A.D. 60.

The Fairy of Chinghsi Temple

When Chao Wen-shao of Kuaichi was the crown prince's steward, he lived near Central Bridge at Chinghsi, in the next alley to Minister Wang Shu-ching's house about two hundred paces away. One autumn night a splendid moon made him feel homesick, and leaning on his gate he sang the sad song *The Crows Fly West*. Then a maid of about sixteen in blue clothes came up to him and said:

"Greetings from my young mistress in the Wang family. She heard you sing while we were playing in the moonlight, and sends her regards to you."

As it was still early and not everyone had gone to bed, Chao was not unduly surprised. He answered politely, and invited the young lady over.

In a short time she came. She seemed eighteen or nineteen, her gait and air were sweet, and she had two maids with her. When Chao asked where she lived, she pointed at the minister's house.

"Over there," she said. "When I heard you sing, I decided to call. Will you sing a song for me?"

Then Chao sang *Grass Grows on the Rock*. He had a clear and melodious voice, and she enjoyed the words too.

"If you have a pitcher," she said, "you need not be afraid of having no water." She turned to her maids and told them: "Go back and fetch my cithern, and I shall play to the gentleman."

Presently the cithern was brought, and she played two or three haunting and plaintive airs. Then she bade her maids sing *Heavy Frost*, loosening her belt to fasten the cithern to her waist and play an accompaniment. The song was this:

Dusk falls, a cold wind blows,
Dead leaves cling to the bough;
Alas, you cannot know
The love my heart holds now!
The curtain of my bed
Is white with heavy frost;
The frost is falling still,
And I alone am lost.

After this song it was late and she spent the night with him, departing at the fourth watch just before dawn, and leaving him her gold hairpin as a keepsake. In return Chao gave her a silver bowl and a white glass spoon.

When day broke Chao went out and happened to pass the temple. Going in to rest by the shrine, he was surprised to find the bowl there, while behind the screen he discovered the glass spoon. The cithern still had a belt attached to it. In the temple stood the image of the fairy, with

maids in blue dress in front — all those he had seen the night before. This took place in the fifth year of Yuanchia.* But nothing like this ever happened to him again.

* * *

This story is from Wang Yen's Occurrences in the Dark *(冥祥記), a collection of Buddhist stories with morals. Wang Yen lived during the Liang period (502-557).*

The Lost Sutra

Ting Cheng, a native of the principality of Chiyin, became magistrate of Ningyin during the Chienyuan period.**

One day a woman in the north suburb went to draw water from a well outside, when a man who looked like a foreigner with long nose and deep-set eyes passed by and asked for a drink. After drinking the stranger vanished, while the woman was seized with a pain in the belly which grew worse and worse. After groaning for some time she abruptly sat up and gave orders in a foreign tongue. Several dozen neighbouring families came to watch. The woman asked for pen and paper, and being given a pen started writing in some foreign language—spidery words that ran from side to side.*** She covered five sheets of paper which she tossed to the ground, but when she ordered people to read them, no one in that district could decipher them. She pointed at a small boy of about ten and said that he could read it, and sure enough the boy took the papers and read them. The spectators were amazed and completely bewildered. Then the woman told the boy to dance, and he stood up, raising his legs and gesturing with his hands. They danced and sang together for a while.

This was reported to Magistrate Ting Cheng, who summoned the woman and boy, but she told him she had not known what she was doing. Anxious to find out what the writing was, the magistrate sent an officer with it to the Hsuchang Monastery where one old inmate was a foreign monk. This foreigner was astounded.

"Part of a Buddhist sutra was lost," he told them. "As we would have had to travel far to find the original, we were afraid we should never

*A.D. 428.
**A.D. 343-344.
***Unlike Chinese which was written vertically.

get the whole text. Some parts we could recite, but not all, and this was the missing portion."

It was copied out and kept in the monastery.

* * *

These last two stories are from Records of Avenging Spirits *(冤魂志), another collection of Buddhist tales by Yen Chih-tui of the Northern Chi period (550-577).*

Iron Mortar

During the Sung period there was a native of Tunghai named Hsu, whose wife died after bearing him a son named Iron Mortar. Then he married a daughter of the Chen family, but she was a cruel woman who determined to kill her stepson. She bore a son herself, and at his birth she swore:

"If you don't kill Iron Mortar, you are no son of mine."

So she named her own boy Iron Pestle, hoping the pestle would overcome the mortar. She kept thrashing her stepson and treating him cruelly, giving him no food when he was hungry and no padded clothes when he was cold. Hsu was a coward, and besides he was often away, so the stepmother could do just as she pleased. And finally Iron Mortar died—of hunger, cold and beatings. He was then only sixteen.

About ten days after his death his ghost came back, and went to his stepmother's bed.

"I am Iron Mortar," it said. "I did no one any wrong, yet I was cruelly murdered. My mother lodged a complaint in heaven, and now I have an order from heaven to fetch Iron Pestle. He will suffer as I did and leave this earth very soon. I shall wait for him here."

The voice was like Iron Mortar's when he was alive, and though the household and the guests could not see him they could all hear him. And the ghost took up its quarters on the beam.

Hsu's wife kneeled to apologize, slapped her own face and sacrificed to the ghost.

"That is no use," said the ghost. "You starved me to death—how can you make up for that with a meal now?"

At night she secretly complained.

"How dare you complain of me?" asked the ghost angrily. "I shall break your roof."

They heard the sound of a saw, and sawdust fell. Then there came a great crash as if the beam had collapsed. The whole household rushed outside, but when they lighted a torch to see the damage, nothing at all had happened.

Then the ghost swore at its stepbrother: "After killing me, why should you live here in comfort? I shall burn your house down."

At that they saw a fire with much smoke and flames, and the whole household was alarmed; but presently the fire died down of itself, and the thatched roof was left undamaged. The ghost used to abuse them like this every day, after which it would burst into song:

Oh, peach blossom and prune blossom,
What if the frost should cover you?
Oh, ripe peaches and ripe prunes,
One frost and all's over with you!

The air was a very sad one, as if the ghost was lamenting its early death. Its six-year-old stepbrother had been ill ever since the ghost came. His whole body ached, his belly became swollen and full of gas, and he could not eat. The ghost kept beating him too, and wherever it beat him the boy turned black and blue. After a month the child died, and the ghost disappeared for good.

The Merchant's Revenge

When Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty wanted to build a monastery at his father's tomb, he could not find good enough timber, and all the authorities were ordered to make a search.

A rich man of Chu-ah named Hung gathered together much merchandise with his relatives, and went to Hsiangchow to do business. About a year later he acquired a wooden raft some thousand yards long, of a magnificent and very rare wood. On his return to Nanching, the local official Meng Shao-ching was so eager to please the authorities that he heaped accusations on Hung. Because he had clothing and silk left unsold, he was accused of stealing these during his journey. He was also charged with having more splendid possessions than any merchant should own. So Meng condemned him to death, and confiscated his raft for the monastery. He obtained government sanction for the execution.

On the day of his execution, Hung told his wife and children to put yellow paper, pen and ink in his coffin, saying that if he retained consciousness after death he would take revenge. He wrote down Meng's name several dozen times and swallowed the paper with the names on it.

A month later, as Meng was sitting in his office, he saw Hung coming towards him. At first he tried to evade and resist him, then he admitted his guilt but begged for mercy, and finally he vomited blood and died. All

the gaolers and clerks involved in this case died one after the other, so that in less than a year they had all perished.

The monastery was no sooner built than fire from the sky destroyed it, leaving nothing at all. Even the bases of the wooden pillars, which were set deep under the earth, were reduced to ashes.

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

FIVE TIBETAN FABLES

1. The Fox Who Did Not Know His Place

A fox once met a tiger who wanted to devour him. "Spare my life, King Tiger," pleaded the fox. "How could a small animal like myself satisfy you anyway?" "But I'm hungry!" said the tiger. The fox sought to placate him. "Since you have such a big appetite, let me find you something else to eat." "What is that?" the tiger asked eagerly.

"Behind the mountain a herd of big, fat, wild yaks live in a cave. If you're not afraid, they'll serve you well."

The tiger made such a fierce grimace that his whiskers stood out stiffly. Rolling his eyes, he laughed contemptuously: "Afraid? Who should I be afraid of ? You better take me there quickly, if you want to eat your fill, too!" The fox took the tiger to the cave. As the wild yaks happened to be away, the tiger settled down to wait in the cave, while the fox was told to watch for their coming outside. Soon the fox rushed in. "They're coming, they're coming, King Tiger," he shouted. "Beware of their strength and be sure of your own!" "Isn't my mouth big?" the tiger asked unafraid, as he opened his mouth as wide as he could. Then he shook himself, as he asked again: "Don't I look impressive?"

"Of course, your mouth is big and you do look grand," said the fox, anxious to please. Mollified, the tiger ordered the fox to look and see whether the wild yaks were coming close. When they were nearing the cave, the fox quickly informed the tiger. The fox was then ordered to keep out of the way, while the tiger crouched down, his fangs and claws in readiness, as he stared hard at the cave-opening. As the first wild yak entered, the tiger pounced upon it and killed it. The others were thus frightened away. Then the tiger invited the fox to the feast, after which he went away, down into the valley, proudly wagging his tail.

The fox thought to imitate the tiger when he came across a hare the very next day. "Don't I look imposing?" he asked. And, opening his small, pointed mouth, he wanted to know how big it looked to the hare. Seeing through his conceit the hare replied: "Your mouth is bigger than mine, of course, but you don't look so very grand to me." The fox did not give up so easily, however. "You wouldn't say that if you saw me catch wild yaks," he bragged. Still incredulous, the hare followed the fox to the wild yaks' cave.

Grandly the fox sat as he had seen the tiger do, and told the hare to keep watch. As soon as the wild yaks were coming back, the hare became so frightened that she ran in and hid behind the fox, trembling and unable to utter a word. "You needn't be afraid," the fox said patronizingly. "Just watch me!" But when the wild yaks saw a mere fox sitting in their cave, they dashed in and ran him through with their horns. And the hare ran as fast as her legs would carry her, so as not to be trampled under their hoofs.

* * *

2. The Lion and the Wolf

On a high, high mountain, there lived a lion, the king among the animals, who was a tyrant full of arrogance and conceit. He took it for granted that he could devour any animal he chose to, and that all the other animals should obey him whether they liked it or not.

A tiny rabbit was hopping about in the grass one day, now nibbling a little, now lying down to look at the clouds floating about cotton-like in the sky. When she had thus eaten her fill and was strolling along, front-paws folded neatly over her chest, she chanced upon the lion and his friend, the red-eyed wolf. The little rabbit immediately saluted them with a deep bow. All the lion said, his eye-lids drooping lazily, was: "We are very hungry today, you might do to fill our stomachs."

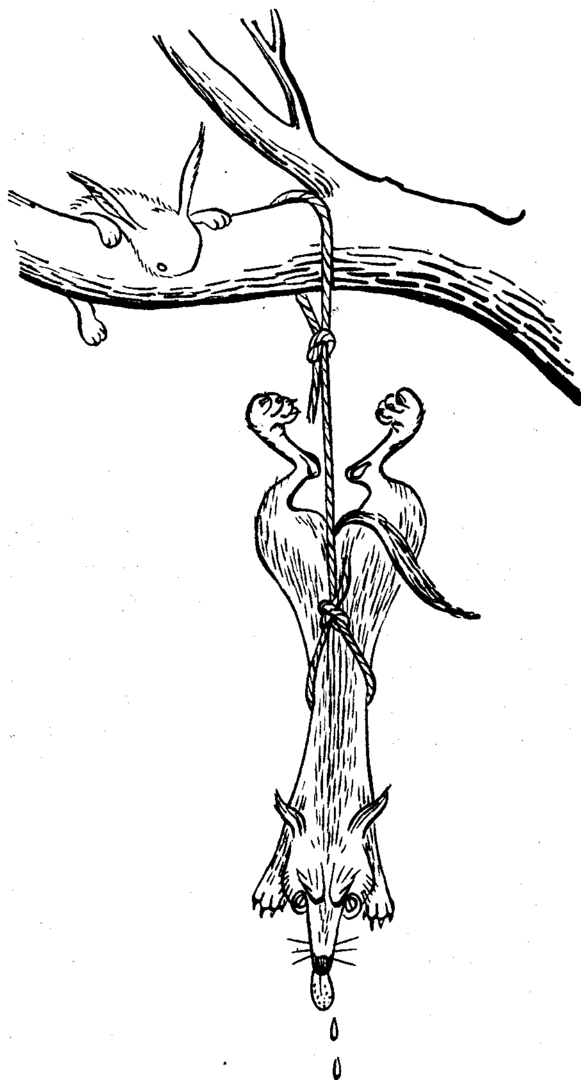
"Of course, I'm always at Your Majesty's service," the rabbit said very politely. "But the sheep told me there is a beast who claims that his position is much higher than yours, and that you must get his permission before you can eat any of us."

When the lion heard this, he nearly jumped out of his skin in his fury. "Who is that and where can I find him? It must be he is bored with life

that he dares utter such things! Take me to him at once!" The lion left the wolf right then and there, and followed the rabbit.

The rabbit showed him to a pool as clear as crystal. "This is where you can find him, Your Majesty," she said.

The lion looked into the pool. What was that? A fierce monster was staring back at him. The lion began to tremble in his anger. There — the monster in the pool was bristling too! And when the lion opened his mouth wide and showed his fangs, the monster was clearly imitating him. Unable to bear such insolence any longer, the lion plunged down to crush his opponent. Both of them disappeared among the ripples of the water. The rabbit had meanwhile gone on her way home when she came upon the wolf who was still waiting for the lion. Told that the lion was fighting a monster in the pool, the wolf immediately caught hold of the rabbit, to make an instant meal of her.



"Oh, clever wolf," said the rabbit. "Small as I am, how can I supply you with enough nourishment? Not even two or three of my size could satisfy you!"

"I'll eat you no matter how small you are!"

"But won't you let me go if I get you a number of sheep to eat instead?"

"All right, little rabbit. I've always told the lion that you are smart. Now you give another proof of it." And, with the promise of several sheep, the wolf let go of the rabbit. "But how are you going to get them for me?" was the only thing he asked.

The little rabbit took the wolf up a big tree and tied a rope round his waist, while the other end was tied to the tree. "Many sheep will pass under this tree tomorrow morning on their way to the river to drink. That's the time you can jump down and catch yourself as many as you like."

The wolf thought this a good plan and praised the little rabbit again. The latter went home quietly, while the wolf was waiting for his prey.

Next morning, when the sun rose, a flock of sheep did pass under the tree. But the red-eyed wolf could not get hold of a single one, for the clever rabbit had tied too short a rope around him. And so in his jump to reach the sheep, he was left dangling in the air.

* * *

3. The Quarrelsome Kittens

THERE were two kittens who usually played together quite happily, but oh! how easily they both fell to quarrelling!

One day, they decided to build themselves new houses, as they thought their present ones too shabby. So they set about gathering timber at once. The sun beat down on them and the mosquitoes stung them till they were drenched in perspiration. However, they got together the timber they needed.

They started work early every morning and kept at it till late at night. The houses were nearly finished, only the door on one of them had not yet been put on. "I'll move into my new house first. You can wait till the door is put on," said the elder kitten. "Why should you move in first when we built the houses together?" the other one retorted.

One kept insisting on moving in first, while the other disagreed. So they quarrelled again, raising an accusing paw at each other. Just as they were at their hottest, a fox came by.

"My friends!" he called. "What are you quarrelling about?" Each of the kittens tried to tell his story first. "I don't see anything worth quarrelling about!" the fox said, shaking his head. "I can settle your quarrel very easily for you." And before the very eyes of the kittens who expressed their gratitude for his mediation, the fox set fire to the two houses which burned down to cinders in a trice. Then he walked away airily, while the kittens sat there in despair.

"It was our quarrel that brought the fox here to burn down our houses which we had built with such hard labour," the elder kitten said regretfully. "And now I'm hungry. Let's go and look for something to eat." So they went away, hand in hand, as if nothing had happened.

On a hill, they found a delicious round cake. The elder kitten proposed they should divide it evenly. "Right! I'll do it!" said the younger kitten and broke the cake in two. But one half happened to be slightly

bigger than the other. . . . Promptly they forgot the outcome of their former quarrel. The elder kitten wanted to have the bigger half, while the younger one thought he should have it, and so they were at it again quarrelling as ever!

A monkey was suddenly passing by. The kittens appealed to him to be judge between them. "Is it worthwhile quarrelling over such a trifle? I'll make the cake even for you," the monkey said off-handedly. The kittens were so happy that they jumped about and thanked the monkey profusely.

The monkey in his enthusiasm even produced a steelyard to weigh the pieces of cake evenly. Naturally the bigger half was too heavy. So the monkey bit off a little. Then the smaller half was too heavy. Again he bit off some. In this way, he ate up the whole cake piece by piece.

Only then did the kittens realize that they had been fooled again. But all they could do was stare in the air and stick their tails up angrily.

"Thanks for the treat, my friends," said the monkey, wiping his mouth.

For all that happened the kittens had only themselves to blame. They had to drink the wine they had brewed for themselves, sour though it was.

* * *

4. The Magic Ox-Horn

MILA-RIBA was a man of great learning who had many disciples. The most outstanding one was Rechungba.

When there was an opportunity for Rechungba to go to India to study the classics of Buddhism, Mila-Riba was very happy for him and gave him great encouragement.

In India, Rechungba studied under a number of teachers who acquainted him with the canons of the Buddha. At the same time, however, certain evil thoughts crept into his mind:

"I have been able to come to India, yet Mila-Riba who taught me hasn't. Obviously, I must be more learned than he is."

When Rechungba had completed his studies, he wrote to his teacher announcing his return. Mila-Riba had seen through this disciple of his and knew that he would become conceited. So he decided to test Rechungba. The day before the young man's arrival, Mila-Riba walked far to receive him. It was the custom for the disciples of learned men to prostrate themselves before their teachers upon meeting. But Rechungba thought to himself: "In the past, Mila-Riba never returned my greeting. But surely he will now that I've come back from India. . . ."

To his surprise, Mila-Riba did nothing of the sort. Without a word, he led Rechungba on. Thirsty and hungry from his travel, Rechungba would have liked to take a rest, to have some tea boiled for him and some food provided. But Mila-Riba offered him nothing. Rechungba was furious, yet he dared not show his anger.

While they were thus walking along, Mila-Riba suddenly stopped and, pointing to a dry and empty ox-horn lying in the road, told Rechungba to pick it up. "It might be of use some day," he said. Overcome by thirst and hunger as he was, Rechungba did not feel like doing anything of the sort.

"This funny old man thought little of gold, silver or any other kind of wealth before. What does he want with this ox-horn all of a sudden?" he thought to himself. "Is he purposely trying to annoy me?"

Aloud he said crossly: "What's the use of an ox-horn? It's not something one can eat. . . ." And with that, he bent down slowly, picked up the horn and threw it aside.

"Don't do that! It might come in useful," said Mila-Riba again. "If you don't want it, I'll pick it up." So he did, and they went on.

Suddenly it began to hail. Wrapping his clothes around his head, Rechungba ran ahead frantically. But the hail only became heavier and heavier. It was some time before Rechungba realized that he had left his teacher behind who was now calling him:

"Come quickly and take shelter in the ox-horn with me, disciple of mine!"

But Mila-Riba was nowhere to be seen.

"Why do you hesitate to accept your teacher's invitation?" came Mila-Riba's voice again. "You're getting yourself wet needlessly. . . ."

Rechungba collected himself and followed the voice to where he saw the ox-horn lying. It was from inside the horn that his teacher was calling! .

"Come, disciple, take shelter in this horn . . ." came the voice again. "Since I haven't been found worthy to travel to India, I can compress myself into the point of the horn, so you may have the wider space. . . ."

Rechungba saw his teacher sitting quite comfortably in the horn, while he could not even put his fist into it.

The hail was still falling. But Rechungba could not walk away, since his teacher kept calling to him. Round and round the horn he went in the hail, vainly trying to get in and find shelter. . . .

This story spread among the Tibetan people, as time went on, and became so popular that it was adapted into a dance.

* * *

5. Three Girls

ONCE upon a time, a young fisherman came down every day to the river to fish.

One morning, he went there as usual. The sun was just appearing over the mountain tops and the river glittered with its golden rays. But the scene looked different that day for, although the young fisherman did not believe his eyes, there were three beautiful maidens sitting shoulder to shoulder on a big rock. Why were those singing and smiling creatures there? Obviously they had not come to fetch water from the river, nor were they travellers happening by. Who were they? The young fisherman knew the whole environs in all their desolation very well; never had he heard such lovely songs there nor seen such fairy-like beauties. They didn't seem to take much notice of him — they cast him a glance only now and then and smiled at each other. But the young fisherman couldn't tear his gaze away from them while he listened to their singing, and forgot all about fishing.

