



CHINESE LITERATURE

July-August

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CHINESE LITERATURE

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HSU HUAI-CHUNG

On the Tibetan Highland

We offer below a portion of the novel *On the Tibetan Highland*. It tells what happens when a government experimental agricultural station — staffed by ex-armymen who had taken part in the liberation of Tibet, and young intellectual volunteers — is set up in that beautiful region known as “the roof of the world.” The newcomers have to learn how to win the co-operation of the Tibetan nobility, herders and peasants; they have to learn how to defeat natural and man-made obstacles. For they knew it is only in this way that they, together with the Tibetan people, can build a better life.

The author, Hsu Huai-chung, was born in 1929 of a poor family in a mining region of Hopei Province. After a few years of middle school, he joined the People's Liberation Army in 1945, and took part in several battles as a member of the Second Field Army. In his spare time he studied art. Later he turned to creative writing. He went to Tibet in 1952 as one of the army's road-builders. He says, “In this period, besides coming into close contact with the men of our own army, I also met many Tibetan officials and civilians, and members of their nobility and clergy.” The novel is based on the author's experiences at that time.

At the moment, the main job of the Agricultural Station was to carry out as quickly as possible agronomist Lei Wen-chu's plan for sowing winter wheat. This overrode all else; it couldn't be delayed. The wild-geese nesting by the bend in the river had disappeared the previous day. That meant a sharp change in temperature was coming. Otherwise why would they take off so abruptly without even saying goodbye? The sowing had to be finished by the middle of October. Any further delay would affect the sprouts; next year the young plants would run into the rainy season before they had a chance to be strengthened by the sun.

The last few months had been hard on the comrades in the Agricultural Station. In addition to their regular work, they had organized a team to produce food supplies as gifts for the People's Liberation Army men building the road. Then they set up a shock brigade to work on the dam. They were on the go practically every day from before sunrise till after sunset. It really was too much. The station chief decided to sacrifice one day and give everyone a Sunday off. (The comrades in the shock brigade had long since forgotten that Sunday was supposed to be a day of rest.)

The weather was very co-operative that day. Real Sunday weather. Perfect for taking a bath.

But not one person showed up at the warm springs.

At the suggestion of Ni Hui-tsung — the girl in charge of stock-breeding — the Youth League branch called a brief committee meeting to discuss the Sunday holiday. The committee decided that Youth League members would continue working on Sundays as usual. Only a few more days were left in September. If they finished spreading the manure quickly, they could start sowing officially on the First of October, in honour of the anniversary of the founding of the people's republic.

The result was that not only Youth League members, but a lot of older people as well, sought out the branch secretary. "Put my name down too," they pleaded. "I'm not a Youth Leaguer, but I want to get out in the fields and stretch my legs a bit!"

Some were rather caustic about it: "Where does the Youth League come off to monopolize all the spades? Are they your personal property? Did you bring them from home? I want one too!"

The Sunday volunteers assembled in front of the weather observatory. After a few words from Hui-tsung, as the organization officer of the Youth League, they formed ranks and prepared to start for the fields. Just then, a young man in the carters' section — also a Youth Leaguer — came rushing up to Hui-tsung.

"I was intending to go with you, originally," he began awkwardly. "But. . . ."

Yeh Hai, helper to the station's tractor driver, was handing out the farm implements. He spoke up before Hui-tsung could reply.

"You mean you're staying behind?" he demanded. "All right, forget it! The branch secretary says it's purely voluntary."

"It's not that I don't want to go!" the young man explained agitatedly. "I can't. Our section chief wants us to repair a cave-dwelling."

"Which one? Is there something wrong with your cave?" asked Hui-tsung.

"No. Ours is all right. It's Chuma's. We've got to fix up Chuma's cave."

The cave Chuma lived in was going from bad to worse. It was in imminent danger of collapse. Mi Fu-sheng, leader of the carters' section, had been meaning to repair it for some time, but had always been too busy. Now, today being Sunday, he wanted to finish the job once and for all. Early that morning he had gone into the forest with the men of his section. They felled several trees and sawed them into boards and pillars to shore up the sagging roof of Chuma's cave. Naturally, no one opposed this. It was only right that the Agricultural Station should look after this young unattached Tibetan woman who washed their clothes.

"Good. You stay here then," said Hui-tsung. She took the spade from the young man's hand.

The group of volunteers left for the fields.

Actually there was no need for fertilizer on the rich virgin loam. But both as a guarantee of a good crop and to demonstrate to the mountain-dwelling Tibetans the value of fertilization, Lei Wen-chu had called for this measure in his plan.