After a while, the singing stopped, although the air still seemed to vibrate with it.

"What are you staring at us for?" one of the girls finally asked amid the laughter of the others.

"It's too marvellous, really too marvellous! If only. . . ." He didn't know himself what he was saying and why.

"You mean you like our singing, don't you?" asked another one of the three girls.

The fisherman blushed so much that he couldn't utter a word. The three girls thereupon whispered laughingly into each other's ears so that the fisherman became more uneasy than ever.

"Why don't you cast your net, young man? If you get the biggest fish, one of us will marry you," the third girl called to him playfully, and then they tittered again. Happy beyond words, the young fisherman applied himself to his trade and, strangely enough, caught a huge fish in no time. He offered the fish to one of the girls who got up and danced with him, to signify her assent.

"If I get one more fish like this, I can have another girl," the fisherman thought to himself. So he left the girl on the rock and turned to fishing again. It was not so easy this time, but he did get a big one in the end. Two of the girls now joined him in a dance so that he was lost in happiness.

"If my luck holds, all the three girls will be mine," the fisherman thought wildly, as he cast his net again. But this time not even the little fish came near him. He tried and tried, till he perspired all over. But all in vain — the waves on the river rippled, as if they were laughing at him.

"The girls will be impatient . . . they must be laughing at me, too. . . ." He turned to look, only to discover that all three were gone.

The river bank was as calm as usual, only the young fisherman's heart remained in turmoil.

Translated by Yu Fan-chin
Illustrations by Ting Tsung

REMINISCENCES OF THE RED ARMY VETERANS

Here are five first-hand stories about the early days of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, written by commanders and soldiers who fought for the great cause of the revolution. They tell how the Communist-led armed forces grew in strength during those difficult years after Chiang Kai-shek's coup d'état in 1927, how it overcame untold hardships during the Long March, and how it scored the first victory over Japanese onslaughts in 1937. They are a vivid illustration of how, as Chairman Mao put it, "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire."

On April 12, 1927, when the First Revolutionary Civil War (the Northern Expeditionary War) was as good as won, the Kuomintang reactionary clique, led by Chiang Kai-shek, working hand in glove with the imperialist and feudal forces, betrayed the revolution. They slaughtered a great number of patriots. Undaunted by this serious setback, the Chinese Communist Party carried on the struggle. On August 1, 1927, it led 30,000 men of the Northern Expeditionary Army and called an uprising in Nanchang, the provincial capital of Kiangsi. This gave birth to the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

In the years that followed, this army grew in strength and was steeled in battles against the Kuomintang and foreign imperialists. Wherever it went, it sowed the seeds of revolution, seeds which took root and blossomed in later years. It established several bases, with the Kiangsi-Fukien Central Soviet Area as its centre. By 1930 the Red Army had grown so strong that Chiang Kai-shek had to mass hundreds of thousands of his crack troops to launch what he called "encirclement and annihilation" campaigns against it. Chiang did not call off these attacks even when the Japanese invaded China on September 18, 1931. In October 1933, he launched his fifth "encirclement and annihilation campaign," mounting a million of well-trained troops, commanded by his foreign military advisers. But the Red Army broke through, and in October 1934 started the historic 25,000 li Long March to the north to fight against the Japanese invaders. A year later, units of the Red Army reached northern China one after another.

During the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, in the years 1937 to 1945, the Red Army was reorganized into the 8th Route Army

and the New Fourth Army which, supported by the broad masses, constituted the mainstay of the resistance to Japanese invasion.

After V-J Day Chiang Kai-shek, backed by the U.S. imperialists, again unleashed a civil war against the Communists and the people. The People's Liberation Army, as it began to be called, fought back and in the short space of three years put the entire Kuomintang forces on the Chinese mainland out of action and liberated the whole country.

— *Editor*

FRAGMENTS OF RED ARMY LIFE

Marshal Hsu Hsiang-chien

THE "RED FOURTH" DIVISION

The Canton Uprising of December 11, 1927 had failed, thanks to the bloody way the Kuomintang reactionaries put it down and the brutal way the imperialists took a hand. The insurgent forces fought without respite for three days and nights, but were at last, on the fourteenth, obliged to withdraw from the city.

The landlords' militia, a muster of reactionary thugs, cast their net wide, laying ambushes and trying to wipe out what was left of the people's forces. We made a fighting retreat all the way to Huahsien county town, twenty-eight miles north of Canton. The landlords' militia from the neighbouring counties promptly closed in on us, never letting up day or night. We stayed in Huahsien three days, during which time we managed both to cope with the enemy encirclement and to reorganize the army.

The reorganization was the first question the Party meeting had to settle. There were altogether a little over twelve hundred men—too few for an army but rather too many for a regiment. A division would be nearer the point. But which division? Somebody suggested that since Comrade Chu Teh's division was the first and Comrade Tung Lang's the second, ours should be the third. But it was pointed out that there was a third already—in Hainan Island. So, after much toing and froing, we unanimously decided that since there certainly was no fourth division yet we should dub ourselves the Fourth Division of the Red Army.

When the men were told about the reorganization they were in high spirits.

"So now we're really part of the Red Army proper—real regulars!" they said. "We're the Red 4th Division!"

The division was composed of three regiments—the 10th, 11th and 12th. Yeh Yung was division commander, Yuan Yu the Party representative and Wang Kan-ju the head of the political department. I was made Party representative for the 10th Regiment.

The second pressing question was that we could not stay in Huahsien any longer. It called for immediate action. But where were we to go? First we decided to make for the North River and look for the Red 1st Division under its commander-in-chief, Chu Teh. Scouts were sent out to discover where they were, but no news came back. Finally we decided to make for the Haifeng-Lufeng area along the East River.

Comrade Peng Pai, whose name will for ever be remembered in the history of Chinese Communist movement, had led three peasant uprisings in this area. The first two had failed. The third led to the taking of the city of Haifeng on November 1, 1927, and the establishment of Soviet Power on the seventh.

En route, we several times had to beat back the militia who were harassing us, and finally, on the first day of the first lunar month of 1928, we arrived near Haifeng. With the sea to the south and mountains at our back it was an ideal place for guerrilla warfare. The local people were all for the revolution. Red flags fluttered everywhere. Every wall in every village was covered with great red slogans like "Down with the local bullies! Down with the rotten gentry! Agrarian revolution now!" It seemed as if we were back on our home ground.

There was a mass meeting to welcome the "Red Fourth," and there for the first time we heard Comrade Peng Pai speak. He wasn't much over twenty, dressed like a peasant and shod with straw sandals. His speech was laced with wit and humour, full of revolutionary fervour and an unshakable confidence in victory. His words, plain and logical, held the audience spellbound. He was secretary of the Special Party Committee of the East River Area and chairman of the Haifeng-Lufeng Soviet; but he usually got called "Saviour Peng."

At Haifeng the Red Fourth joined up with the Red Second under Comrade Tung Lang. Comrade Peng Pai took over the joint command and we scored a number of victories. We took Chiatseyu, broke through Kuolung, and, pushing east, established contact with the guerrilla units at Chaoyang.

Soon afterwards, the Kwangsi warlords started a campaign to encircle Haifeng-Lufeng and other Soviet areas. The enemy did their damnedest to destroy the young Red Army. They burned every house that had

sheltered the Red Army and killed everybody who had had anything to do with us. At last we were forced to take to the mountains.

There, we cut straw and built ourselves huts. As soon as the enemy encirclement forced us to shift they burned them down, but we built new ones on a new site. Right from the first the peasants were on the side of the Red Army guerrillas. They risked their lives to get us intelligence and grain up in the mountains. We held out till the spring of 1929, and then we left.

THE LITTLE WARRIOR

It's more than twenty years ago, but I still vividly remember our "Little Red Army Warrior."

It was 1929. I was working in the Red 31st Division. At that time there were quite a few "under-agers" in the Red Army's ranks. Some were just about as tall as a rifle, some were mere children, but they marched and fought with the best of us. At our headquarters there was a little orderly whose name was Chen Chi-po. He was just turned 14, about as tall as a cavalry rifle or may be a bit taller. He used to wear a Red Army cap which he'd made himself, and the smallest army issue jacket came down to his knees.

In the companies most of the men, regardless of age, had some sort of weapon, either a rifle or a sword. But the only "weapon" this "little devil" had was a kettle slung over his shoulder which clanked whenever he was on the move. Oh, how he longed for a gun of his own! Whenever he had a chance he'd come pestering me: "Division commander, when shall I be given a gun?" At the time we had only some 400 rifles all told for the whole division. Newly enlisted men went into their first battle with a hand-grenade. Some hadn't even that, and used to go for the enemy with bare fists. So of course we couldn't spare a weapon for an orderly!

That year our troops manoeuvred around Huangpi, Loshan and Hsiaokan, and had many encounters. Whenever a battle was fought I ordered the "little devil" to remain in the rear. But he was intent on getting a gun, and he always pleaded to go to the front. Of course we allowed him to do nothing of the sort.

Once we were in the thick of a battle around Yinchiapeng and I was directing the assault troops when suddenly I saw in the midst of our men a child, advancing, empty-handed, under the barrage. I was furious. What on earth was the company commander doing, letting a child like that advance with the troops? Suppose he were killed! But there was no time to get him back.

When the battle was over I made inquiries about the child. It was no other than the orderly, Chen Chi-po, and he'd got himself a rifle!

When I got back to headquarters the "little devil" had already boiled the water and was fetching me a jugful. He hummed a tune incessantly. I had half a mind to give him a severe reprimand. But my temper melted at sight of the look of bland innocence on his face, so I just called him over and dosed him with a little criticism. "The next time there's an assault," I said sternly, "you will NOT join in." Then I added, "You're still too young. When you grow up, not only will you be given a gun, but you'll be made to *lead* the army."

Two years later the "little devil" left our headquarters. Later on I heard he had become political commissar of one of the 28th Army regiments.

BY THE WEIKU

In the summer of 1935 the Fourth Field Army, which had marched and fought for months after withdrawing from the Soviet area in northern Szechuan, joined forces with the First Field Army near Maokung in western Szechuan; but I was so busy, with a battle on my hands, that I had no opportunity of meeting our new comrades.

Finally I made an appointment to meet Comrade Peng Teh-huai one day at a certain spot. In the forenoon, I went with a signal platoon to the bank of Weiku. The Weiku is a tributary of the Black Water River. It's only some 60 metres wide, but the current is strong and wading out of the question. Then we discovered that the suspension bridge which spanned the upper reaches had been destroyed by the enemy. As we were gazing forlornly at the prospect before us, a little group of men emerged from the foot of the mountain across the river. The man in front, a rain-hat on his head, came slowly towards the bank and waved and beckoned to us. We could hear nothing, but we could see his lips moving. We yelled back, but our voices, too, were lost in the roar of the river and the echoes of the valley. I guessed the man with the rain-hat must be Comrade Peng Teh-huai, but I wasn't sure, because we had never seen each other before. Suddenly, a stone was thrown from the opposite bank. To it was fastened a string, at the end of which was a slip of paper. It read:

"Brought part Third Army Corps welcome you.
—Peng Teh-huai"

I was overjoyed. We had seen each other at last. I tore a page from my diary and wrote:

"I am Hsu Hsiang-chien. Would be glad to meet you!"

I copied his method of attaching the slip to the stone and throwing it.

But the wind was against us. I tried several times but every time the stone fell in the river. At last our Tibetan guide offered to do it. He

gave one mighty heave, and the stone sailed across the river and landed on the further bank.

They took up the paper and we could see they were quite excited. Comrade Peng Teh-huai took off his rain-hat and waved.

That very day a telephone line was slung across the river. Comrade Peng Teh-huai and I exchanged regards and decided on a place called Yinien, up river, for a meeting the next day. There was said to be a cable bridge.

Next morning a few of us from headquarters set out, making a detour of two big mountains. But when we reached Yinien we had another disappointment: the bridge was destroyed here too. One of the two cables that carried the planks was snapped and the other had sagged so much that it touched the water. There was Comrade Peng Teh-huai on the far bank of the river and all we could do was to look at each other across it!

Luckily nearby there was a rope over the river. On it hung a sort of wicker basket, and that was what the local people used to haul themselves across. It was now my turn to try this interesting means of communication. I clambered in and pushed off. The basket slid unsteadily towards the other bank. Below it the current rushed like mad. My heart was in my mouth, but the prospect of meeting got the better of my fear.

The comrades on the other side ran towards me. Comrade Peng Teh-huai gripped my hand. Though we were meeting for the first time we were hardly strangers!

HOW WE STORMED TSUNYI

Brigadier-General Wang Chi-cheng

Just before dawn on the third day of 1935 I received a phone call from Comrade Liu Ya-lou, the Divisional Political Commissar. "The Fourth Regiment has broken through the Kuomintang defences at the Wukiang and seized control of the ferry," he said. "Take the Sixth Regiment across the river at once, march towards Tsunyi as fast as you can and take it by storm!"

We were beside ourselves with joy when we heard that the task of capturing Tsunyi, an important city in Kweichow Province, had been entrusted to us. Groping in the dark, we set off without delay. The currents of the Wukiang were swift and treacherous, and as we crossed the river on bamboo rafts we felt as though we were riding bareback on unbridled horses which might throw us off at any moment. Though our

rafts were tearing along at a dangerous speed, we were so anxious to get to the opposite bank that we all wished they could have moved much faster than they did.

Soon it was broad daylight. When everyone had crossed, we headed straight for Tsunyi. Our regimental commander, Chu Shui-chiu, on horseback, pulled a 1:50,000 map out of the knapsack he kept slung over his shoulder all day long, and spread it over the neck of his horse, studying it as he jogged along. I was riding beside him, looking at the map every so often and thinking about the tactics we should employ in storming Tsunyi. During those years of war we fell into the habit of working on horseback.

After careful consideration we decided to use our First and Second Battalions as shock forces to close in on Tsunyi from the east and south. The Third Battalion was to stand by for any emergency.

That night we put up at the little town of Tuanhsi, thirty miles away from the city.

Early next day (January 4) we got up when it was still dark. The guards greeted us with the glad news that Comrade Liu Po-cheng, Chief-of-Staff at H.Q., had come.

"Now we've got somebody to back us up," we all said joyously. After the regimental commander and I had had a hurried wash, he went off to call his men together and I went to see the Chief-of-Staff.

Comrade Liu Po-cheng was having a wash too when I entered his room. I gathered that he had travelled all night from H.Q. in his haste to reach us. Though he had not slept a wink I could not detect a trace of tiredness in his face, though it was a bit thinner from overwork. He looked, in fact, hale and hearty.

"Hullo, Political Commissar," he said. "Think you can take Tsunyi?"

"No question about it," I replied. "We've carefully studied the whole situation. This isn't the first time we've fought Wang Chia-lieh's troops. We'll take Tsunyi all right." Then I related to him in detail our plan for the coming battle. He thought it over for a while before he nodded in approval.

"The men must be extremely tired, eh?" he asked. "They've travelled thousands of miles across four or five provinces and fought scores of battles during the last three months."

"Yes, they are tired," I said. "But the moment they hear they are going to fight against the Kuomintang troops, they seem inspired again and forget their tiredness at once."

The Chief-of-Staff gave a smile. "What about the ammunition?" he went on.

"Plenty of it," I replied. "The more battles we fight, the more ammunition we get. We'll get another haul when we've taken Tsunyi."

He seemed to be thinking of something as he nodded in answer. Then in a solemn voice he said: "It's of great importance to capture Tsunyi.

You are the main forces, and you've fought splendidly all the way. I hope you'll score a still greater victory in the coming battle. It's true that we're only fighting a local army under Wang Chia-lieh this time, but Tsunyi's a pretty big city, and its defences are fairly strong. They've more than three thousand strong, and we're only a little over a thousand. So, you see, there are difficulties. In battle it pays to be wary. Don't underestimate the enemy. Be prepared to slice rocks even if they turn out to be bean-curd!"

I listened to all this in silence. "Things are still a bit tough for us," he continued, seeming to weigh every word. "We must not only fight well, but use ammunition sparingly and keep losses down to the barest minimum. That means you've got to use your brains and good judgement."

I turned the Chief-of-Staff's words over and over in my mind. They seemed to have probed my weak point. Then, in a determined tone, I answered, "Don't worry, Chief-of-Staff. We'll capture Tsunyi by hook or by crook. Would you like to talk to the men?"

"Good idea," he said, putting on his glasses. "Today we'll all march into Tsunyi together!"

But how could we allow the Chief-of-Staff to fight by our side? He had heavy responsibilities. Besides, he had not slept for nobody knew how many nights. I was so moved that I was at a loss what to say. Now that the Chief-of-Staff had come in person, we all seemed to have gained extra strength.

It was getting light when I took him to where our soldiers had assembled. A canopy of thick fog hung low in the sky, looking as if it was caused by the men's breath. Standing among the soldiers, the Chief-of-Staff looked round him for a moment. Then he spoke in a resonant voice:

"Comrades! You have set a grand example for others to follow. You've been quick on the march and courageous in fighting the enemy. You've stood up to all sorts of difficulties and carried on doggedly. This time we have entrusted to you the task of capturing Tsunyi. I am confident you will score another great victory, and so clear the way for our Red Army to march north and fight the Japanese invaders. . . ."

As he finished a forest of clenched fists went up and a chorus of slogans rang out—a thunderous roar like the booming of a hundred guns, a salvo which bade fair to blow the enemy troops in Tsunyi to bits.

We advanced towards the city at the double. In the afternoon our scouts brought word that they had located an enemy outpost at a village about ten miles from the city and that more than a battalion of enemy troops was stationed there. When Regimental Commander Chu heard this, he at once ordered our troops to advance at full speed and take the enemy unawares, closing in on the village in a pincers movement. The Chief-of-Staff gave our men explicit instructions that they must put the entire enemy battalion in the village out of action: if a single one of them

escaped he might put the garrison in the city on the alert and ruin the whole operation.

We launched our attack on the village just after three. There was a heavy downpour, and we were all drenched to the skin, but it didn't daunt us — we were used to it. No — it was the enemy who had the worst of it. First, they had staked too much on the Wukiang as a natural barrier, thinking we probably shouldn't be able to cross it, and now they were under the illusion that nothing untoward would happen on such a sopping wet day. When they heard the angry chatter of guns they quite literally had a rude awakening. They were hardly aware that by the time they hastily grabbed their weapons to offer what resistance they could they were already like rats in a trap.

Before long our men poured into the village and made short work of the garrison there. The enemy battalion commander tried to escape with a small unit of his remaining forces. They dashed about blindly, but failed to break through our hermetically sealed ring. We carried out the Chief-of-Staff's instructions to the letter: all enemy troops in the village were either killed during the fighting or captured alive. Unfortunately, the enemy battalion commander, over-confident, tried to make a get-away. So he was killed while trying to escape — a bit sooner than we should have liked. We would rather have taken him prisoner and pumped him for information about the enemy's positions in the city itself.

So, as it were, we lopped off the feelers of the enemy at Tsunyi. Or rather, we turned them into *our* feelers. From among the prisoners we picked a company commander, a platoon leader and about a dozen soldiers who came of poor families, and asked them at length about the enemy's defences at Tsunyi.

I began by asking their names, their places of birth and what their families were. They were sort of awestruck as they stood up one by one, held themselves rigid, clicked to attention and answered my questions in a most respectful manner. The company commander must have cast such former airs of self-importance as he had had to the winds, for when he spoke he stuttered and did not even dare look me in the face.

Seeing that they were still scared and suspicious, I began to explain our policy towards prisoners-of-war. I told them that our Red Army belonged to the workers and peasants, and that our aim was to overthrow the warlords and landlords so that the poor might lead a better life. Realizing how little they knew, I went on to explain why there was no equality between the rich and the poor and why we wanted to overthrow the warlords and landlords. Finally I said to them, "Now think it over and tell me this: what did you enlist for? Who benefited?"

That must have brought home to them the truth of my words, for some of them began to dab their eyes and others hung their heads in silence. One of them said, "We are poor people. We enlisted because we were

starving." Two others took off their military caps with the Kuomintang emblem on them, threw them to the ground and stamped on them, shouting angrily: "We've been tricked! We aren't going to die for the warlords and landlords!"

When I saw that they were beginning to see things in their true light, I told them that we were going to attack Tsunyi that very day and that we would amply award anyone who told us the enemy positions in the city in detail. That brought the enemy company commander to his feet at once. After making a bow he said: "Sir, we've been treated so well by the Red Army, and we beg for a chance to give you our services!" Then he went on to describe every detail of the enemy's defence works at Tsunyi, drawing a map as he did so. He also told us the actual strength of the garrison.

"Can I trust your words?" I asked him, with a meaning glance at the other captives.

"Every word of it!" said the company commander cringingly. "If I've said a single false word, you can cut off my head right now!" The other captives, who seemed to have come to an awakening too, nodded to confirm the truth of their company commander's protestations.

When the talks ended we gave each of them three silver dollars. At that time we were rather hard up and had little money to spare. But we always did the right thing by our prisoners-of-war. Clutching the silver dollars, they could hardly conceal their gratitude. "Our officers," they said, "told us you were all horrible, red-nosed, blue-eyed creatures who indulged in orgies of killing and burning down houses. They frightened us by saying that if we fell into your hands, you'd gouge out our eyeballs and disembowel us! We never imagined you were such nice people. Why, you've actually saved our lives!"

An idea suddenly occurred to me. Now that we knew everything about the enemy in Tsunyi and that no one had escaped from the village, why shouldn't we disguise ourselves as enemy troops, make use of the captives to trick the garrison and win an easy victory? I had a word with the regimental commander and he readily agreed. Then we took it up with the Chief-of-Staff, and got his consent at once. "It's a good idea," he said. "That's what I call really using your brains." But he also gave us a word of warning: we should have to make ourselves really look like enemy troops; it would be fatal if the enemy spotted anything unusual about us.

The main actors in this "farce" were Comrade Tseng Pao-tang, commander of the First Battalion, the men of the Third Company, the Scout Platoon and the thirty or so regimental buglers. They were to dress up as enemy troops. The captives I'd talked to were to go with them as guides. The rest of the regiment were to follow and launch an all-out attack if our plan fell through.

About 9 p.m. we set out in pouring rain. It was pitch-dark and extremely slippery on the road, so we kept stumbling all over the place, getting covered with mud and looking more like clay figurines than men. We all got our straw shoes stuck in the mud and could not for love or money get them out again. We hated parting with them, but we should have held up our advance if we'd insisted on recovering them, so we were forced to leave them behind — those straw shoes we held so dear, which we had worn crossing countless mountains and rivers. We tramped on barefooted: and it was no joke with all the pebbles, puddles and brambles.

After more than two hours' quick going the heavy downpour finally subsided — there was only an occasional sprinkling. Soon through the darkness we saw a light in mid-air. Our captives whispered to us that we were approaching the city, and that the light was the lamp in one of the gate-towers. We immediately started kicking up a din, put on a spurt towards the city wall, behaving as if we were running helter-skelter from some enemy in hot pursuit.

"Who goes there?" an angry voice challenged us from the gate-tower and we heard someone click his rifle-bolt.

"Friends. Your own men!" our captives calmly replied in the local dialect.

"What unit?"

This time our captive company commander made his answer as we had arranged beforehand.

"The battalion stationed on the city outskirts," he whined. "Today the Communist bandits surrounded us. We lost the village — battalion commander killed. We're First Company. I'm in command — what's left of us. The bandits are after us. Open up. Let us in!"

"What's the name of your battalion commander?" someone asked.

The company commander answered without the least hesitation. There was a moment's silence — evidently the enemy soldiers on the gate-tower were not prepared for all this. We could hear them muttering to each other. Of course we had no intention of giving them time to consider the situation carefully, so we organized another "attack." We broke into an uproar, yelling at the top of our voice: "Come on, open up! Come on, open up! The bandits'll be on us any minute!"

"Stop clamouring!" someone shouted down. It was evidently an officer, and we could hear from his voice that he was still annoyed at being woke up.

So we had to "obey" the officer's orders, and stopped clamouring. Suddenly we were caught in the glare of flashlights from the gate-tower — they were making another check on us. But flashlights couldn't, of course, show them who we actually were. As far as the soldiers on the gate-tower could see, we really were "their own men," in Kuomintang military caps, so they said: "All right, wait a moment and don't fuss. We'll open for you."

We could hardly keep from laughing. Silently we fixed bayonets, held our rifles at the ready and waited anxiously for them to open the gate to welcome "their own men."

First we heard the bolts of the city gate being pulled back, and then the creak of the high, thick gate itself being opened. In a scared voice an enemy soldier asked one of our scouts: "Are the Communist bandits across the Wukiang? They are pretty fast, aren't they?"

"They are that!" answered our scout. "And now they've entered Tsunyi! Listen, you! *We're* the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army of China!"

With which our scouts pointed their rifles at the heads of the two enemy soldiers. They promptly surrendered their weapons, gave a wail and sank to the ground like two coils of noodles.

So without firing a shot our men rushed through the "breach" like a flood. They set about cutting the telegraph wires and putting the enemy soldiers on the gate-tower out of action. The thirty buglers who were in the van of the attack sounded the charge as our soldiers streaked into the city like lightning. Before long, the whole place was seething: the blare of the bugles mixed with the chattering of machine-guns and rifles stirred the hearts of everyone who heard them. Everywhere we could hear the shouting of our brave soldiers as they pounced upon the enemy and the cries of the enemy trying to escape. We took the greater part of the garrison prisoner — many of them had just tumbled out of bed and hardly had time to put any clothes on. Only a few managed to escape through the north gate. That was a sight—the way they ran for their lives, leaving all they had behind them.

On the morning of January 5 we declared Tsunyi liberated from the Kuomintang. All the people in the city came out to welcome us: they lined the streets, waving little coloured flags and burning firecrackers as they joyfully greeted their own soldiers, happy that a new life had dawned for them.

We sent part of our Sixth Regiment in hot pursuit of those who had fled through the north gate, while the rest of us carried on our work among the people, put the local despots under arrest and froze the property of the warlords and landlords. The next day we received orders to march north to attack the county town of Tungtzu, which we captured without much difficulty.

In Tungtzu we stayed about two weeks, making use of this interval between battles to rest and regroup. It was at this time, we learned later, that the Central Committee of our Party held an enlarged conference of its Political Bureau at Tsunyi — the conference which was of such historic importance. During this conference a new Central Committee led by Comrade Mao Tse-tung was elected; the "Left" military line which had proved so mistaken was thoroughly criticized. This put an end to the crisis which our Party and the cause of the revolution faced. From that time on, we scored victory after victory, right up to the final, crowning success of today.

WITH CHAIRMAN MAO ON THE LONG MARCH

Chen Chang-feng

It was on one evening in April 1935, I remember, that we reached the Chinsha, we being the 9th, 1st, 5th and 3rd Red Army Groups, and the Cadres' Regiment—all belonging to the First Field Red Army. The Central Committee staff was also with us. The Chinsha was the first big river to face us after the crossing of the Wukiang. It was in spate, with angry dragon-headed waves confronting us. All the leaders were greatly concerned with the problem of crossing, as we had practically no craft at our command. Chairman Mao, of course, was in the thick of these discussions, which went on all night.

I was his personal bodyguard. Just before dawn I crossed with him. We had hardly landed when he was off to General Liu Po-cheng (the Chief-of-Staff) to plan the next stage of the march. I set about looking for somewhere for him to use as a temporary office and home.

It didn't look hopeful. The river bank was nothing but bare rocks, with a few holes in the cliffs, dripping with moisture, hardly big enough to be called caves. I sought in vain for planks or even straw to use for a bed. In the end I had to lay out a piece of oiled cloth and put the blanket on that, feeling that that would at least give him something to lie down on—he hadn't rested at all the whole night. Come to that, he had had no rest for the last few days.

My next task was to lay out his documents—maps and papers. Usually I did it with his secretary, Comrade Huang, whenever we made camp. We used to rig up some kind of a table or desk. But now there was nothing at all to use even as a makeshift, and Comrade Huang was still on the other side of the river. I couldn't think what to do. I tried pinning one map up on the side of the cave, but it was no good—it was just sand and wouldn't hold the nail, and there wasn't room to spread the documents out. Already I had wasted enough time; I was expecting Chairman Mao back from his conference any minute, and I hadn't even got a drop of boiled water ready. I knew he would need it, after all he had been through. I put aside the problem of the documents and hurried out to see what I could do about the water.

It was broad daylight when Chairman Mao did come back and sent for me. When I reached the cave I saw that he was standing there, deep in thought.

"You've come back," I said.

"M'm . . . everything ready?"

"I've done what I can," I said, pointing at the "bed." "There are no boards to be found, so I've made this up. Will you lie down for a bit? The water will be boiled any minute."

I turned to go to see how the water was getting on, but he called me back.

"Haven't you found me a place to work?" he asked.

"Comrade Huang hasn't come over yet," I said without thinking. "I couldn't find anything to use as a desk. Why don't you have a bit of a rest and a drop of water first?"

He took a step towards me, as though he had not heard what I told him, and said, very seriously, but not at all angrily, "The work's the all-important thing at a moment like this. Rest, or food, or drink are trifles. Twenty to thirty thousand of our comrades are still waiting to cross the river there. Thirty thousand lives in peril!"

I didn't know what to say, but stood there looking at Chairman Mao. I could feel my heart pounding. He came right up to me and patted my shoulder. "Go on," he said. "Find me a board or something to use as a desk before you do anything else."

I pulled myself together and ran off, and by hunting high and low found a small board which must have been used as a door for a cave mouth. Chairman Mao helped set it up, wedging it underneath to make it flat and steady, and spreading out his maps and documents. Then I remembered the water; it must have boiled by now. I got up to go and fetch it, when Chairman Mao spoke to me again.

"Chen Chang-feng!"

"Yes, comrade?"

"Come back!"

I went back right into the cave, stepping carefully over our desk.

"I'll have to give you some punishment, you know," he said. Although the tone of his voice was mild and there was a kind look in his eyes, I felt the air very tense. I realized how I had failed in my job, and stood looking at him, very miserable.

"I want you to stay by me and keep awake."

I felt an uneasy smile come over my face and sat down opposite him.

"Right, comrade," I said.

He had got telegrams and documents all over the desk. The field telephone which the signal corps had rigged up was going all the time, and he was absolutely immersed in work. He had not allowed a minute for himself. I found it hard to keep the tears back as I realized that I

had wasted his time over the desk, and if I had understood my job, I would have had it ready before.

I was awfully drowsy, and had a habit anyway of dropping off beside him when he was working. I knew what he meant when he said he would "punish" me by asking me to keep awake, although he only said it as a joke. But when I saw how he was working with all his heart and soul, without showing the least sign of wanting to sleep, and even looking at me from time to time with a cheerful smile, I felt terribly uneasy. I got up and went and fetched the water after a bit, and poured some out to cool.

Time enough to eat two meals passed before Chairman Mao stopped and stood up to stretch himself.

"You've been with me several years now," he said. "How is it that you still don't understand what comes first? The first thing you have to do is to find somewhere where the work can be done. Food and rest are quite secondary to that. You *must* realize that the work is the most important thing under all circumstances." He stopped a minute and then rubbed his hand over my head. "You'll have to get a bit of sleep," he said. "You can hardly keep your eyes open."

After all that I had been thinking about myself, of course I didn't want to. He urged me again. I burst into tears — I couldn't help it. It wasn't that I felt I had been criticized. It was a mixed feeling of sorrow and joy, the sort of feeling you have when your loving parents speak seriously but not harshly to you in warning.

I lay down near the bed, but I didn't go to sleep. My mind was full of memories. . . .

It was five years ago, at the end of March, when I was transferred from the 4th Army H.Q. to the Chinese Revolutionary Front Committee, to be Chairman Mao's orderly. At that time we called him "Commissar," not "Chairman" Mao. He had only the simplest of belongings. Two cotton and wool mixture blankets, a sheet, two of the ordinary uniform jackets and trousers, a sweater, a patched umbrella, an enamel mug which served as his rice-bowl, and a grey brief-case with nine pockets. On the march he used to carry the brief-case himself, and the umbrella, and I made a roll of the rest of the things. When we made camp I used to get hold of two boards for a bed, and make it up with the blankets and sheet. He used the rest of his belongings as a pillow.

He never did spend much of the nights in sleep, though. Directly the evening meal was over he would get out his maps, papers and pen and start working by lamplight. I used to sit by him. Of course I was very young, and I could never keep awake. I used to slide down on the floor and drop right off. He would often wake me up around midnight, saying to me, "Let's have some cold water." We had a little bucket we had brought with us from Kiangsi, and I used to get cold water in that for him to freshen up in. We hadn't got a basin — he just used the bucket.

He'd feel hungry after that, and I would get him the "three-level rice" in his mug — that is, rice in first, then whatever vegetable was going, and then another level of rice. The rice was left over from the afternoon meal, and I would heat it for him. If he didn't finish it he would cover it up with a piece of paper and eat it at the next meal time — he would never let me throw food away. After this midnight snack he went on with his work. It was under such conditions that he wrote the famous *On the Land-Investigation Campaign.*

Later on, when the Central Workers' and Peasants' Democratic Government was set up at Juichin, Kiangsi, and he was elected Chairman of the Republic, he still lived just as simply. We didn't even get proper food containers until February 1934, when we entered Changchow, Fukien.

I come from a poor family, and had never had any education. I couldn't read a single character when I joined the revolution. Chairman Mao used to teach me characters from the posters that the Red Army always put up wherever it went, as we went along, snatching a few minutes as he could on the march. He taught me how to sign my name.

I was brought back from these memories by the sound of the telephone. I looked up. Chairman Mao was still hard at it.

Altogether it took three days and nights to get the troops across the Chinsha — there were up to 40,000 of them. For those three days and nights Chairman Mao never left his "desk."

We were on the march again. We went through the area inhabited by the Yi people and swept over the Tatu River. By May 1935 we were at Hualingping. We were making for Shuitseti, and we reckoned it would take a whole day from Hualingping.

It was the usual early start. Chairman Mao was held up by some business or another and went with the medical corps instead of the Central Committee staff. The squad leader of the bodyguards and I went with him. We were crossing an open valley, some four miles long, when we were suddenly dive-bombed by three enemy planes. The bombs fell really near and we rushed to shield Chairman Mao. He was up at once, though, bending over the squad leader, who had been hit. He lay there, clutching his abdomen, quite silent. Chairman Mao touched him gently, and turned to the medical corps officer. "Can you do anything?" he asked urgently. My squad leader struggled to wave help aside. "No!" he said, "go on." He could hardly speak. He was terribly pale, as though all the blood was draining away from him. Chairman Mao sat down by him and lifted his head. "You'll be all right, Comrade Hu Chang-pao," he said gently. "Just keep quiet, and we'll carry you to Shuitseti, where we can get a doctor who'll see to you." My squad leader moved his head as it lay on Chairman Mao's arm. "I can't let you carry me," he said. "Don't trouble yourself. I can feel I'm bleeding inside. It doesn't matter about me, I'm quite content. But will you tell my parents? They live in Kian,

in Kiangsi. I'm only sorry that I can't go on with you to Shensi, and see our base there." He stopped and breathed hard for a minute. Then he looked at me. "Chen Chang-feng," he said. "Take good care of our Chairman Mao and the other leaders." His voice died away, and we couldn't hear what else he said. He tried to speak again; we could see his lips move. Suddenly, with a great effort, he spoke loudly. "Victory to the Revolution!" he cried. His head fell over and his eyes fixed and closed. "Squad leader, squad leader," I cried, but he was dead. Chairman Mao slid his arm out from under him and stood up. "Give me the quilt," he said. I gave him a quilt from the bedding-roll, and Chairman Mao laid it over the body.

Another time, I remember, I had got everything ready for Chairman Mao to go to bed — it was in September, when we were nearing Latsekou — and went to find him. He was deep in conference with Lin Piao, Nieh Jung-chen, Liu Ya-lou and Lo Jui-ching bending over maps. I went off quietly.

Next day we captured Latsekou and pushed on. Mount Liupan lay ahead on our line of march. We were aiming at reaching the village of Hatapu in a day — a distance of about forty miles.

It was a dark morning, with heavy cloud and a strong wind which brought rain in its wake. By the time we reached the foot of Mount Liupan we were all soaked to the bone.

Mount Liupan was nothing compared to the Snow Mountain Range that we had already crossed, but the ups and downs made the distance very long. We had about twenty miles of it, very hard going. There was nothing to help get a foothold, no trees after we began getting to the top, only dead grass.

I had picked up a dose of malaria by this time, and had had some trouble with my legs in Szechuan — a little time before. The swelling had gone down now, but I still felt rather wabbly. By the time we reached the summit I was so dizzy I felt I couldn't move another foot. Chairman Mao noticed this, and asked me what was the matter. I told him I was afraid I could never cross. As I spoke I crumpled up. Chairman Mao pulled me to my feet. He thought I was having an attack of malaria again, and told another bodyguard to get the medical orderly to give me something for it. But I wasn't having malaria, I was just exhausted from the march. "You go on," I said to him. "I'll have a bit of a rest and then catch you up."

"That won't do," said Chairman Mao. "The air's thin here, and there's all this rain. This is no place to rest. You must pull yourself together and get down this mountain." He got ready to carry me himself, with the other bodyguard. I wasn't going to have this, so I tried to start walking again, but my strength failed me and I couldn't move a step, I was so shaky. "What's the matter?" asked Chairman Mao. "Cold?" "Yes," I said. "I'm chilled right through, I feel all shrivelled up." "Come

on," said Chairman Mao. "Take my overcoat, and have some hot water. If you get warm again you'll be all right." He began to take his coat off, but I pulled at his arm. "No, Chairman Mao," I cried. "I won't take your coat. See, I can walk." I knew the ordinary uniform he had on underneath would not keep the cold out. He'd been up most of the night, too. I insisted I wouldn't have his coat, and tried to walk, but I was really too weak. I managed a step and then fell down, flat out. When I came to, the other bodyguard was in front of me with some hot water, and Chairman Mao's coat was over me. I looked at the wind tearing at his thin uniform, and strength seemed to come over me. He looked at me, with his usual fatherly expression. "Better now?" he asked. "Yes, I'm fine!" I said, struggling to my feet. "That's a Red fighter!" he said. "Let's go!"

We were over the mountain by the evening and got to a peasant's hut before we reached Hatapu. As I lay in bed that night my mind went back to the mountain. If Chairman Mao hadn't given me his overcoat, I said to myself, I would be dead up on those heights. Tears came to my eyes as I thought of it.

THE FIGHT AT LUTING BRIDGE

General Yang Cheng-wu

In May of 1935, during the course of the Long March, the Red Army reached the banks of the Tatu River at the border between Szechuan and Sikang Provinces. On the 22nd, the First Red Regiment successfully concluded forcing a crossing at Anshunchang. But the current was too rapid to permit the building of a bridge there. Only three small boats were available to serve as ferries, and it took each one a long time to make the round trip. To get tens of thousands of men across would require many days.

Chiang Kai-shek had ordered his armies under Liu Wen-hui and Yang Sen to block our crossing and those commanded by Hsueh Yueh and Chou Hun-yuan to harry us from the rear. A century ago, the famous general of the Taiping Revolution, Shih Ta-kai, and his army had been annihilated by the Manchu soldiers at Anshunchang, and Chiang Kai-shek was dreaming of reducing the Red Army to the same fate there. All the people of China were worried. Would the Red Army go the way of Shih Ta-kai? Would this historic tragedy repeat itself?

To get across rapidly and break the enemy pincers it was necessary to capture the bridge at Luting at once. The vanguard Fourth Red

Painting in the traditional style By CHEN SHIH-TSENG
Late Autumn (100 cm. × 22.5 cm.)

Regiment of our Left Route Army was given this task by General Lin Piao. The First Red Division, under the command of Army Chief-of-Staff Liu Po-cheng and Political Commissar Nieh Jung-chen, continued crossing at Anshunchang and travelling north along the east bank of the river to give support to our Fourth Regiment from the opposite side of the Luting Bridge.

* * *

Early in the morning of the 23rd I set out with our regiment from Anshunchang, heading along the west bank towards the bridge, about 110 miles away. We were given three days in which to reach it. The road twisted like a sheep's gut along the side of the mountains, and was full of ups and downs. To the left was the side of the mountain, rising sharply vertical, as if cut by a knife, straight up into the clouds. On the higher slopes was snow that never melted all year round. It dazzled the eyes and gave off a frigid chill. To the right, dozens of yards below, were the white-capped waves of the rushing river. One mis-step and you were a goner. But no one worried about the danger. There was only one thought in everyone's mind: Hurry on; take the Luting Bridge.

After we had marched about ten miles, enemy troops on the opposite side of the river began firing at us. To avoid needless losses, we made a detour of a few miles through the mountains. This consumed quite a bit of time.

After covering about twenty miles, we found ourselves confronted with a large mountain. Our vanguard ran into a company of the enemy and pounced on them like tigers. There was a brief fierce clash and the enemy unit was smashed.

The mountain was about four miles high. On the other side was a stream, not wide but very deep. The enemy had destroyed a bridge that had been there, and fording was impossible. We felled some trees and soon were across.

Cheered by our first victory, we marched with a spring in our step. Scattered firing broke out ahead. Suddenly, one of our scouts came flying back to report: "There's a mountain pass ahead of us on the left. It's being held from above by an enemy unit about the size of a battalion. They're blocking our advance."