Spreading manure on a big stretch of land requires a lot of people, and the station was short-handed. In the past it would have been easy enough to hire some men for the day. But now the mountain folk nearly all had land of their own. It had seemed unlikely that any of them would have time to help out.

Yet, to everyone's surprise, a large crowd showed up every day, carrying their baskets and asking for work. At first, when the station tried to pay them the regular wage, the mountain folk became very angry. They said to give them money would be a cold, almost contemptuous, gesture.

Today, a big group of young men and girls again appeared, with Chiuchih — still looking rather wan after her ordeal with the bandits — at their head. They had been told the day before that there was no need for them to come. But from their village on the mountainside, they had seen the Youth Leaguers setting out, and hurried to join them.

"What are you doing here?" Hui-tsung scolded. "Didn't we tell you not to come today?"

"But why? What's so special about today?"

"It's Sunday. Today is Sunday. That's why."

Sunday? The young mountain people looked blank. They didn't know what Hui-tsung was talking about.

"Who is Sunday?" a stout Tibetan girl standing off to one side queried boldly. "Why doesn't he want us to come?"

Though asked in all seriousness, the question brought chuckles from several of the Youth Leaguers. Hui-tsung stopped them quickly with a sharp glance. Turning back to the girl, she said:

"Sunday isn't a person; it isn't anything you can see. We measure our lives in days, don't we? Well, every seventh day we call Sunday."

"On Sunday nobody has to work," school-teacher Lin-yuan explained, trying to be helpful. "You can play all day if you like. Understand?"

But the young mountaineers didn't put much stock in the girls' explanation either. Why did you have to have a Sunday every seven days? Why not every eight, or ten? Some of the young Tibetans came to the conclusion that the Hans thought every seventh day was unlucky — on that day it was best to do as little as possible. And so, half timidly, half boldly, they said:

"Don't send us away. As long as you're not frightened, we won't be either!"

"Frightened? What's there to be frightened of?" said Hui-tsung. Then she guessed what was on their minds. "Sunday isn't a bad day. We look forward to it all week."

"It's just what I said. Sunday means no work," the young school-teacher summed up. "That's as it should be. Nobody will laugh at you. After working hard for six days why shouldn't you have a day of rest?"

"Well, what about you? Why don't you rest? What are you going to the fields for?"

"As a matter of fact, the station chief has given everyone the day off," Yeh Hai interjected. "We're working today of our own accord. We want to work."

"How is that any different from us?" the young mountaineer protested. "We want to work too. Nobody forced us to come here!"

The Youth Leaguers had no choice but to enlarge their original band of volunteers.

Hui-tsung reorganized the work-teams to make the best use of the Agricultural Station spades and the baskets brought by the newcomers. She also had the Youth Leaguers see to it that the mountaineers wore gauze masks covering their noses and mouths. These had been made by the station's clinic a few days before and issued to all those helping spread manure. But some of the Tibetans failed to wear them when they were needed the most. The mountaineers weren't opposed to using them or-

dinarily, but how could you wear them when you were working in the fields? The masks were so nice and white; they'd get filthy!

Everyone set to work. Piles of horse manure were soon being levelled over the fields which were to be sown with winter wheat. This would later be covered with a layer of fresh earth. . . .

Tractor driver Chu Han-tsai had been delayed adding up his fuel account in the book-keeper's office. Now he joined the others in the field. All the tools having already been given out, he tried to borrow Hui-tsung's spade — she was wielding it with her left hand and looked tired — but she refused to give it up. Yeh Hai's team had a big basket that was really too large for one person to carry, so Han-tsai went to work with them.

The team operated smoothly: Chiuchih filled the basket with manure, Han-tsai and Yeh Hai walked with it and spread the manure over the field; then the basket was returned to Chiuchih who again filled it. . . .

Although the work couldn't be called heavy, it was very tiring. Before long, the two ex-soldiers removed their cotton-padded jackets. Twigs and pebbles kept getting into their low sneakers; they took these off too.

Lin-yuan blew her whistle — she was the time-keeper. Rest period.

All put down their spades and baskets and went into the shady grove and seated themselves on the ground. Cheerful conversations began in mixed Chinese and Tibetan, with much laughter.

When Han-tsai and Yeh Hai went to put on their sneakers, they found that their laces were missing. Strange. They distinctly remembered having laces when they took the sneakers off.

"Hey! Has anyone seen our shoe-laces?" Yeh Hai called to the group under the trees.

"You mean they're gone?" several of the young folks countered. The announcement caused a stir among the Tibetan mountaineers. With great interest they surrounded the two Han boys, who were standing, sneakers in hands.

"Search them!" cried a young mountaineer, pointing at the Tibetan girls. "Make no mistake. They've taken the laces. I'm positive!"