At once, together with the regimental c.o., I led a few men forward at the double to scout out the terrain. The mountains ahead rose in sheer cliffs. There was only a narrow path between them, climbing so sharply it was like a ladder to heaven. Your cap fell off when you tried to look all the way to the top. Forts had been built both on the mountain summits and at the head of the pass.

The river was on our right, so we couldn't circle around from that direction. The heights directly ahead looked impregnable. On the left was a sharp cliff sparsely covered with shrubs and brambles; from the top of the cliff, the tall mountain continued to rise steeply.

After careful scouting, we decided to send a party up from the left to circle around, attack the enemy from the rear, and take the pass from behind. While one company was climbing around from the left flank, our Third Battalion pretended to make a direct assault. The enemy put on a tremendous show with their machine-guns, sealing the mouth of the pass so tight that even a bee couldn't have flown through.

In less than an hour we heard shots from the enemy's rear. Third Battalion then attacked in earnest, and the enemy were driven out of their fortifications. We pursued them relentlessly, destroying three companies at the foot of the cliff. We captured one battalion and one company commander and over two hundred prisoners.

* * *

The next day we received an order reading as follows: "Our Left Route Army has been given until the 25th to take the Luting Bridge. You must march at the utmost speed and act in the shortest possible time to accomplish this glorious mission. We are confident you can do it. Are preparing to congratulate you on your victory." Below was the forceful signature of General Lin Piao.

When we finished reading the order, Commander Wang and I looked at each other, then said together: "A glorious but very tough mission!"

The 25th! The 25th was the following day, and we were still eighty miles from the Luting Bridge. We would have to cover two days' march in one. No one had thought our time schedule would be changed so quickly and made so urgent. Eighty miles in one day is a tremendous march, and we had to do it on foot, every step of the way! What's more, we'd have to fight our way through strong enemy resistance.

But orders were orders. It was a glorious task and we certainly had to carry it out. We couldn't delay a minute, not a single second. Time was everything now. Originally there were two enemy regiments holding the bridge. But we had seen with our own eyes two more brigades on the other side of the river hurrying to reinforce them. Part of the brigades' forces were left to block our First Red Division, crossing over at Anshunchang, but the main body was racing us to the bridge. If we got there first, there was hope of victory. Otherwise, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for the Red Army to cross at Luting.

We couldn't stop. Time was too precious. As we marched we held a meeting of military and political officers to discuss what we should do. First we issued a number of rallying cries: "The Fourth Red Regiment has a glorious battle record. We must complete our mission and preserve our glory!" "Emulate the First Red Regiment, which captured Anshunchang. Compete with them and take the Luting Bridge!" "Our mission is glorious but very difficult. We can pass the test!" We set six the following morning as the dead-line for reaching our objective. After the meeting, the officers went back to their units to rally their men.

Just about the time this was completed, Wild Tiger Mountain was sighted ahead.

To cross Wild Tiger Mountain you have to go up ten or twelve miles, then come down the same distance. It is a dangerous climb, with the Tatu River on the right, high cliffs on the left, and the path just a narrow twisting trail. People say it's the neck of the road between Anshunchang and the Luting Bridge, and that's no exaggeration in the least.

An enemy battalion held the path where it cuts through the summit. It was the height of the foggy season; you couldn't see five paces beyond your nose. They spotted us as we neared the summit, but because of the fog they couldn't see us clearly. They could only fire wildly in our general direction. Taking advantage of this help from nature, we ordered our men to hold their fire. When we got close enough, we charged with hand-grenades and bayonets. You could hear them bursting in the fog, and the exultant cries of our men. Terrified, the enemy turned and fled. Our vanguard battalion pursued them all the way down the other side of the mountain, capturing prisoners and considerable booty — including not only rifle bullets, but white flour! As the chase reached the village of Mohsimien, the battalion ran into an enemy battalion and a regimental headquarters unit which were quartered there. Our victorious spearhead plunged in, and again the enemy scattered. We then occupied Mohsimien.

The wretched enemy had destroyed a bridge over the stream to the east of the village, putting a new obstacle in the way of our march. After spending two hours repairing the bridge, we continued our advance, covering fifteen or sixteen miles without a stop. We arrived at a little hamlet of ten or so families by the edge of the Tatu at about seven in the evening. We were still thirty-seven miles from Luting.

Troubles never come singly, and no one can control the weather. Suddenly there was a tremendous downpour, with thunder and lightning. The sky was so black you couldn't see the fingers of your own hand. Our men hadn't eaten all day; they were suffering from hunger. Marching at night in the slippery mud, the pack animals with our food and supplies couldn't keep up. As we came down Wild Tiger Mountain we had seen the enemy on the other side of the river still racing with us, neck and neck. If they beat us to the bridge, everything would be finished. We simply had to find a solution, and at once.

The more difficult our problems became, the more we had to intensify our political work among the men. We put out a call to all our Communists, Youth Leaguers, and other enthusiasts; we stated plainly the hardships that lay ahead, but insisted that we must be at Luting by six the next morning. An order was issued for every man to cut himself a staff. Anyone who couldn't march could walk leaning on the staff. Those who couldn't walk with the aid of staffs could crawl — but they still had to reach our objective on time! We couldn't stop to cook. Everyone was

directed to eat his rice ration raw — and wash it down with unboiled water.

The call, spreading through the ranks like wildfire, roused the men's fighting spirit. From the look of them, not even a mountain of knives could have held them back. But how could we march thirty-seven miles through over slippery mud in pitch darkness? That question weighed on my heart like a thousand-catty stone.

Suddenly a few points of light appeared in a dip in the mountains on the opposite side of the river, changing in an instant into a long string of torches. Enemy troops were making a forced march by torchlight. That gave us an idea. We'll do the same, I thought, and conferred immediately with our regiment commander, our chief-of-staff and our Party secretary. But the problem was this: The enemy were only across the river. Suppose they signal us, and ask that we identify ourselves? If they find out who we are and engage us in combat, how will we reach the bridge in time?

"When things are toughest, strike out boldly." We decided to adopt the designations of the three enemy battalions we had beaten yesterday and today. Buying all the reed, fences from the folks in the hamlet, we tied the reeds together to make torches and issued one to each man. On the march, one torch was lit by each squad — the torches were not to be wasted. Our aim was to cover at least three miles per hour. We directed our bugler to be prepared to give the responses we had learned from the captured enemy materials. Liu Wen-hui's troops were all Szechuanese; we picked out a few Szechuan comrades from our own ranks and some Szechuan men from among the prisoners so that they could shout back replies to any questions.

For the sake of speed, we left all our animals, baggage and heavy weapons — including my horse and the mount of the regimental c.o. — in the care of a platoon led by two officers, with instructions that they follow behind as best they could.

I had a leg wound at the time which had not yet healed. It caused me some inconvenience on the march. The comrades — especially the regimental c.o. — urged me to continue on horseback. But at a time when all officers should set an example, how could I ride? I issued a challenge: "We'll all march together, comrades. Let's see who walks the fastest. Let's see who gets to the Luting Bridge first!"

Delighted, the men held their torches high and pressed forward.

Our torches and those of the enemy column, pacing us on the opposite bank, crimsoned the waters of the Tatu. From a distance the lines of torches looked like two writhing fiery dragons. Above the sound of the waves we heard the sharp notes of an enemy bugle, followed by the weaker cry, "Which unit are you?" The enemy was making contact with us.

Our bugler blew the call required by enemy regulations as a response, and our Szechuan comrades and prisoners shouted an answer back in chorus. The stupid pigs on the other side never guessed that marching parallel with them was the gallant Red Army that day and night they dreamed of eradicating. They marched along with us for nearly ten miles. At about midnight, the rain grew heavier, and the torches on the opposite bank disappeared. We figured that they must have found the going too hard and made camp. The news spread quickly through the regiment. Our comrades were overjoyed. This is our chance, they said. March on! Faster! . . . In single file, we pushed ahead for all we were worth.

The rain pelted mercilessly; torrents rushed down the mountain gullies into the river. The twisting path along the side of the mountain had been difficult enough before; now the water made it slick as oil. Our walking staffs proved of little use. One slip and you landed on your head. It was a case of every three steps a skid, every five steps a fall. We rolled rather than marched forward.

Even under those conditions, men kept dozing off. A soldier would slowly come to a halt and the comrade behind would push him and yell, "Keep going! They're way ahead of you!" Only then would he suddenly waken and hurry to catch up. Finally, the men simply unwrapped their puttees and tied themselves together in a long chain, each pulling the other along.

After proceeding at a forced march all night, at a little after six the following morning, we succeeded in reaching the Luting Bridge and capturing its western end and western approaches. In twenty-four hours, besides fighting and repairing wrecked bridges, we had marched eighty miles. Truly an exploit of winged feet!

* * *

We occupied several buildings at the western end of the bridge, and there the men dried out their clothes, cooked some food, and rested. Regiment Commander Wang and I went out with the battalion and company officers to look over the terrain.

The Luting Bridge was located in a dangerous setting indeed. Even we who had braved the greatest difficulties couldn't help being taken aback. Below, the reddish waters, cascading down from the mountain gorges of the river's upper reaches, pounded against the ugly boulders rising from the river bed and tossed white froth high into the air. The roar of the rushing torrent was deafening. Not even a fish could hold its own against that water. Fording or crossing in boats was out of the question. The bridge was the only way to get to the other side.

We examined it. It was made not of stone or of wood but of iron chains — thirteen in number, each big link as thick as a rice bowl. Two chains on each side served as railings; nine formed the surface walk.

Originally, planks had been laid across the nine chains, and the whole bridge, suspended between two cliffs, swayed like a cradle with the motions of the person walking upon it. Now the planks were gone, having been taken by the enemy into Luting City. All that remained were the black hanging chains. At the head of the bridge two lines of a poem were inscribed on a stone slab:

Towering mountains flank the Luting Bridge,
Their summits rise a thousand miles into the clouds.

Across the river on the eastern side was the city of Luting, half of it along the shore, half of it against the slope of a mountain. Surrounded by a wall twenty-five feet high, the city was directly beyond the eastern end of the bridge. After you crossed the bridge you had to enter the city's West Gate. There was no other road. Luting was garrisoned by two enemy regiments; they had built strong fortifications along the mountain slope. Machine-gun emplacements close to the bridge kept us under continual fire, and mortar shells rained down on us.

Confident that their position was impregnable, the enemy sneered and yelled at us: "Let's see you fly over! We'll give up our arms!"

Our soldiers shouted back: "We don't want your arms. It's your bridge we're after!"

We set a battalion in position to seal off with rifle and machine-gun fire any enemy reinforcements which might try to reach the eastern end of the bridge from the south. Just as on our side, there was only a narrow path between the mountainside and the river along which they could come. Then we went among our companies to begin our battle rallies. Enthusiasm ran high. Each company submitted a list of names of men volunteering as an assault squad, each demanding that the men of their unit be given the task of taking the bridge.

At noon we called a meeting of all the officers in the regiment to decide on the composition of the assault squad. No sooner had we started our discussion than enemy mortar shells blew a big hole in the roof of the building in which we were gathered. Shell fragments and bits of broken tile showered down on us. Not one of us moved, but every pair of eyes stared angrily at the east bank.

"The enemy is urging us on," I said. "We must drive across the bridge immediately. Now let's decide which company shall be responsible for driving the opening wedge."

Liao Ta-chu, the commander of Second Company, jumped to his feet. Usually a taciturn man, he now forced himself to speak, though his dark sun-burnt face blushed to the ears with the effort. His short wiry frame trembled with excitement as he said:

"First Company was commended as a Model Company when we forded the Wuchiang River. We'd like to emulate them and win the title of Heroes Company in taking the Luting Bridge."

"You've got to give the assault mission to Third Company," the excitable commander of that company interrupted, sputtering like a machine-gun. "Third Company has done well in every battle. We can guarantee to take the bridge." Standing as solid as an iron pagoda, he added plaintively, "If you don't give the assault mission to Third Company, I won't be able to go back and face my men."

A heated debate followed, no company willing to yield to any other. It was up to the leaders to decide. Regiment Commander Wang and I talked it over; then he stood up and announced that Second Company would lead the assault. I then rose and said:

"If it's fighting you want, there's plenty more to come. You'll each get your chance. At Wuchiang River, First Company led off; this time we'll let Second Company start. The assault squad will be formed of twenty-two men — Communists and other bold young fellows — from Second Company, and will be led by Commander Liao. It seems like a good arrangement to me. What do the rest of you think?"

The response was a burst of applause from all present. Only the commander of Third Company continued to sulk. "Third Company's job isn't easy either," I assured him. "You have to go over directly behind Second Company and lay planks across those chains, so the rest of the men can charge into the city." Only then did his face break into a smile.

Finally I instructed the company commanders to issue to each man one catty of the salt pork we had captured from some of the local tyrants. The men fought better on a full stomach. After the meeting, I asked the regimental Party secretary to help the assault squad of Second Company get ready.

We began our attack at four in the afternoon. The regimental c.o. and I directed it from the west end of the bridge. All the buglers of the regiment blew the charge call in unison, and we opened up with every weapon we had against the enemy on the opposite bank. The firing, the shouts of the men, reverberated through the valley. Carrying tommy-guns, big knives strapped across their backs, twelve grenades apiece tucked into their belts, twenty-two heroes, led by Commander Liao, climbed across the swaying bridge chains, in the teeth of intense enemy fire. Behind them came the officers and men of Third Company, each carrying a plank in addition to full battle gear; they fought and laid planks at the same time.

Just as the assault squad reached the opposite side, huge flames sprang into the sky outside Luting City's West Gate. The enemy was trying to block us by fire, to consume us in its flames. The blaze, reddening half the sky, licked fiercely around the east end of the bridge.

The whole outcome of the attack hung by a hair. Confronted by the fire at the city gate our assault squad hesitated. The men standing with me and the regimental c.o. shouted across the river: "Go on, com-

rades, charge! Victory depends on you! Never mind the fire, charge! The enemy is cracking."

Emboldened by our cries, the twenty-two men, at the sound of a clarion bugle call, plunged boldly into the flames. Commander Liao's cap caught fire. He threw it away and fought on. The hair and eyebrows of the men were singed, but, streaming smoke and flame, they continued charging behind Liao, smashing their way into the city. In the street fighting that followed, the enemy brought their full weight to bear, determined to wipe our assault squad out. The twenty-two fought until all their bullets and grenades were gone. The situation was critical. It seemed to be all up with them.

But just then Third Company came charging to their rescue. Next, Regiment Commander Wang and I sped across the bridge with our second contingent and also entered the city.

In two hours' time, we destroyed half of the enemy's two regiments. The remainder broke and scattered. By dusk we had completely occupied the city of Luting and were in firm control of the bridge.

Our main task now was to guard against an enemy counter-attack and hold on to the bridge at all costs. We knew there were a couple of enemy regiments near Tachienlu, so we sent one battalion in that direction to stand as an outpost guard. We sent another battalion south along the river to hold off the two enemy brigades we had seen hurrying towards the bridge the day before. Around ten in the evening we heard the battalion's forward point open fire. Assuming they had made contact with the enemy, we prepared for a bitter battle. Our battalion took the position, then sent out an assault squad which brought back a wounded prisoner. He turned out to be a comrade of the 3rd Regiment of our First Red Division. Only then did we know that the first division had already arrived. We had been tensed for a cruel struggle, but now everyone relaxed and celebrated joyfully.

The First Red Division had caught up with the enemy brigades twenty miles from Luting. Afraid of being caught in an attack from both south and north, the brigades fled in panic towards Hualinping.

We at once dispatched men to meet Army Chief-of-Staff Liu Pocheng and General Nieh Jung-chen, who were following behind, and lead them into the city. It was a very happy reunion.

Although it was already two in the morning, the two commanders insisted on inspecting the bridge. Carrying a lantern, I accompanied them across. General Liu examined every detail carefully, as if he were trying to memorize the entire bridge. On the way back, he stopped in the middle and leaned over to look at the turbulent waters of the Tatu. Tapping his foot against the planking, he murmured, "We've spent plenty of blood and energy to get you, Luting Bridge, but we've done it!"

Among the captured enemy documents, we found an urgent directive issued by General Liu Wen-hui. It read: "Chu Teh and Mao Tsetung are going to become the second Shih Ta-kai. Ahead of them is the Tatu River, behind is the River of Golden Sands. They're caught like a fish in a bottle. Now is the time to annihilate the Red bandits."

Liu Wen-hui even offered a reward for the capture of our military leaders. "The enemy rates us very highly," our Army Chief-of-Staff remarked drily. "You see, they've put a 100,000 silver dollar price tag on me!"

Our men laughed. "We followed the same route as Shih Ta-kai, but history couldn't repeat itself. We're bound to win because ours is a people's army led by the Communist Party and Chairman Mao."

The following day, General Lin Piao marched up with our main force. His warm congratulations were a great encouragement to us. Then Chairman Mao, Commander-in-Chief Chu, Vice-Chairman Chou and the staff of other organizations arrived too. Thousands of troops strode across the Luting Bridge. We had conquered the seething barrier of the Tatu River.

The twenty-two heroes who had first smashed across were highly commended by the Military Committee. Their fearless exploits are a glorious page in the annals of our military history.

THE BATTLE OF PINGHSINGKUAN PASS

Chen Kuo-hui

Yes, I took part in the great battle of Pinghsingkuan Pass in September 1937. The set-up was that a crack Japanese division under Itagaki were marching on the Pass. They thought the area, bordering as it did on Hopei and Shansi Provinces, would be poorly defended. In the outcome it was the place where the imperialist aggressors met an annihilating blow from the Chinese people for the first time since the war started in July that year.

Knowing what threatened, General Lin Piao, at that time Commander of 115th Division of the 8th Route Army, had gone up himself to Lingchiu, the nearest largish town, to see what the enemy strength was and what dispositions he would make for our men. He decided that the lie of the Pass could be used strategically to strike a blow from the flanks and rear. Our orders were that we should get to the hills south-east of Pinghsingkuan under cover of darkness, to prepare an ambush and cut communications.

Most of the men in our regiment had been on the Long March, and the rest were seasoned fighters from the North Shensi Red Army. Ours was a well-steeled army, which had been well and truly tried in the long

years of the revolutionary civil war; we had crossed the Yellow River to march north and come to grips with the imperialist invaders. Morale was high, and the words of the Central Committee of our Party on Army Day, 1935, "Fight for the existence of our motherland!" had been taken to our hearts.

Before the battle of Pinghsingkuan our leaders called upon us to "win a great victory and cheer the hearts of the whole people," and at the Party branch meetings and soldiers' meetings which followed this was echoed unswervingly by officers and men. I was then a platoon leader in 4th Company, 685th Regiment and the pledge I made to the Party branch was, "This is our first direct encounter with the imperialists since the Party called upon us to march north and resist them. I am a Communist. I promise that I will uphold the glorious name of the Red Fifth Regiment!" The Red Fifth, now the 685th Regiment, had been commanded by glorious names, Chairman Mao himself, Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh and Commander Lin Piao.

My battalion's orders were to move off ahead as an advanced unit. My platoon was sent out on reconnaissance, in front of the battalion, and we were ordered to bring back a prisoner to act as a tongue.

It was in the evening of September 22. As we got near we could see the road was full of enemy lorries, motor-cycles, guns, mules and horses. We could see them clearly from the hills south-east of the highway, which we were on. The enemy was so cocky that they made no attempt at trying to keep under cover. They had their tents up by the road, and fires blazing merrily. Our reconnaissance unit waited till midnight and then got quietly up close to the highway, where we split into small groups. Just by mine was a sentry, steel helmet on his drowsy head, and his bayonet at the ready. He had his back to us. My group — there were four of us — got out our rope, made a noose in it and then crept up to the sentry. We got the noose round his neck before he could make a sound. I sent him back with one of the men, and then did a stalk on my own, returning with a couple of machine-guns and some ammunition from a lorry. The chaps were very pleased, and we did a bit more of the good work, getting another machine-gun and seven rifles. The enemy began to suspect something was up and fired a few shots, but didn't keep it up. As it drew near daybreak we left our ditch before we could be spotted.

Next evening the officers went off to make a further survey and set out the markers. We made a point of familiarizing ourselves with every ditch and rise in the section we were responsible for.

Guns were booming in the distance. The enemy had started their attack on the Pass.

On the 24th we started. It was pouring with rain as we went over the rough ground towards Pinghsingkuan. The paths were very narrow and we had to move in single file for the most part, but despite this we

made good time, and we were in good cover in the planned positions before daybreak, at Paiyentai, less than a mile from the highway. My division's line lay along a four-mile front in the hills between Pinghsingkuan and Honanchen, with one group sent out to the north. This detachment had to cross the highway and get on to a height north of Honanchen, so as to cut off the enemy rear and be able to control the northern side of the highway.

By daybreak of the 25th we could just see the enemy troops deploying outside Pinghsingkuan, getting ready to mount an attack. We could see the Pass. It had been barricaded, but the enemy artillery had made a mess of the outer defences and we could see that they were about to enter. It was then that the 21st Battalion of the Japanese 5th Division began to come up from Lingchiu. There they came, about a hundred lorries, twice that number of carts and a cavalry group. They were coming our way, right into our ambush.

There was a heavy frost and a biting north wind. We attacked at about 5:30, breaking their line in three places, to begin with, and then chopping up these pieces into fragments. Each of our men had four to six grenades and led off with them, following up with the bayonet. Their spirit showed what moved them; their high sense of patriotism and hatred for the invaders shone out. Some of them were throwing their grenades in twos. There was a tremendous din, as grenades exploded and battle cries rang out. The enemy was thrown into confusion. Some took cover under lorries and went on fighting and some got up the hillside and tried to get at us. Their lines of lorries got mixed up and their command system broke down.

In front of my company they had taken a little rise — the terrain here is all hilly as it rises towards the Pass. Our company commander called to us. He pointed at the enemy and cried, "Comrades! The hour to fight for our motherland's existence has struck!" He himself led us in the assault. The enemy fire was heavy, and almost immediately he was wounded. The battalion commander turned to me. "Comrade Chen Kuo-hui!" he said. "The Party entrusts you with the task of leading the company. Continue the battle!" Now was the time for me to carry out my pledge! I burned to fulfil it well. I sent the 1st and 2nd platoons out to get round the hill and take it from the rear and myself led the 3rd in a frontal assault, calling out to the men to respond to the Party's call and annihilate the enemy.

They kept up a stubborn resistance despite our attacks from both sides. No. 1 platoon leader got his men up the hill first, and engaged in hand-to-hand fighting. Even the enemy wounded went on fighting and we saw one draw a knife and stab No. 1 platoon leader. We rushed the hill and got rid of all resistance. Of the forty or so Japanese we had been fighting, fifteen were casualties and the rest routed. It is true that they

were stubborn, but we were even more so. 1st platoon leader refused to leave the line, despite his wound, which deeply moved his men.

After we had taken this hilltop we moved over to the heights nearer the highway, leaving 3rd platoon to cover the hill. We were under heavy bombardment and smoke and dust filled the sky, which was clouded by smoke bombs as the enemy tried to cover his counter-attack. Leading 1st platoon, I scattered the men on the nearby slope with orders to hit the enemy at close range. The Company Political Instructor, in charge of 3rd platoon on the hill, put his men into some cover in the ditches, calling on them to defend their position determinedly, and not let a single one of the enemy escape.

By 10:00 the battle was at its height. All the strategic heights were in our hands, and we had complete control of the gorge and the highway. The enemy attempted to counter-attack time after time, trying to get to the heights themselves, but each time we kept them off. Our section was rushed four times, the first time by quite a large group — there must have been more than eighty of them — who persisted in their attack despite our fire. We got them from the flanks and they pulled back, dragging more than twenty wounded or killed with them. Soon afterwards another lot rushed us, even more this time, nearly a hundred. They were near enough for me to see them individually, rushing up in threes and fives, shouting wildly. We were at a disadvantage to them as far as fire-power went. We had four machine-guns, three of them taken on our reconnaissance and one which we had captured on the hilltop that day, but no artillery. But we made good use of the machine-guns. When they jammed I was able to help the gunners, using my lessons from the Long March. I must have fired over a thousand rounds that day, and thrown 58 grenades, myself.

This second assault was very fierce. We had to shift our machine-guns several times. I was firing in short bursts at one time and asked one of the men to watch results. It turned out that I got three of the enemy in six bullets.

"Got him!" the men would sing out. "Got another!" When I really got going I downed fifteen in one long burst.

I was fairly carried away with it, standing up, clutching the machine-gun and swinging it round chattering. A shell burst near where I stood and I got a bit of shrapnel in one leg. A moment later a bullet hit the barrel of my gun, ricochetted off and scraped my forehead, digging a bit out and sending the blood streaming down my face. The gun was hit twice that day, as a matter of fact, but not badly, and we got it going again each time.

Now they were obviously weakening. The third rush was only two squads strong, and the last only one. We, on the other hand, were strengthening our position and had made ourselves some very useful foxholes by then from which we could attack and yet be in good position.

On the road below us stood the Japanese lorries piled high with ammunition. We longed to reduce them with grenades — we could easily lob them over from where we were, but we were afraid the explosion which would follow would get our men too. However, the problem was the same for the enemy. Their planes were over us most of the time, but they could not bomb us without hitting their men. Both sides looked at the enemy dead. The enemy could not drag them off, and we could not get to them to get their rifles. At some stages of the battle even the wounded on both sides were fighting with bare hands. We remembered to utilize our training, though, and called out the Japanese phrases we had learned. "Throw down your arms and we'll spare your lives!" and we threw over leaflets in Japanese.

By 16:00 our ammo was running low. 1st platoon leader, a Party member, rallied the men. "Comrades!" he said, "if our ammunition runs out, we'll fight with stones and our bayonets! If our rifles go, we'll go on with our bare hands, even our teeth. We'll not let a single one get away!"

It was just about then that the battalion commander sent a runner through the lines to tell us to hold on till nightfall. I sent an immediate answer, "We pledge ourselves to hold out till nightfall at all costs." When I told the men, they fully agreed and went further. "Of course we'll hold on," they said. "If he says nightfall, that means we'll be annihilating them then. Good!"

It was a very hard day. We had not by then worked out all the tactics we perfected later. Our movements were not perfectly timed and we had not arranged for proper provisioning before we started fighting. Still, our assets were great. We had the Party and Chairman Mao to lead us, and Commander Lin Piao to guide the battle. We also had a high morale, based on the experience we had already had from the revolutionary civil war and our determination to defeat the Japanese imperialists. We were covered with powder and dirt. The bandage I'd got on my forehead showed up startlingly white and drew the enemy fire, so I pulled it off.

But the worst thing was our thirst. The rain had stopped early, and the sun was hot, scorching hot. We had been nearly twenty-four hours without water. Everyone was parched, and we could none of us get our dry rations down — our potatoes and baked flour stuck in our throats. Some of the men dug up roots and sucked them. I tried this too, and felt a bit better for it.

As night fell more battalion orders came. We were to get back to the main forces, move to the left flank, and wipe out some enemy remnants there. This we did successfully.

The result of the fiercely-fought battle was that we had completely cleared four miles of highway east of Pinghsingkuan. Enemy dead and wounded, horses, over-turned lorries and weapons and ammunition littered the whole place.

Japanese reinforcements trying to come up next day were dealt with by our troops in Honanchen. They got thirty lorries, six hundred mounted soldiers and three tanks. Japanese planes were up, but we were already in good cover in the hills.

After the battle the peasants came in their thousands to pay tribute to us. The cadets from Commander Peng Ming-chih's Cadet Corps came too. The battlefield was cleared up—it took two days, there was so much material. Altogether we had nearly a thousand casualties on our side, but we had removed over 3,000 of the enemy, killed, wounded or prisoners, destroyed over 100 lorries, and captured one field gun, over 20 machine-guns, over 1,000 rifles, 20 grenade-throwers, 53 horses and a lot of Japanese money — something over 300,000 yen. Other supplies and provisions were too numerous to count. We had enough Japanese army overcoats, for example, to supply every one in the division.

After this battle, our main forces moved to Shansi, to continue the fight there and answer Chairman Mao's call to set up bases in the rear of the enemy. My battalion went to the Hopei area after several victorious battles and became a guerrilla detachment, fighting in the heart of the Japanese-occupied territory.

FIFTEEN YEARS SINCE THE YENAN "TALKS"

Fifteen years ago in his "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature" Chairman Mao Tse-tung raised one of the fundamental unsolved problems of literature — the gulf between the writer and the labouring people. The gradual bridging of this gulf has helped to carry forward the new Chinese literature which arose with the May Fourth Movement. The three articles published here show the reactions to the Yenan "Talks" of the woman novelist Tsao Ming, the short-story writer Kang Cho, and the literary critic Chu Kuang-chien, a professor of Peking University who was formerly much influenced by Benedetto Croce.

The Editor

NEW PROBLEMS

TSAO MING

This year is the fifteenth anniversary of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* as well as the first year of our policy of encouraging full creative diversity in these fields. Our commemoration of Chairman Mao's historic essay is, therefore, of special significance today. I am sure it would be valuable for us to examine our own activities and work as writers in the light of both the *Talks* and the new policy.

When I began writing, revolutionary literature was still in its infancy. We were using it in the struggle before we even knew how to handle it as a weapon. Looking back, I can see now that the Yenan *Talks* were a turning point in my literary career.

Ten years before the *Talks* were published, though still at school, I had already begun to write. I knew little about literature, and not much

about life either. Although I came from a region of craftsmen and most of my girl relatives were workers, I viewed their activities through the eyes of an immature observer. Even after I began writing progressive literature, except for the few individuals I met in Canton and a period I spent in jail, I had little contact with the people. Most of the time I sat in my room in Shanghai writing, and discussing literary questions with other writers. I was quite divorced from the struggles of the great masses of the people.

Even so, I could not help becoming aware of the resentment and resistance of many labouring people to their domestic exploiters and rulers and to the foreign imperialists. Reflecting this mood of theirs, I wrote a story about one of their strikes.

But so far as the workers themselves were concerned I had only the vaguest idea of how they lived or thought or fought. My stories about them were necessarily very empty. In describing their life, I had to rely on my recollections of the workers I had known as a child. The Chiang Kai-shek regime was extremely reactionary, and it was difficult for a writer to have any contact with workers without coming under suspicion. But my main fault was that I didn't recognize how important it was for a writer to be close to the people. Had I known, it wouldn't have been impossible for me, even then. A few writers at that time managed to do quite a bit of work among the workers.

It was a happy day for me when, in 1942 in Yenan, I heard Chairman Mao deliver his *Talks* on art and literature. But did I, as a result, understand fully the importance of going deeply into the life of the workers, peasants and soldiers? No. When the big production movement began in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region in 1943, all the intellectuals in Yenan took part. We carried water buckets suspended from yokes on our shoulders, we picked manure from the road with our bare hands, we learned to spin cotton into thread. Labour became the accepted thing. Unfortunately, our participation didn't last long enough, and we worked in groups of our own, not together with the people. At best, I only laid the beginnings of a foundation of my ideological remoulding.

After the Japanese surrendered, the realm of our people's government grew larger day by day. I left Yenan and went to Changchiakou (Kalgan), where I was thrilled to see again locomotives, water towers and high power lines that could serve our revolutionary forces to liberate the whole country and eventually turn our homeland into an industrial power.

Although my stay in Changchiakou was only temporary, I managed to spend a few months in a local iron mill. They hadn't yet started production, but were still in the repairing and political education stage. I was only a spectator at first; worst of all, I had no common language with the workers. Later, I helped them with their wall newspaper, and things were a little better. This was my first contact with liberated industrial

workers, and I didn't get much out of it. But going to the mill was better than nothing, and a few months was better than a couple of days.

In the north-east, where I went next, there was so much work to do that we writers pitched in and worked along with everyone else, each person doing the work of three. One writer served as district Party secretary, another became the district chief, a third joined the army as a correspondent. Many writers participated in the mass struggles of the people.

For some reason I was assigned to take over the local postal services. Complete amateur though I was, I set to work. First, at the urging of the postal workers and employees, I organized meetings at which they poured out their grievances and accused the rascally officials who had abused them under the Kuomintang. A number of forceful and competent people showed their mettle at these meetings, and I helped them set up labour unions and institute various welfare arrangements.

A few months of this and I no longer was tongue-tied among workers as I had been at the iron mill. Whatever I didn't understand, I asked the masses. Their suggestions, I collected and synthesized. If we still were stuck, I would seek help from higher organizations. This method not only solved our problems, but was heartily supported by the masses. That was when I began to understand that it is only by taking part in the people's struggles that you can share their emotions.

This experience stood me in good stead when I was transferred to the hydro-electric station. I got along fine with the workers there. I taught them literacy and organized sidelines for their families. Incidentally, I gathered material for a novel. But even after I had collected all my material, I let it simmer for over a year before daring to set pen to paper. That was because I had run into a new problem, and a very troublesome one at that.

You remember that in 1947 a tumultuous land reform movement was instituted in the north-east villages; militarily we were attacking the key rail town Ssupingkai, steadily pushing the enemy south. Defeating the enemy, defeating the feudal landlords—obviously splendid themes for a novel. What then was my problem?—The factories and mills now belonged to the people. The enemy had been cleared out of them. What enemies could I attack in writing about industry?

Write about something else then? That wouldn't be right either. Industry still had plenty of problems. The workers hated certain revolutionary administrators—subjective people who worked tremendously hard over trifles but couldn't see the forest for the trees. These people irritated me too. They were a wet blanket on the workers' initiative and creativeness. But should I criticize our own people, criticize Communists like myself? Bureaucracy was a new theme for me. Yet not to treat with it seemed to be letting the workers and my own artistic conscience down.

I mulled the question over for nearly a year, the image of the indignant workers constantly prodding me. Finally I made up my mind. If anyone criticized me, I would invite him to face the facts.

How was I to know then that what I had run into was one of the "contradictions among the people"! Only recently when I heard Chairman Mao's speech to the Supreme State Conference did I connect the two together. It was a great lesson to me.

Thereafter, I kept going to factories, and kept meeting the problem of internal contradictions. I found out that wherever free rein and encouragement was given to the workers' initiative, there production was good. Wherever bureaucracy was prevalent, there production suffered. Indeed bureaucracy seemed to exist everywhere; it was more easily concealed in places like government offices, but in industry it immediately came to light because it directly affected production. Moreover, workers, being more positive and creative than people in other lines of endeavour, are particularly sensitive to it.

I wrote one story after another attacking bureaucracy. But it seemed to me that the bureaucracy of leaders in industry was becoming more and more complicated, and was manifesting itself in increasingly different forms. At the hydro-electric station I had met the hard-working bureaucrat who cut himself off from the majority of the workers and relied entirely on a small group of enthusiasts. In other places I found the conservative type who relied on no one—ignoring all the workers completely—an even more onerous kind of bureaucrat.

I was bolder now than I had been when writing *Moving Force* —my novel about the hydro-electric station. For one thing, I had already written one book attacking bureaucracy, and it had been well received. Secondly, at my new post in a railway equipment plant, I had penetrated more deeply. I had been transferred there after the liberation of Shenyang, to lead the political education. I didn't leave until we had gone through several movements for production and education in democracy and had brought a new batch of workers into the Party. And so, when I wrote *Locomotive Engine* I was full of confidence.

By then I was well aware of the value to a writer of taking part in the people's struggles. Living and working among the workers was gradually improving my own thoughts and emotions. In addition, participating in their struggles was giving me more material than I could possibly use.

This discovery so intoxicated me that it made me rather dizzy. I could see that the human problems in industry were very complicated, but I viewed them only superficially, and I tended to over-simplify. My portrayal of them, therefore, was of course no better than in my earlier writings. Even though I personally felt I had gone much deeper into life at the railway equipment plant than I had at the hydro-electric station, and despite the fact that I worked harder on *Locomotive Engine*

than I had on *Moving Force,* it was obvious the second novel wasn't as good as the first. The trouble was I had been mentally lazy and self-satisfied. I hadn't taken Chairman Mao's advice about ". . . more practice, more knowledge; the cyclical repetition of this pattern to infinity."

I have been living in a steel mill town for nearly three years now. Logically I should be able to write somewhat better than before. But I do not. I can't seem to get started. I have run into many new problems, of a sort that cannot be quickly solved.

What we have here is a steel combine, more complicated than ten railway equipment plants put together. We have well over a hundred departments. About a dozen are the most important—if any one of these fails to complete its quota it affects other units.

The place is the finest touchstone for determining whether or not people have a healthy collective outlook. The contradiction between the individual, departmental approach and the collective approach, between proud complacency or crabby conservatism and a constructive, creative attitude—all these form an involved, dazzling pattern.

Production and construction of socialist industry is so new in our country, and is developing so rapidly, with new problems every day, that no sooner has an author recognized one problem than a new one pops up. A vast variety of techniques are involved too, different in each branch of industry. Although a writer need not describe technical aspects in detail, unless he has a general grasp of their function in the productive process, he will not be able to understand the problems involved. Yet technical questions, by their very nature, are apt to limit him in constructing his plot and hinder him from bringing in other aspects of life with which he is much more familiar.

Collective effort and the time element are also very important in industry. It is hard for a writer to pick out the many and varied individual incidents he needs for his story. . . .

While all of the above contribute to our difficulties, none of them is the major problem. The major problem is still understanding people. We haven't known industrial workers very long. There is a considerable difference between our abstract conception of the working class and workers as they really are. They require careful study and thorough understanding. We are all too often inclined to take a particular worker and see only his individualistic or backward traits and overlook the class quality of which he is possessed and the general trend of his development. Or we stress the things that workers have in common, while neglecting the special traits a particular individual manifests under specific circumstances. . . .

Regardless of the number of difficulties, I believe we can conquer them all. But we can't do it closeted in our studies. We must go among the workers, take part in production, make a deeper study, write much more.

Since the defeat of the landlord class in the land reform, the rural problems remaining are also primarily those of contradictions among the people. The formation of farming co-operatives and collective farms offers a whole series of new themes to our authors. With the liberation of the mainland and the wiping out of the counter-revolutionaries, our army is now concentrating on training and improving its technique; troops are mustered according to a regular conscription system and many of the old veterans have gone back to civilian life. This too has provided our writers with much new material. The things with which we were most familiar in the past are gradually losing their importance as themes.

Today, at the same time they are building socialism, the labouring people of China are transforming themselves spiritually. We must join them in this ideological remoulding. We are living in an era that is changing from day to day, a wonderful era that is going forward with flying strides. Only by plunging ourselves into this changing scene can we writers reflect it well and help the people advance.

THE PATH I HAVE TRAVELLED

KANG CHO

Today we are celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Yenan *Talks,* and the Communist Party has made known that it is its policy to "let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools contend" and has launched a new rectification campaign. People and the times have changed. At such a moment I cannot help asking myself seriously whether I, a writer, have done enough to identify myself with the people. Have I still got reservations regarding this vital problem? What am I going to do in the future?

I first worked among the masses in 1940, in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region in the rear of the enemy. I was only twenty then, and had been sent there by the organization I belonged to. I was rather a fish out of water when I first went to the countryside. When I met one of the village officials I just didn't know how to talk to him, and had to force myself to squeeze out a few awkward words. Finally I decided that the best thing was for me to do whatever I saw needed doing. If a peasant asked me where to find the head of the peasants' association I used to take him along myself. If the landlord of my house wanted his turnips dried, I helped him carry them on to the roof. Work like this helped me a lot.

Later on I went to an area where guerrilla fighting was going on. I found it hard to follow the local dialect, and that made it decidedly unpleasant when sometimes there were enemy units only a mile away. Even so I used to join in discussions with the local people and officials about such things as rent reductions. Gradually people began to accept me as a person, even if I was a bit "different." Once I was trapped in a courtyard by enemy troops and they very skilfully got me out. Another time I got rheumatism in my left arm which put it out of action for months. They got a specialist in acupuncture from a far-away place to come and treat me. Three needlings did the trick.

It was in the winter of 1943, when I was doing rent reduction work in a guerrilla area, that I got a copy of Chairman Mao's Yenan *Talks* by underground channels. It shook me considerably and brought home to me that I had done pitifully little to help the people, and even what I had done had been to some extent because I feared they might think I was useless and wanted them to protect me. I'd been toying with the idea of going in for literary work, but I had a lot of high falutin ideas about literary work and I couldn't square them with my work with the masses. I had a few casual acquaintances, and my main interest in them was to gather material for my writing. For some time I'd been trying to write in the way working people talked, though looking back now it seems to me that even this I did for personal ends. I never really felt much admiration for all the great things done by the working people. They treated me well, and the only effect was to make me feel that I was a somebody. That was why the Yenan *Talks* came as such a shock to me. Later on I improved and struck up a real friendship with many people whom I keep in touch with still. My work showed some improvement, and I started writing articles in my spare time.

It was the *Talks* that first impelled me to learn from the people, but I also got an enormous amount of help from the Party and from other people who weren't writers. It would be impossible to speak too highly of the help I got from my old superiors and comrades-in-arms in the Border Region. I must mention one comrade who was then head of the peasant association for the region. I taught him algebra and lent him books, but that was nothing to what he taught me. He was always pulling my leg to make me get down to realities. He used to say things like, "Lao Kang, do you know what the peasants call a hen?" I'd look blank, and he'd say, "Well, they call it an egg-laying hen." And again, "You're always talking about rent reduction, but which is better, fixed rent or adjustable?" Sometimes he'd challenge me to do a bit of hard work: "Bet you I can hoe three furrows while you're doing two." And when I'd written an article he'd say, "Read it to the people and see what they say. If they say it's good I'll give you half a pound of our home-grown

tobacco." Yes, this peasant taught me a lot. He really knew how working people lived and thought; he really understood what a problem it would be to remould intellectuals; and he could more than hold his own in any discussion on art and literature. He is only one of the many people who come to my mind when I think of the education I received from the Party.

Chairman Mao's *Talks* set out to invigorate literature, to bring the flowers to bloom. The policy of letting "a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools contend" has the same purpose. It is a policy which amplifies and brings up to date the ideas sketched in the *Talks*. Till quite recently I failed to see that the policy and the *Talks* were pretty much the same thing, and perhaps I am not so clear on it even now.

We writers have to learn from life; and when I say "we writers" I mean, in the first place, myself. I shall try to solve this problem of linking myself with the people, to close the gap between me and them. It is a problem, and to solve it we have to set ourselves to serve the people, constantly, unconditionally and whole-heartedly. That is the way in which we shall remould ourselves. Life itself has changed, and there may be many ways of getting in touch with, of identifying ourselves with the people. But my feeling is that our younger writers should strive to emulate those of the older generation who plunged into real life and steeled themselves in the process, like those in the liberated areas fifteen years ago.

As for me, I intend to go back to the place where I grew to manhood. For the next few years I shall be an Antaeus: nothing shall tear me from my mother earth. I intend to write about it, its present, past and future. Whether I write anything worthwhile is another matter, but I shall do the best I can. I shall go and live among the masses and take my place by their side as a worker for the revolution. I shall work in the co-operatives and earn work-points by my own sweat. I will not be a mere onlooker. I shall use that place as my base for ever broader contact with life in general, try to link it up with the whole of China, perhaps with the whole world. Writers are not pedlars who come to the countryside for what they can get and then rush back to the city to sell their wares. A writer must keep close to the earth and raise flowers from it by his toil. I have a firm yet flexible plan for striving to become one with the people. I can't help thinking something like this would do all writers good.

The "hundred flowers and schools" policy and Chairman Mao's *Talks* between them give us an incentive, a spur such as we have never before known. In addition, relying on the leadership and supervision of the Party and of the people, I shall carry out the directions given by the Yenan *Talks*, and try to produce one tiny flower in our literary garden which will have blossoms to show all the year round.

MY UNDERSTANDING

CHU KUANG-CHIEN

I read Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* for the first time after the liberation of the mainland. At first reading it seemed strange and peculiar, for it was a complete repudiation of many of my own views on the subject.

First, regarding the relationship between literature and politics. I had always believed that literature was above politics; to use literature as an instrument of propaganda was to debase it. Literature was literature. In criticizing a literary work there was only one standard — the artistic one.

But Chairman Mao repeatedly emphasizes, "Literature should serve politics," politics are class politics, to serve politics means to serve a class. "Any class in any class society always considers politics as the first criterion and art as the second criterion."

I had felt that art should serve art alone, that its sole function was to portray individuals' thoughts and emotions, that creation and appreciation were solely intended for individual enjoyment. There was no question in my mind of "whom to serve." Naturally I wrote my books for those who read — this obviously excluded crude fellows like workers, peasants and soldiers. I wrote for "upper-crust" gentry like myself.

Chairman Mao, however, not only places the question of whom to serve in the first rank, but he states without the slightest equivocation that literature should serve the workers, peasants, soldiers and urban petty bourgeoisie — the very people whom we of the "upper crust" had in the past despised. "In comparing intellectuals who have not yet remoulded themselves ideologically with workers and peasants," he relates, "I came to feel that it was the intellectuals who were the dirty ones."

This leads directly to the problem of study methods of writers and artists. I had believed in the saying that "Book-learning improves one's character." I thought that a writer must first and foremost study the classics, be a superior, ivory tower type of person who acquired his wisdom from texts on which he battened in secluded contemplation.

Chairman Mao on the other hand says, "Literature of the past is not a source but a resulting flow," that "the only source" is "the literary and artistic raw material in the lives of the people," and that therefore "any writer or artist worth his salt" must "whole-heartedly go to the worker, peasant and soldier masses, go into their fiery struggles."

It was clear that my original ideas and Chairman Mao's literary precepts were as different as day and night. Young people today hearing that I formerly entertained these fantastic concepts may find it hard to believe.

To them I can only say: I'm older than you by several score years; it is your good fortune that you are incapable of thinking such nonsense. But when I was your age, ideas like mine were quite common. Many Chinese intellectuals thought that way; many foreign intellectuals thought that way; today literati in capitalist countries like England, France and America still think that way. For a long time, no one considered such ideas odd or silly; in fact they were quite basic, even classic, among writers. Among people living in that period, or growing up under its influence (that is to say, bourgeois intellectuals), concepts like Chairman Mao's were very unusual. From this simple fact alone, we can see how revolutionary his *Talks* were.

I venture to say I am somewhat more aware of their revolutionary significance than the average younger reader of this article, because the target of their attack was those very bourgeois and idealist literary ideas of which my thinking was typical. Young people reading Chairman Mao's warning to petty-bourgeois intellectuals may be conscious of its sting and feel a bit uncomfortable. But to people with such obviously serious failings as mine, his words were nothing short of a club, a club that hit hard and accurately. All the ideas I had taken for gospel in literature, everything my mind clung to most stubbornly — in other words my whole subjective idealist and bohemian literary theories — had the props knocked out from under them. My own experience proves that Chairman Mao drove to the root of the ailment of the old intellectuals, and provided the direct cure in recommending what should be destroyed and what should be constructed.

The root lay in a stand that was not of the proletariat or the people, in a separation from the masses and from life. The cure lies in studying Marxism-Leninism and making a deep study of the life of the working people so as to change our thoughts and emotions, our class standpoint.

So far as I was concerned this was a tall order; I had to move from one world to another. This was a difficult but by no means impossible job. My own not too complete change, and especially the relatively thorough transformation of people more mentally advanced than I, proves that this difficult task can gradually be accomplished.

You can see how big a change has already taken place by comparing the ideological situation in the literary world today with what it was before the country was liberated. Chairman Mao's literary precepts instead of being little known are now widely accepted. The vast majority of the literati not only recognize the correctness of the direction which Chairman Mao has pointed out, but they are striving to travel in that direction.

In the fifteen years since the *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* were published, unprecedented changes have taken place in

Homeward Bound (9½ in. × 6½ in.) Coloured woodcut by WANG CHI

every aspect of our country's life. We have overthrown the feudal reactionary rule, cast off the shackles of imperialism, completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and are now triumphantly going ahead with socialist transformation and construction, converting China from a backward, weak, agricultural nation to a strong, modern, industrial nation.

This is a very different situation from what prevailed in Yenan during the Anti-Japanese War. On the cultural front alone, the changes have been enormous. The majority of people in the cultural field have gone through an ideological remoulding, they have studied Marxism-Leninism, they have been trained in revolutionary struggle. A literature that truly serves the working people has begun to flourish, while the working people themselves, steadily improving organizationally, culturally, in education and economically, have produced quite a number of fine writers and artists from their own ranks.

In view of the great change that has occurred, one can't help asking whether Chairman Mao's *Talks* are still pertinent. Or have their scope and degree of applicability also changed?

It seems to me the question is not one of change, but rather of how, at a relatively higher stage, to apply Chairman Mao's principles to the present situation. On the one hand we must recognize the great advances in our literary circles in recent years; on the other hand we must admit that these advances still fall far short of our economic developments and actual demand.

During the Yenan period, we conducted a severe struggle against the enemies in our literary world. Today this contradiction has already been resolved in the main. But the thing which Chairman Mao so earnestly warned us of in his *Talks* —the necessity to change our petty-bourgeois standpoint and thinking—has become more acute.

The major contradiction among China's literati today is the conflict between petty-bourgeois and proletarian ideology. Writers have already appeared among the workers, peasants and soldiers. Some writers not of worker, peasant or soldier origin have taken a more or less proletarian stand. But most intellectuals in the literary field still have a bit of a petty-bourgeois tail concealed beneath their clothes. This is a basic fact of our present literary world.

Writers are still inclined to keep their distance from the masses and from life; they write with little regard to reality, relying on their own simple subjective ideas. This also shows that the two important questions raised by Chairman Mao in his *Talks* — "Whom to serve" and "How to serve" — have not yet been satisfactorily answered to this day.

Chairman Mao pointed out the correct path. "Study Marxism-Leninism, study society"; ". . . for long periods of time, unreservedly and whole-heartedly go into the midst of the worker, peasant and soldier

masses, into their fiery struggles; go to the only, the broadest, the richest source to observe, learn, study and analyse all men, all classes, all the people, all the vivid patterns of life and struggle . . ."; diligently study ". . . the lively rich language of the great masses of the people"; "transform your thoughts and emotions. . . ."

For the bulk of China's writers and artists, this is a goal which is yet to be attained.

CHRONICLE

The Debate on "The Tale of the Lute"

The well-known Chinese classic *The Tale of the Lute* (琵琶記) which has always been regarded as the first drama of the Southern Theatre,* was written in the thirteen sixties at the end of the Yuan dynasty. Its author, Kao Tse-cheng, served as a minor official under the Mongols, and took part in the campaigns to crush the peasant revolt led by Fang Kuo-chen. A dramatist and a poet, he finally gave up his official career when the red-turbaned peasant forces were rising throughout the country, and went to live as a recluse near Ningpo in the province of Chekiang, where he wrote this masterpiece which has been staged for centuries.

The hero of this drama is the scholar Tsai Po-chieh, who lived at the end of the second century. In the opera, Tsai wants to stay happily at home with his bride Wu-niang looking after his old parents, but his father orders him to go to the imperial capital to take the civil service examination. After coming first in the court examination, he is forced by the emperor and prime minister to marry the latter's daughter and remain in the capital as an official. Meantime his home in Chenliu has suffered so badly from drought that Wu-niang finds it hard to make ends meet. In order to give the old people rice she lives on rice husks herself, though they suspect her of eating better in secret. And after the old couple die, she has to sell her own hair to bury them. Then, helped by her neighbour Chang, who has a strong sense of justice, she goes with her lute to the capital as a singsong girl, and at last she finds her husband. The drama ends with Tsai's return home with his two wives to observe mourning for three years, while the prime minister sends the whole clan a congratulatory message from the emperor.

*The general name for folk dramas in south China before the Ming dynasty. *Kunchu* and other types of opera were derived from this genre.

Kao Tse-cheng based his drama on an old folk opera which he revised. The original version is lost, but from certain records we know that the hero of it was a faithless husband, whose wife was trampled to death by his horse and who then was struck dead by a thunderbolt — retribution from Heaven. Kao obviously wanted to make Tsai a good man. In his prologue he declares that his hero Tsai Po-chieh is a loyal subject and an excellent son, pointing out that a drama with no moral message is worthless, however well-written.

Tsai's wife Wu-niang and his neighbour Chang are the two best-known and most popular characters in this opera which, incidentally, covers a considerable range. For instance, during the great drought in Chenliu, Kao exposes the prevalent corruption by describing the distribution of government relief. He skilfully contrasts the famished peasants eating husks with the guests in the prime minister's house who drink and enjoy the cool breeze by the lotus pool. He also compares the old parents' longing for their son's return with Tsai's homesickness in the capital. These are examples of his dramatic technique.

But though the drama has always won wide acclaim, it has also been the subject of much controversy. Many critics during the Ming and Ching dynasties pointed out that certain episodes were not sufficiently true to life. For example, how could Tsai's family remain ignorant so long of the fact that he had passed first in the court examination? Once he became an official, why could he not bring his parents to Loyang? . . . In recent years quite divergent views have been expressed in the articles dealing with this drama. Some regard it as a strongly realist work with close ties with the people, while others consider it an unrealistic drama advocating feudal morality. After the liberation when many traditional operas were revised, a number of authorities on

drama also held sharply divergent views on *The Tale of the Lute*. The Hunan Provincial Repertory Company changed the ending in accordance with the old folk tradition, to have Wu-niang trampled to death and her husband killed by a thunderbolt. This change was not very popular, however. The conflicting opinions which exist make it hard to determine the play's value. They also affect the work of dramatic reform and pose a series of important questions regarding our estimate of the Chinese classics and our literary criticism — such questions as the relationship between the author's world outlook and his method of writing, his intentions and his finished work, and the creation of typical characters. That is why, in the summer of 1956, the Chinese Dramatists' Association headed by its chairman, Tien Han, invited many people to discussions on *The Tale of the Lute*.

About a hundred and eighty people from all over the country took part in these discussions. They included famous actors of this drama, scholars and experts on classical literature, writers and dramatic critics, and editors of classical literature from various newspapers, magazines and publishing houses. Seven meetings were held in the Winter Palace between June 28 and July 23. The participants divided into small groups, two meetings each lasted for a whole day, and the proceedings were extremely lively. During the last two sessions some speakers rose three or four times to refute opposing views. The well-known historians Chien Po-tsan and Shang Yueh spoke on the historical background of Kao Tse-cheng's time, giving rise to heated discussions. Many enthusiasts gathered outside the meeting hall, in the corridors or in the garden to listen to these debates.

Unanimous agreement was soon reached on two points, namely, that we should not judge *The Tale of the Lute* solely by the views expressed by the author in his prologue, nor should we condemn it as feudal because the first emperor of Ming thought highly of it.

Widely divergent views were held, however, on many other aspects of the drama. Some felt that on the whole it was a great work, others that by and large it was worthless. These views were presented from very different angles.

In the main it was the divergent estimates of the chief characters that gave rise to different views about the central theme of the play.

Chen To, a young assistant of the Shanghai Branch of the Central Dramatic Academy, spoke several times. He quoted past critics to prove that in certain respects Tsai is not a convincing figure. For instance, Tsai could have had his parents brought to Loyang, yet he shilly-shallies until they starve to death. The author apparently lays the blame for this not on Tsai, who is portrayed as longing for his home and his parents, but on the irresponsible emperor and prime minister. He gives no satisfactory explanation, though, for Tsai's lack of moral fibre under these circumstances. And owing to this lack of realism, no one appears responsible for the tragic fate of Wu-niang which is so well presented. Chen To attributed this to the fact that Kao Tse-cheng was a feudal scholar who distorted the theme of an excellent folk drama.

Hsu Shuo-fang, a young lecturer from Chekiang Normal College, was another exponent of this view, who reached similar conclusions although disagreeing with Chen To's analysis. He found Wu-niang's character less moving in the first half of the play because she expressed mainly feudal sentiments and failed to carry conviction. He considered that Tsai — the filial son — was the personification of feudal morality, arguing that his feeling for his parents was not true to life. He admitted, however, that the drama has an important position in the history of Chinese literature, and spoke highly of certain scenes.

Teng Shao-chi, assistant research fellow of the Institute of Literary Research, also analysed the two chief characters and the author's views as expressed in the prologue, concluding that Kao's aim was to advocate feudal morality. Wang Yao, a professor of Peking University, felt that judging by the strong feudal sentiments in this work the author could be called "reactionary." But though the play aimed at extolling loyalty and filial piety, the unhappy fate of Wu-niang could lead the audience to doubt the feudal system.

Professor Shang Yueh attached social significance of quite a different character to *The Tale of the Lute*. He contended that it reflects the racial clash at the end of the Yuan dynasty. The people of Chenliu eat husks while those in the capital enjoy lotus flowers — a picture of society at the end of the Mongol domination, when "South of the Yangtse there was dire poverty, yet in the north men boasted of their wealth." To him, the character of the prime minister stood for the ruling class, recruited from the Mongols and other races in China.

Huang Chih-kang, the venerable white-haired research fellow of the Institute of Operatic Research who chaired several of these meetings, expounded a view which he had held for many years. His analysis of the faithful wife Wu-niang and Tsai, who was a loyal subject and filial son, led him to the conclusion that *The Tale of the Lute* was a typical feudal morality play. He viewed the filial piety described in this drama as a moral concept which supported the feudal system, but he also considered this as something good in the system. He thought the faults in the portrayal of Tsai and the most unconvincing character of Miss Niu were the natural reflection of the outlook of the feudal literati. He attributed what was successful in the drama to the original folk play.

Those who had a high opinion of *The Tale of the Lute* also based their views on the portrayal of Tsai, the special features of Chinese stage technique, and the writer's approach. Professor Tung Mei-kan of Chungshan University defended those incidents considered as lacking in verisimilitude. He said that a drama should be seen on the stage, not studied from the text. Another professor from the same university, Wang Chi-ssu, compared Chinese opera to those Chinese paintings which convey a certain idea or atmosphere, in which inaccuracies in the treatment of detail do not spoil the whole effect. Professor Li Chang-chih of the Peking Normal University urged those who were against this drama to consider whether an opera should be judged on its general theme or on certain details, on particular parts or on the whole, on the chief character, Wu-niang, or on the less important character of Tsai.

Even among enthusiasts of this drama, opinions also differed regarding its contents. Professor Pu Chiang-ching of Peking University was the first to suggest that since Tsai was forced to stay in the capital as an official and to marry again, he was unable to support his old parents or be a truly filial son; thus the main theme of the play is the contradiction between loyalty to the sovereign and to one's parents. This view found many supporters. Some of them considered that loyalty meant support for the ruling class, whereas filial piety reflected popular morality. Professor Hsu Chih-chiao, who defended the character of Tsai, pointed out that the conflict between loyalty and filial piety in his mind actually reflected the conflict between the feudal system and common humanity. Chung Tien-fei, literary critic, quoted passages from Confucius and Mencius to prove that filial piety had a progressive connotation in ancient society, while loyalty was something demanded by the ruling class. Professor Cheng Chien-fan of Wuhan University immediately opposed this view, stating that it was wrong to lay too much emphasis on the conflict between loyalty and filial piety and ignore their unity. On the other hand he felt the strong anti-feudal feeling of *The Tale of the Lute* could be seen from the fact that Wu-niang who tried so hard to observe the conventions of the day not only suffered hardships and mental agony, but was also regarded with suspicion.

Many other interesting views were expressed by those who stood up for this drama. Professor Yang Shao-hsuan of Peking Normal University made an analysis of Tsai Po-chieh, relating his character to the author's life and his poems. He believed that the main thought in this drama was the same as the author expressed in one of his poems: "Let us not soil the scholar's cap with dust" — he was advising scholars to refuse an official post under the Mongolian regime. Another authority on Chinese literature, Professor Yu Ping-po, also considered that there was anti-feudal thought in this drama, but felt the main problem raised in it was that of the marriage system, one of the most serious problems of feudal society. If Tsai had not married a second wife, there would have been no tragedy. Another authority on Chinese traditional drama, Professor Chao Ching-shen of Futan University, held that this drama gives a truthful picture of the weak and fickle nature of the old literati. Professor Chou Yi-pai of the Central Dramatic College was convinced that the author's main purpose was to praise such good women as Wu-niang. In order to satisfy the audience, he could not make Tsai a faithless husband but had to contrive a happy ending. Finally, mention should be made of the young reader of the *Drama Monthly*, Tung Ni, who started this controversy and came all the way from Chungking to take part in these discussions. He found many different ideas in this drama, which criticized the old examination system, the

feudal marriage system and the corrupt political life of the time, besides praising the fine quality of the common people.

Analyses were also made of other characters in *The Tale of the Lute*, as well as of the author's reasons for making a happy ending. And proposals were put forward on the future revision and production of this play.

The two magazines of the Dramatists' Association, *Drama Monthly* and *Theatre Journal*, published many articles and news items in connection with the discussions. The *People's Daily*, other important papers and the *Literary Gazette* also gave good coverage to this subject.

No summary was made at the end of these debates. But all who took part felt that the discussions had done much to deepen their appreciation of this drama, show how to approach our literary heritage, and strengthen the relations between scholars and dramatists. Before drawing conclusions about this work and other problems, further study would be required.

All the speeches made in these discussions and certain material on the author of this much-debated drama as well as statements by some experts which came too late for publication at the time, were compiled as one volume by the *Drama Monthly*, and have now been published by the People's Literature Publishing House.

The Opera Form in China Today

New forms of Chinese opera may be said to have come into being during the May Fourth Movement — i.e. they have a history of just over thirty years. In this period, in an attempt to reflect the revolutionary struggle, Chinese writers and musicians have produced many works, largely drawn from local Chinese opera, folk songs and Western opera, which were very well received.

As early as in 1923 Li Chin-hui, using melodies from Hunan opera, composed many musical plays for children, among them *The Grape Fairy*, *The Little Painter*, and *The Sparrow and the Child*. These are perhaps the earliest works in modern Chinese opera and were the forerunners of many others. Nieh Erh's *Storm on the Yangtse* (libretto by Tien Han, the well-known dramatist), and Huang Yuan-lo's *Village Song* and *March of the Soldiers and Civilians*, which were composed after the Anti-Japanese War started, have been taken to the people's hearts. Mao Tse-tung's famous *Talks at the Yenan Forum* further stimulated this process. Writers, composers, workers, peasants and soldiers adapted the music of *yangko* opera to their cause. Other forms of musical drama rapidly developed from this, using northern Shensi folk songs, Honan *pang-tse* opera and Shensi *mei-hu* opera. *Brother and Sister Pioneers*, *The White-Haired Girl*, *Liu Hu-lan* (A Girl Revolutionary), *The Red Leaf River* and *The Hatred Caused by Tears and Blood* were inspired by this period and marked a great step forward.

Since 1949, many new operas have been written, such as *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang*, *The Long March*, *The Marriage of Hsiao Erh-hei*, *Song of the Steppes*, and *The Volunteer's Betrothed*, to mention only a few.

As may be expected, these new forms have given rise to a number of interesting problems: how to assimilate and develop the national traditions of Chinese opera, for instance, or how other forms, such as Western opera, should be used; on what foundation should modern opera in China develop, and so forth. In February a series of meetings was called to discuss these problems, sponsored by the Union of Chinese Dramatists and the Union of Chinese Musicians. The discussion went on for a month, during which many opinions were freely voiced.

A number of speakers were of the opinion that opera in China should develop in the direction of opera as it is in Europe. They contended that an opera should have arias, recitatives, a full chorus and orchestral accompaniment throughout the performance and so on, and should have no spoken dialogue at all. It could not be called opera, otherwise, they said. According to this school, *The White-Haired Girl*,* which contains a good deal of spoken dialogue, is "drama plus singing" and could in no way be termed opera. They proposed that the style of a typical Italian opera, such as *La Traviata*, should be followed, and said that opera directors should study this, and that the artists should be trained to sing in the "Western voice" not in a peasant ballad style as in *The White-Haired Girl*. Actually, Ma Ko's *Song of the Steppes*, which the Central Experimental Opera House put on, followed this form.

Many others opposed this school, saying that spoken dialogue was not entirely barred in European opera, and in many cases singing was not essential, giving operettas as an example. To follow one method slavishly would be dogmatic, they said.

Another point put forward was that China's own rich heritage could reflect modern life if some changes were made, and Chinese modern opera should develop on this basis. Besides modern themes, they claim, Chinese traditional operatic forms could very well be adopted, using historical stories, children stories, folk tales, and stories about the national minorities as themes. Another suggestion was that modern opera should be developed from a specific local form such as the *ping-chu* of north Hopei, the *hu-chu* of Shanghai, the *mei-hu* of Shensi, etc., or should draw from several of these. Others suggested that it should develop on the basis of folk song and not from local operas, while agreeing that it should learn from these. But to limit it to one form, they said, will hinder modern opera from adopting a wide range of musical themes and melodies, and its appeal will be too localized.

Musically, many were against adapting folk songs and strongly stressed the importance of the composer having his individual style, though, they said, the composer could learn from local opera. Revolutionary songs were in a different category, they felt, and did reflect the life of today, but local opera had a set style and belonged to a certain historical period and therefore might be said only to reflect the life of that period.

At present, both peasant ballad singing and "Western" methods of voice production are in use. Each, of course, has its audience. In general, the meeting felt, a unified method should be used in one and the same modern opera. In the discussion on orchestration, some preferred that only Chinese instruments should be used, some only Western, while others liked a combination of both. No agreement was reached on this.

It was commonly agreed that modern opera in China since 1923 was well worth studying, both the development in Yenan of *yangko* opera, and the works of Li Chin-hui and Nieh Erh. The importance of learning from the national heritage and from the West was stressed by all.

The need to beware of dogmatism and sectarianism in developing modern opera was strongly expressed. By dogmatism in modern Chinese opera was meant the mechanical transposition of Western methods and the ignoring of customs of Chinese audiences, or the mere substitution of Western operatic form for Chinese, or the arbitrary mixture of the different forms of modern opera with local Chinese opera. Sectarianism will show itself, for example, in only taking the form developed in Yenan, the *yangko* opera, and ignoring or discriminating against other attempts by composers and librettists from the May Fourth Movement onwards, and in despising any aspect of Western opera and Chinese local operas.

The way to apply the policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom" to modern opera was also discussed. There was common agreement that writers and composers should be encouraged to write all kinds, forms, and schools of modern opera and compete freely with each other so that China's modern opera can develop even more quickly.

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 2, 1953.

Studio of Traditional Painting Opened in Peking

In June 1956, the State Council had adopted a decision to set up studios of traditional Chinese painting both in Peking and Shanghai, in order to carry on the traditions of China's classical painting, to encourage painters to continue using this medium, to train young painters in it, and to provide possibilities for research. The studio in Shanghai will be under the Shanghai People's Council, while the Peking studio comes directly under the Ministry of Culture.

The studio in the capital was inaugurated on May 14, 1957. Yeh Kung-cho, a well-known painter, will be in charge. The 96-year-old painter of world renown,

Premier Chou En-lai speaking at the inauguration of the Peking Studio of Traditional Painting

Chi Pai-shih, is honorary president. The studio has three sections: painting, teaching and research. At present, it has over sixty members who are classified as master painters, painters and assistant painters. The studio will follow the traditional teaching methods of Chinese painting, that is, rely mainly on individual tutoring. The veteran artists will work in their homes, and students will go there as apprentices. Step by step, a systematic method will be worked out for teaching Chinese traditional painting. The studio will also be responsible for promoting traditional painting outside its precinct.

Premier Chou En-lai was one of those present at the inauguration. He encouraged painters in this traditional art not only to put themselves whole-heartedly into their work, but to train the younger generation of artists in it, as well as do research on the subject. They should, besides, absorb the good points in foreign styles of painting and strive to achieve a new, socialist form of national art. Shen Yen-ping, the Minister of Culture, delivered a message of greeting, while studio chairman Yeh Kung-cho reported on the preparatory work done. Other speakers at the inauguration included Pu Hsueh-tsai, a veteran painter, the sculptor Liu Kai-chu, and the three vice-chairmen of the studio. Every one of them felt that the founding of this studio was an epoch-making event in China's history of art. Present at the inauguration were over 200 people from all walks of life in Peking. Among them were Chou Yang, the vice-director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Kuo Mo-jo, the vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and veteran actor Mei Lan-fang, the chairman of the Chinese Opera Research Institute.

Under Ministry of Culture auspices, traditional Chinese paintings were shown in the Fine Arts Exhibition Hall to commemorate the founding of the studio, all of them masterpieces by ancient, modern and contemporary artists.

State Theatre for Northern Kunchu Opera Set Up

Kunchu opera, which is one of our oldest operatic form, originated some 500 years ago, when it played an important role in China's dramatic art. Later on the literati and officials monopolized it, so that it became divorced from the people. Robbed of its healthy vitality, it was on the verge of extinction. In April 1956, a revised version of the old play *Fifteen Strings of Cash** was put on the stage that was widely acclaimed by all who saw it. These performances revealed the artistic charm of *kunchu* opera and led to the revival of this classic form of opera.

During past decades, when *kunchu* grew in popularity in many places of China, the tastes, customs and, especially, the dialects of local audiences, exerted a big influence upon it. Consequently, a number of schools of this art arose, now mainly classified into "southern *kunchu*" and "northern *kunchu*." The former has been popular in Kiangsu, Chekiang and other provinces along the Yangtse, the latter in the provinces north of the Yellow River.

To develop the traditional art of northern *kunchu*, a Northern *Kunchu* Opera Theatre was set up in Peking on June 22, 1957, by the Ministry of Culture.

The official inauguration was attended by some 300 guests, Vice-Premier Chen Yi among them. Minister of Culture Shen Yen-ping was in the chair. The theatre, he declared, would, aside from its main task which was to perform *kunchu* opera, search for plays that had dropped out of the repertoire, and train young actors in staging them. He also announced that Han Shih-chang had been appointed the theatre's director, and Pai Yun-sheng and Chin Tsu-kuang vice-directors, respectively. He expressed his best wishes for the newly founded theatre and urged it to maintain its vitality as a developing art: carrying on the old traditions and, at the same time, avoiding pitfalls that might hamper its growth.

Pai Yun-sheng reported on the preparatory work done in setting up the theatre. Then Han Shih-chang gave the guests examples from his personal experience about the hard times *kunchu* opera had encountered in the old society. He also expressed his joy at the new lease of life this classical opera form has gained in the China of today.

Mei Lan-fang, president of the National Peking Opera Theatre; Tien Han, chairman of the China Association of Dramatists; and Yu Ping-po, chairman of the Peking Institute for *Kunchu* Opera Research, all expressed their hopes for the new theatre. Chou Yang, vice-director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, gave high praise to the dramatic art of *kunchu* opera with the hope that, under the policy "Let flowers of many kinds blossom side by side; weed out the old and let the new emerge," it would develop from an art for the intellectuals only into one belonging to the people as a whole.

Vice-Premier Chen Yi brought a message of greeting from the State Council and Premier Chou En-lai. He said that, while no importance was attached to *kunchu* opera in the past, today anything that helps the building of socialism, is wholesome and liked by the people, can inspire with a feeling for beauty and exaltation and promote human progress, will be encouraged to exist and grow. The numerous messages of greetings received were read out at the meeting. Flowers were presented by various local cultural groups, while *kunchu* opera artists in Shanghai had sent pennants and flags.

Government leaders discuss the future work of the Northern *Kunchu* Opera Theatre with its directors on the inauguration day

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 4, 1956.

THE TRADITIONS OF CHINESE DANCING

China has an ancient tradition in dancing and there seems little reason to doubt that, as in other lands, it had its origins in the work customs of the people in primitive times. Historical records describe how the dance in antiquity was associated with hunting, war, courtship and religious ceremonies designed to ensure rich harvests or ward off calamities. The *Analects of Confucius* describes a dance of this latter type named *no* which was part of the ritual to exorcise evil spirits. It is significant that the word *wu* in ancient times served both for "witch" and "dancer"!

From the tenth century on till modern times, however, the art of dancing suffered a prolonged decline. The thread of tradition snapped. Almost all the old dances were lost. Only vestiges of them now remain in written records, on murals, figurines and other relics which have survived countless man-made and natural disasters, but these survivals all attest to the great richness of the dance tradition of China.

Authentic records of the dance begin with the Chou dynasty (from the twelfth to third century B.C.). These tell of a dance which is of course already far removed from the primitive dance. There is a description of the *pa yi* (The Eight Row Dance) at royal entertainments. The rows of eight dancers formed a square. In the same type of dance dedicated to a duke or high official the number of rows and dancers were reduced to six and four respectively.

At this time dancing was an attribute of nobility. Nobles learned to dance the civil dance at the age of thirteen and the military dance at sixteen. These were the two principal forms of the dance performed at court and in ceremonies at the temples of the ancestors. The civil dance symbolized the benevolent administration of the king. The performers waved flutes signifying harmony in all things or pheasant plumes signifying the flowering of culture. Learning these dances was at the same time an exercise in ceremonial deportment.

The military dance celebrated the martial prowess of the ruler. Dancers performed with battle-axes and shields. It was also an exercise in military training.

Folk dancing also flourished. Quite a number of poems in the *Book of Songs* refer to dances of courtship. Here is one:

How you make free,
There on top of the hollow mound!
Truly, a man of feeling,
But very careless of repute.

Bang, he beats his drum
Under the hollow mound,
Be it winter, be it summer,
Always with the egret feathers in his hand.

Bang, he beats his earthen gong
Along the path to the hollow mound,
Be it winter, be it summer,
*Always with the egret plumes in his hand.**

A sword dance and *po hsi*

In the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) there was little change in the dances associated with ceremonial and ritual or entertainment of the court and nobility, but there was a marked increase in the number of folk dances introduced to the court. The Emperor Kao Tsu, founder of the dynasty and a petty official by origin, together with his concubine Lady Chi were lovers of folk dancing and the latter was herself a dancer.

There was another notable source of change in the dance of China: the influence of cultural trends coming in from the Western regions which now roughly comprise Sinkiang. The conquests of the Han brought many foreign lands under its rule. Along with other cultural riches came new dances. The *po hsi*, a kind of variety entertainment including dances, acrobatics and conjuring, was introduced to Changan, capital of the Han. We have records of the *Chi Pan Wu*, the Seven Drum Dance, which became one of the most popular spectacles of the time. The dancers in two rows, each dancing on a drum, performed this dance which appears to have developed out of the *po hsi*.

The *Prose-Poem of Dances* by Fu Yi, a poet of the Han dynasty, describes the solo and group dances of this type as being distinguished by the play of expressions on the faces of the dancers and their gestures which communicated deep emotions.

Stone carvings of the time show that most of the dancers wore long sleeves which are clearly the prototypes of those worn by our own opera actors today. Others danced with swords and still others with long silk streamers tied to short sticks. It may safely be said, there-

*Arthur Waley: the *Book of Songs*, p. 223, Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1937.

The Dance of Prince Lanling

fore, that the popular "red silk dance" which we do today dates back to the Han dynasty.

We have records of a farm dance intended to encourage the peasants at their work. Dancing to the accompaniment of a song, sixteen boys divided into eight pairs, one following another, pantomined the motions of cutting grass, reclaiming land, planting, cultivating and weeding, driving away the pilfering birds, reaping, hulling and winnowing rice.

Dancing was a popular entertainment among the wealthy. Many nobles maintained large troupes of dancers and musicians to entertain their guests at banquets or other festivities. In the fifth century A.D. we have a report of a rich official who had more than a thousand dancing girls performing in brilliant costumes and valuable headdresses.

It seems that from the third to the fifth century A.D. the upper classes in general delighted in dancing. We read of the host at a banquet himself leading off festivities with a solo dance.

One of the popular folk dances of the next century was *The Dance of Prince Lanling* which was created in the time of the Northern Chi dynasty (550-577 A.D.) celebrating the prince who, to hide the beauty of his face, wore a ferocious mask. According to written records, the dancer dances with a whip.

A lively cultural exchange went on via the great Silk Road through Sinkiang. Many dances came from India, Kucha and other cultivated cities of Central Asia. The marriage between one of the emperors and a Turki princess particularly stimulated this exchange in the Northern Chou dynasty (557-581 A.D.). A troupe of dancers and musicians jointly organized by Kucha, Kashgar and Samarkand arrived in Changan and became the sensation of the day. Indian dances had come to China in the wake of Buddhism. In the period of Southern and Northern Dynasties dances of the "Western regions" were widely performed in the north, while the south continued to develop the classical tradition of the dance and at the same time enjoyed the folk dancing of the southern regions.

The re-unification of the country under the Sui dynasty (581-618 A.D.) brought these various streams of culture together. It was evidently a time when many dances flourished. We hear of the *chiu pu chi* or Nine Dances. While the court and nobility cultivated the dances of society and elaborate dance entertainments like the *po hsi*, the folk dance continued its own lively traditions. We have records of the *Ta Yao Niang* or *Woman Dancing with Tottering Steps*, a dance pantomime ridiculing a drunkard who ill-treats his wife. It had a sung accompaniment performed by a chorus.

The founder of the Tang dynasty, Tai Tsung, was a patron of the arts. The cultural ferment of the preceding period now attained its full flowering in the dance as in other arts. Classical dancing and music reached their zenith.

A Tang court dance performance must have been a magnificent affair. Chang Hu, a contemporary poet, writes in admiration of a court ball: "Sleeve to sleeve, three hundred girls move around in the hall." Orchestras of five hundred members are mentioned. It is believed that the number of professional dancers and musicians at that time ran into several tens of thousands. Dancing took on its own existence as an art apart from acrobatics, giving greater scope for its development. The dances that came from foreign countries, from the outlying provinces and national minorities and that had been monopolized by court circles in Changan now became known throughout the length and breadth of the land and brought new influences to bear on the dance of the people. They brought changes in the native dances and themselves became adapted to Chinese taste both in content and form. This process of adaptation was of course a slow one. The professional dancers themselves, who acquired increasing skill in their art, brought about changes in the technique of dancing and the *po hsi*. The flourishing of music and writing of new compositions led to the creation of new dances. The extraordinary flowering of poetry, to which dancing had always been intimately allied, also led to the creation of new dances.

The best-known festive dance in the Tang dynasty was the *po chen yueh* (Breaking Through the Enemy Ranks), later known as the *chi teh wu* (Dance of the Seven Virtues), inspired by the dispositions of troops in military parades. There were 120 performers in three groups, each of which changed its formation four times. The fame of this dance spread to India and the monk Hsuan Tsang, the great traveller, received added regard from the princes there because he came from the country which had composed this splendid dance.

It was at this time that the "character or letter dances" were invented in which groups of performers formed "living ideographs." One of the most spectacular of these was the *sheng shou wu* (The Dance Dedicated to Long Live to the Emperor). The 140 performers in this dance were divided into 16 groups to form 16 characters, grouped into four poetic phrases of four characters each. This was done in various ways, sometimes the dancers would form the characters by lying on the ground, sometimes they would trick the character out by holding kerchiefs or lanterns in their hands.

The *chien chi wu* (Sword Dancing) was popular both at court and among the people. The grace of a woman sword dancer named Kungsun Tanlang is said to have inspired great calligraphers in their art.

Another famous Tang dance was the *ni shang yu yi wu* (Dance of the Garment of Rainbows and Feathers). The music of this is said to have been of Indian origin and the dance takes its theme from the music and was brought to the court by border officials. It is about a beautiful fairy whose airy grace is reflected in the movements of the dance, the music and costume. Pai Chu-yi, one of the most distinguished poets of the Tang dynasty, wrote of a performer of this dance that she was as beautiful as jade, while her garments seemed to have nothing in common with worldly wear. Her dress was spun and coloured as fine as a rainbow, and her shawl was like the afterglow of the sunset. Bedecked with gold and jade ornaments and strings of pearls hung from her headdress she came with the sound of tinkling pendants. She moved sometimes as lightly as the snow-flakes but could dart with the speed of an angry dragon. When she paused, with her long hanging sleeves, she seemed as subtle as a willow branch, her skirts flowing about her like a cloud.

The absorption of foreign influences which began as early as the Han, increased steadily till the Tang dynasty. But not all the dances that came from outside were accepted in their entirety. Some of them disappeared after enjoying a short-lived popularity. The dance of *po han hu* (Sprinkling Water on the Frozen Foreigners) for instance is a comedy in which men on horseback sprinkle water for fun from the leather bottles they carry onto walkers on the road. After a short time the dance was transformed into *hun tuo wu*, a dance of

The Dance to the Singing of the Spring Oriole

quite different character and today all that we have left is the tune now known as *su mo cheh*, used in classic operas.

From a Tang mural we have learned about the evolution of the *cheh chih wu* which was introduced from the Western regions. At first it was a solo but later it was danced by a pair of dancers. Still later, in the Sung dynasty, the number of performers increased to five with the one in the centre acting as the "heart of the flower," who sang the accompanying song and recitative. Finally it was danced by twenty-four members led by one or two dancers waving bamboo wands and chanting words of good omen. All wore tight sleeves and silver belts, and pointed hats with upturned brims studded with bells. Later the hats were replaced by the phoenix headdresses traditionally worn by women of the nobility. This is typical of the process of assimilation of foreign dances.

During the period of the Tang and Sung dynasties Chinese dancing itself spread its influence abroad. Many dances were introduced to Japan and Korea. Most of them are preserved to this day in Japan. These include the *chi teh wu* and *The Dance to the Singing of the Spring Oriole.* The Ueno Museum in Tokyo to this day preserves dance masks of the Tang dynasty.

Despite some further creative advances the art of the dance in China went into a steady decline. With the Sung dynasty the number of dancers diminished. Records say that the imperial court reduced its establishment of dancers to twenty troupes: ten composed of boys, a total of 72, and the rest of girls, totalling 153. Their music and costumes were adopted from the Tang dynasty. The succeeding dynasties — Yuan, Ming and Ching — saw no new advances in the art.

Even in the Tang dynasty restrictions were imposed on folk dancing and these imperial edicts became more oppressive as time went on. The official explanation was that many dances were not becoming to the traditions of the people and in the case of the peasants' indulgence in dancing would interfere with their farm work. The common people were naturally denied access to the theatrical performances, dance parties and dances and music which the upper classes indulged in. Pointing the finger at dancing, puritanical Sung dynasty philosophers and official killjoys quoted Confucius: "You shall not look at, nor listen to what is indecent!" Folk singing to them was to raise an "obscene voice"; dancing was "undignified." The proper man must observe the rules of the ancients and the woman's place was in the home.

The loss of a great part of our classical dance heritage is irreparable, but vestiges have thankfully been preserved in the classical theatre. If you look at the visual evidence of the movements of the dancers' arms and sleeves in ancient records of the classical dance and then at the movements of *kunchu* and Peking opera performers of today you can clearly see the similarities. It is unfortunate that, to our knowledge, none of the ancient dances have been preserved in these operas in their entirety. But it seems very probable that many of the other characteristic gestures of traditional theatrical dancing and acting derive from the ancient source of the classical dance, for instance, the series of gestures by which a general indicates that he is putting on his armour for battle and which give an impression of strength and resolve, or the complex movements, quick or slow, tense or relaxed, forceful or subtle, each with its special rhythm, that go to make a battle interlude.

Since China's liberation in 1949 a great deal of study and effort has gone into the attempt to restore the traditions of Chinese dancing and particularly to revive those dances which were most popular among the people. In the last few years many folk dances have been brought to light in various parts of the country. These include thirteen from the Inner Mongolian region alone and many others from Yunnan and Fukien. There is also a great deal of original creative work being done.

There is a rich and living tradition of dancing among the national minorities. Simple, wholesome and vivacious, these dances are mostly closely related to the ways of living of the minorities, their customs, habits and productive labour. Each has its own national character and style. It is only to be expected that they too will create new dances enriched by their widening contacts with other cultures.

Then there are broad new trends that link our dancing with the rest of world culture. We have learned a lot from the Soviet Union not only in regard to preserving and developing our own traditional dances both of the Hans and of the national minorities, but in developing modern dancing and ballet. We are learning from the dancers of India, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Burma and Vietnam with whom we have developed friendly contacts and which have splendid and unique dance traditions. In such an environment and with the favourable conditions created by cultural life in New China, the art of the dance here is undoubtedly approaching one of the most brilliant periods in its long history.

—*Ouyang Yu-chien*

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Sixty Years of Change (Volume I). By Li Liu-ju. Writers' Publishing House, Peking. This is a long historical novel. Volume I covers the period between the Reformation Movement at the end of the Ching dynasty and the failure of the 1911 Revolution. Volume II deals with the rule of the northern warlords and the 1924-27 Revolution. Volume III describes the ten years of civil war and the period up to the liberation. As the writer took part in these social changes and revolutionary struggles, he is able to give a comprehensive and faithful account of the political situation and life of those years. Illustrations by Chiang Ying.

Lord Kuei's Pool. By Cheng Chen-to. New Literature Publishing House, Shanghai. A collection of three historical stories: "Lord Kuei's Pool," "The End of Huang Kung-chun," and "Ruin." "Lord Kuei's Pool" deals with Wen Tien-hsiang, the patriotic prime minister of Emperor Li Tsung (1225-1265) of the Sung dynasty, who resisted the Mongol invaders and tried to save the empire. "The End of Huang Kung-chun" is a tale of the Taiping Revolution (1851-1864). "Ruin" describes the last days of the corrupt officials Ma Shih-ying and Yuan Ta-cheng at the end of the Ming dynasty. These stories of patriotic themes were written before the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression.

Studies of Lu Hsun. By Liu Pan-hsi, Sun Chang-hsi and Han Chang-ching. Writers' Publishing House, Peking. Lectures given in the Chinese Department of Shantung University. The subjects dealt with include Lu Hsun's life and works, his scientific ideas, the development of his realism, analyses of his stories, essays, poems and letters, the way in which he developed traditional forms, and his method of studying the Chinese classics.

On Lu Hsun's Stories, Essays and Other Writings. By Hsu Chung-yu. New Literature Publishing House, Shanghai. Seven articles on Lu Hsun's works. The first section deals with his well-known stories "The Madman's Diary," "The True Story of Ah Q," and "The New Year's Sacrifice," analysing their historical background and ideas, and devoting special attention to the language of "The True Story of Ah Q." The second section comments upon various studies and analyses of Lu Hsun's essays. The third section contains summaries and explanations of his views on literary research, reading and criticism. A useful reference book.

The Golden Bridge. By Keh Kang. New Literature Publishing House, Shanghai. The first novel about the construction of the Tibet-Sikang Highway, it describes the courage with which soldiers of the People's Liberation Army cut through mountains five thousand metres above sea level to link up China's south-west frontier with the rest of the country. Vivid and detailed descriptions reveal the fine character of these soldiers, officers and medical workers in their selfless labour to build socialism, and depict the enthusiastic support they receive from the Tibetans.

Forty Years of Stage Life (Volumes I and II). Told by Mei Lan-fang and written by Hsu Chi-chuan. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking. The memoirs of Mei Lan-fang, the well-known exponent of Peking opera, showing the development of his art and the valuable experience acquired in forty years. One is struck by the modesty of this great artist, his perseverance, artistic integrity, and devotion to his public. The book also throws light on the whole historical background of Peking opera, and is therefore a valuable document and guide for artists.

Studies on Nineteen Ancient Poems. By Ma Mao-yuan. Writers' Publishing House, Peking. These nineteen anonymous poems from the end of the Han dynasty were based on popular folk songs, and marked a new departure in Chinese poetry—the beginning of a verse form with five characters to each line. Each of these poems, which have been studied and admired through the centuries, is a gem with power to haunt its readers. After a long introduction and general analysis of the nineteen poems, the author gives detailed commentaries on each.

Selected Poems of Tai Wang-shu. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking. Tai Wang-shu is one of the leading figures of the Modernist School of Chinese poetry which arose after the May the Fourth Movement. This selection includes forty-three poems chosen from two of his anthologies, "Poems of Wang-shu" and "Troubled Years." There is a preface by the poet Ai Ching, and an appendix of notes by Tai Wang-shu, which reveal his views on Chinese poetry.

The Mandarins. By Li Pao-chia. Edited and annotated by Chang Yu-ho. Writers' Publishing House, Peking. Li Pao-chia is a novelist of the end of the Ching dynasty. In this satirical novel he exposes the corruption of the feudal rulers as the Ching dynasty was tottering, and shows the inevitability of its collapse. The author died before completing this work, which consists of sixty-four chapters. This new edition has an appendix entitled "The Manchu Official System," as well as notes on the political background and phraseology of that period.

Shrimp Ball. By Huang Ku-liu. Popular Literature Publishing House, Peking. A novel written before the liberation, and taking as its background the Hongkong and Canton area. Its hero is a waif named Shrimp Ball, and in describing his experiences the story exposes the iniquities of the Kuomintang regime, reflects the sufferings of the people and praises the heroism of the guerrillas. This novel has been published in Hongkong under different names, and translated in Japan, England and Yugoslavia. It was well received both in China and abroad. Explanatory notes on local idioms have been added and some minor changes made by the author in this edition.

On the Boundless Grassland (Volume I). By Malchinhu. Writers' Publishing House, Peking. This new novel by our young Mongolian writer describes the growth of a Mongolian revolutionary force at the time of the liberation, and the beauty of the steppe. This is one of the better novels of recent years.

Racine's Andromaque. Translated by Chi Fang. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Tales Selected from Galsworthy's "Caravan." Translated by Shen Chang-hui. New Literature Publishing House, Shanghai. The collection contains 19 stories: "Quality," "The Broken Boot," "The Choice," "Courage," "Philanthropy," "The Prisoner," "A Simple Tale," "Consummation," "Acme," "Virtue," "The Neighbours," "The Mother Stone," "The Nightmare Child," "Expectations," "Manna," "Compensation," "Conscience," "Blackmail," "The First and the Last."

The Old Man and the Sea. By Ernest Hemingway. Translated by Hai Kuan. New Literature Publishing House, Shanghai. Hemingway's novels began to be introduced to China more than ten years ago, and the Chinese translation of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was well received. This translation of his more recent work has also aroused much interest.

Squire Hellman and Other Stories. By Juhani Aho. Translated by Mei Shao-wu. New Literature Publishing House, Shanghai. In 1909 one of Aho's tales was published in China in a collection of translated stories. This volume contains five short stories which were among the earlier works of this well-known Finnish writer.

Power Without Glory. A novel about Australia by Frank J. Hardy. Translated by Yeh Feng and Chu Huei. New Literature Publishing House, Shanghai.

Longfellow's Song of Hiawatha. Translated by Chao Lo-jui. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Quatrevingt-treize. By Victor Hugo. Translated by Cheng Yung-huei. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

The Gilded Age. By Mark Twain. Translated by Chang Yu-sung and Chang Chen-hsien. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Stories from St. Petersburg. By N.V. Gogol. Translated by Man Tao. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Mayakovsky's Poem 150,000,000. Translated by Yu Chen. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Es Grunt Die Saat. Novel by Rudolf Weiss. Translated by Kuo Ching. Writers' Publishing House, Peking.

Lelo. Novel by the Georgian writer A. Cheishchveli. Translated by Yeh Tung-hsin. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Hlapec Jernej in Njegova Pravica. Novel by the Yugoslavian writer Ivan Cankar. Translated by Huang Hsin-chi and Kuo Kai-lan. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Burmese Folk Tales. Compiled by Maung Thin Aung. Translated by Shih Hsien-jung. Writers' Publishing House, Peking.

The Prophet. Prose poem by the Syrian writer Kahlil Gibran. Translated by Ping Hsin. People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

WRITERS AND ARTISTS IN THIS NUMBER

Lin Chin-lan was born in 1923 in Wenchou, Chekiang. When the Anti-Japanese War started in 1937, he joined the drama team of his school and worked in it for years against Japanese invasion. After the war ended he joined a professional drama company and subsequently taught in a middle school. He only started writing after liberation, when he worked in the Peking Association of Literary and Art Workers.

Kuan Yu, the pen-name of Kung Yi-hou, comes from Anhsien County, Szechuan. He is now thirty, and started writing in 1953. He has spent a good deal of time among the Yi people in Yunnan, and his works are chiefly concerned with their life since liberation. He is at present teaching in a spare-time middle school in Yunnan.

Lao Sheh is the pen-name of Shu Sheh-yu, who was born in Peking in 1899. He started writing quite young. For some years he was professor of Chinese literature at Cheeloo University, Tsinan, and later Shantung University, Tsingtao. He continued to write, and during the war against Japan took an active part in organizing the National Association of Writers and Artists. His famous *Lo To Hsiang Tse,* well known in English as *Rickshaw Boy,* was published in 1940.

He is now a deputy to the National People's Congress, Vice-Chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, and Chairman of the Peking Federation of Writers and Artists. In the last few years he has written several plays, including *Dragon Beard Ditch* (an English translation of which has been published by the Foreign Languages Press, Peking) as well as many popular articles.

Wu Chang-shih (1844-1927) came from Chekiang. He possessed a good knowledge of the ancient Chinese bronze and stone inscriptions. Like a true traditional style artist, he was also a poet. His paintings of flowers and bamboos, rocks, landscapes and figures have a simplicity of their own. He was a magistrate in the Ching dynasty, but, hating the corruption of the time, resigned after a month and retired from official life to Shanghai, and made a living from his art. He was a prolific painter in his old age, and his paintings of pines, bamboos and plums are typical of this time. Perhaps this is symbolic — the straight, strong pine fears no wind or storm, the bamboo remains green and fresh even through winter, and the plum blossom stands for nobility, purity and unflinching courage.

Hsu Pen, the Yuan dynasty (1277-1368) artist who painted *Sunshine After Snow* was born in Soochow, Kiangsu. In the true traditional style he was a calligrapher, poet and painter. *Sunshine After Snow,* a magnificent example of the delicate, realist style of which he was a master, was inspired by a four-word verse by a famous calligrapher of the time. The painting, which is in the Palace Museum, Peking, is now mounted on a scroll with the calligraphy which inspired it, together with a painting on the same theme by another famous Yuan dynasty artist, Huang Kung-wang.

Chen Shih-tseng (1876-1923) came from Kiangsi. He was the son of a well-known poet, Chen San-li. Chen Shih-tseng studied in Japan, and later was a professor at Peking University and at the Peking Institute of Fine Arts. His paintings of landscapes, birds, flowers and figures are remarkably full of life. He is reckoned as one of China's gifted modern painters.

Wang Chi was born in 1918 in Chungking, Szechuan Province. At the beginning of the War Against Japanese Aggression he studied at the Lu Hsun Institute of Fine Arts in Yenan. After the war was over, he worked as an editor for a newspaper and at one time was a teacher in an art institute. After liberation he became the head of the Fine Arts Section in Hsing Chih Arts' Institute in Shanghai, and since 1952 has been a professor in the Peking Central Academy of Fine Arts.

INDEX Nos. 1-4, 1957

NOVELS

	Issue No.
CHAO SHU-LI — Sanliwan Village	3

STORIES, SKETCHES, TRAVEL NOTES, REMINISCENCES

LI CHUN — When the Snow Melts	1
HSU TI-SHAN — Blooms on a Dried Poplar	1
HSU TI-SHAN — Big Sister Liu	1
JEN TA-LIN — Crickets	1
HSIAO PING — At the Seaside	1
KAO HSIANG-CHEN — Chubby and Little Pine	1
SAYNTSOGT — The Blue Satin Gown	2
BREN BIK — Going Home	2
MALCHINHU — By the River Shand	2
ANCHINHU — A Blizzard on the Steppe	2
SHA TING — The Magnet	2
SHA TING — An Autumn Night	2
FANG CHI — The Song and the Flute	2
LI HUNG — Travelling Companions	2
HSIN JU — His First Prize	2
LU FEI — Forest Girls	3
LIU SHENG-YA — The Beacon on the Cliff	3
YU TA-FU — Intoxicating Spring Nights	3
YU TA-FU — A Humble Sacrifice	3
PI YEH — A Trip to the Tienshan	3
HSIAO CH'IEN — Scenes of the Grasslands	3
LAO SHEH — Crescent Moon	4
LIN CHIN-LAN — Taiwan Girl	4
HSIAO PING — The March Snow Flower	4
KUAN YU — The Young Hunter	4
HSU HSIANG-CHIEN — Fragments of Red Army Life	4
WANG CHI-CHENG — How We Stormed Tsunyi	4
CHEN CHANG-FENG — With Chairman Mao on the Long March	4
YANG CHENG-WU — The Fight at Luting Bridge	4
CHEN KUO-HUI — The Battle of Pinghsingkuan Pass	4

CLASSICS

KUAN HAN-CHING — Snow in Midsummer	1
KUAN HAN-CHING — Rescued by a Coquette	1
LIU TSUNG-YUAN — Prose Writings	2
A Selection of Early Ghost and Fairy Stories	4

ARTICLES

	Issue No.
WANG CHI-SSU — Kuan Han-ching—Outstanding Dramatist of the Yuan Dynasty	1
CHOU YANG — The Important Role of Art and Literature in the Building of Socialism	1
YEH SHENG-TAO — The Fine Traditions of Chinese Literature	2
MAO TUN — The Chinese Literature of Today	2
LIU TA-CHIEH — Liu Tsung-yuan and His Prose	2
ANCHINHU — A New Page in the Literary History of Inner Mongolia	2
HSU CHEN-NGO — Chinese Ghost and Fairy Stories of the 3rd to the 6th Century	4

FOLK LITERATURE

MONGOLIAN FOLK TALES: The Wise Bird — The Law and Silver — The Hunter Who Had a Beautiful Wife — How the Horse-Headed Fiddle Came to Be Made	2
FIVE TIBETAN FABLES: The Fox Who Did Not Know His Place — The Lion and the Wolf — The Quarrelsome Kittens — The Magic Ox-Horn — Three Girls	4

ONE-ACT PLAYS

TSUI TEH-CHIH — Saturday Afternoon at the Mill	2
HO CHIU — The Day the New Director Came	2
LU YEN-CHOU — Home-coming	2

INTERVIEWS, OPINIONS ON ART AND LITERATURE

MAO TUN — Oppose Doctrinaire and Petty-Bourgeois Thinking	3
CHOU YANG — Answers to *Wen Wei Pao* Correspondent's Questions	3
CHEN CHI-TUNG AND OTHERS — Our Views on Contemporary Literature and Art	3
CHEN LIAO — Some Comments on the Views of Chen Chi-tung and Others	3
WEN YI PAO'S EDITORIAL — For the Flourishing of Socialist Literature and Art	3
CHANG TIEN-YI — Writing About Contradictions	3
TSAO MING — New Problems	4
KANG CHO — The Path I Have Travelled	4
CHU KUANG-CHIEN — My Understanding	4

CHRONICLE

	Issue No.
The Twentieth Anniversary of the Death of Lu Hsun	1
Exhibition of Traditional Painting	1
Controversy over a Poet	1
The First National Music Festival	1
Foreign Art Exhibitions in Peking	1
Museums in Building	1
Commemorations	1
Music and Dancing from Abroad	1
Peking Opera	1
Asian Writers' Conference	2
Discussion on Realism in Chinese Classical Literature	2
Kai Chiao-tien, Peking Opera Star	2
A New Look at China's Operas	2
The Antiquarian Book Trade in Peking	2
Changes in *Wen Yi Pao* (Literary Gazette)	2
National Musical and Dance Festival	2
China's Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1956	2
Some Features of Traditional Chinese Painting	2
Discussions on Aesthetics	3
The Institute of Literary Research of the Academy of Sciences	3
Pai Chu-yi's Birthday Honoured	3
Pre-liberation Films Screened Again	3
Ancient Chinese Sculpture	3
The Debate on *The Tale of the Lute*	4
The Opera Form in China Today	4
Studio of Traditional Painting Opened in Peking	4
State Theatre for Northern *Kunchu* Opera Set Up	4
The Traditions of Chinese Dancing	4

PLATES

FU PAO-SHIH — Raining Flower Mount	1
ANONYMOUS — The Hunters	1
JEN PE-NIEN — Swallows and Peach Blossoms	1
WU FAN — Herald of Spring	1
HSIEH CHIH-LIU — Capuchin Monkey	2
HUANG PIN-HUNG — Corner of the West Lake	2
MA LIN (c. 1200 A.D.) — Watching the Waterfall	2
MO TSE — Cormorant-fishing	2
YUAN HSIAO-CHEN — Shepherd Homeward Bound	3
CHUNG CHING-PING — Goldfish	3
ANONYMOUS — Buffalo Boy in the Autumn Forest	3
WU FAN — It Looks Like Rain Coming	3
WU CHANG-SHIH — Golden Harvest	4
HSU PEN — Sunshine After Snow	4
CHEN SHIH-TSENG — Late Autumn	4
WANG CHI — Homeward Bound	4

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

FROM THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS, PEKING

SELECTED WORKS OF LU HSUN
Volume II

The second volume of the *Selected Works of Lu Hsun* consists of 70 essays written between 1918 and 1927.

Essays occupy a most important place in Lu Hsun's writings, for they were the weapons he used as a thinker and political polemist. Because of the wide range of his observation, and his brilliant, analytical mind, they provide us with a comprehensive record of the life and struggles of the Chinese people during the period of their democratic revolution. At the same time, his concise, highly individual style makes them masterpieces of the essayist's art.

(The *Selected Works of Lu Hsun* will comprise 4 volumes, of which Volume I has already been published. Volume I includes 18 short stories, 19 prose poems and 9 essays.)

DAWN ON THE RIVER AND OTHER STORIES

by Contemporary Chinese Writers

The 7 short stories collected in this volume have appeared during the past two years in various Chinese publications. In every case their authors are young people just starting their career on China's literary stage. They draw their materials from various phases of human endeavour and are thus able to show us three-dimensional characters of flesh and blood.

Dawn on the River describes the heroic part played by the people during the War of Liberation ten years ago. In *Membership Dues* we see the simple heroism of a Red Army fighter's wife in the thirties. The other five stories introduce the reader to New China.

In their variety of topics these stories will enable the reader to appreciate the problems, ideological struggles, feelings and reactions of the Chinese people who are building socialism.

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CHINESE LITERATURE is pleased to announce that, in response to requests from readers, the magazine will become a bi-monthly in 1958. This will provide more space for the publication of important works, and mean that readers are more promptly supplied with new writing which reflects life in China today, as well as with accounts of fresh developments in Chinese literature and art.

In addition to modern writing, the magazine will continue to publish works from old Chinese literature, others written since the May the Fourth Movement in 1919, and studies of individual authors. This should contribute to its readers' understanding of the ancient traditions and continuous development of Chinese literature. The work of different minority peoples in China, folk literature, literary criticism and new publications will continue to be introduced. As regards illustrations, the magazine will retain those features which have proved popular: each issue will carry coloured reproductions of both ancient and modern works, including paintings in the traditional style, woodcuts, sculpture and oil paintings.

The new format of the bi-monthly will be slightly smaller. Each number will have about 150 pages, with at least three coloured illustrations; but in other respects no changes will be made.

In order to make sure of receiving the coming issue, please place orders immediately with our nearest agent, or order directly from the chief distributor in Peking: GUOZI SHUDIAN, 38 Suchou Hutung, Peking, China.