This stirred up a hornets' nest. The girls showered the boy with abuse in rapid Tibetan and, picking up clods of earth, flung them at him with such vigour and accuracy that he beat a hasty retreat, arms covering his head, and hid behind Han-tsai and Yeh Hai.

But all the while the mountaineers were roaring with laughter. Some were so convulsed that they dropped rolling to the ground.

What was it all about? The two Han boys couldn't make head or tail of what was going on.

Then, Chiuchih came out. When the whistle sounded, she had swiftly hidden behind a big tree. Holding a branch with both hands,

she had shyly peeked around the side of the trunk. She saw Han-tsai and Yeh Hai searching for their shoe-laces; she saw the hilarious reaction of the others. Now she felt she could remain in hiding no longer. She stepped forward—for all the world like a wood sprite emerging from the heart of a tree. All eyes turned to her—she could feel them. Her pallid cheeks became tinged with apple-red.

"Lost your laces?" she asked in a casual tone as she approached. "I have some. You can take mine."

She bent and, lifting the hem of her skirt, quickly removed the laces from the tops of her scarlet boots. One in each hand, she offered them to Han-tsai and Yeh Hai.

Neither of them moved. Confused they stood looking incomprehensibly at the two almond-brown woollen laces which were obviously brand-new.

"Take them, take them!" the Tibetan girls surrounding them urged. "They're perfectly good laces, aren't they? All right. Take them and put them on, hurry!"

With everyone watching them closely, Han-tsai and Yeh Hai finally accepted the woollen strings and threaded them through the eyelets of their sneakers.

Frowning slightly, Hui-tsung paced the floor as she wrestled mentally with the proposals she was preparing "On the Administration of the Grassland Pastures." It would be a long document, for it would include a survey of the present condition of the pastures, the population distribution of the nomads, suggestions on the propagation of new fodder grasses, some ideas on rotational use of pasture land . . . even proposals of methods to encourage the nomads to settle in permanent homes. . . .

These were all knotty problems, but the young stockbreeder pitched into them with a will. She was anxious to get her paper out soon. The Agriculture and Forestry Division had been urging quick action.

Deep in concentration, Hui-tsung didn't hear Chiuchih come in. It was only when she went to take up her pen that she finally noticed the Tibetan girl standing beside the table. Tears glistening in her eyes, Chiuchih was staring at the lamp wick.

"Chiuchih! What's wrong?" Hui-tsung hastily put down her pen.

The girl stood numb. Hui-tsung came toward her in some alarm.

"Is anything wrong? Tell me. What's happened?"

"Sister Hui-tsung," Chiuchih cried in a voice that trembled. "Those two . . . how could they. . . ."

She threw herself on Hui-tsung's bosom and sobbed uncontrollably. Patting the girl's heaving shoulders, Hui-tsung said in a firm tone:

"A big girl like you shouldn't cry so. Now what's wrong? Tell me everything."

It seemed that in the afternoon when Chiuchih and a group of Hans and Tibetans were returning from the pastures, the station people had wanted to go by way of the warm springs and wash their hands and feet. Although the Tibetan mountain folk didn't see much sense in this, a few of them went along.

Chiuchih took off her striped apron and beat the dust from the clothes of Han-tsai and Yeh Hai with it. Then she sat down and removed her boots. She was so long in washing her feet that in the meantime all the others left. Only Han-tsai and Yeh Hai remained. They were waiting for her, at her request.

After putting on her boots again, she brought out a small object from her bosom. With a somewhat exaggerated gesture she shook it before the two men—and unrolled two pairs of muddy shoe-laces. Then she solemnly bent and set them into her boot tops.

The men were startled. What was she up to? Watching Chiuchih's unhurried movements, of one accord they swung their gaze to the almond-coloured laces adorning their sneakers.

Just before reaching home, Chiuchih stopped as if she had something to say. But then she turned and ran into the house, forgetting completely that whenever people escort you to your door you should always invite them in for a bowl of tea and yak butter.

Suddenly she reappeared at the door. Leaning out, she asked softly:

"What do you think? Should we tell Ah-Pa and Ah-Ma now?"

Han-tsai and Yeh Hai didn't know what she was talking about.

"I think we might as well. They're bound to hear anyway."

These words Chiuchih said not only with her voice but with her whole being. An irrepressible happiness and pride revealed themselves in her curving eyelashes, in the corners of her pretty mouth.

The two men reacted as if they had suddenly been stricken. They were speechless and stiff with embarrassment. Chiuchih's heart contracted. She rushed out and blocked their path. Staring at them searchingly, she demanded:

"Have you changed your minds? You don't want to marry me, is that it?"

Please don't think she was being immodest. Not at all. Young Tibetan mountaineers never beat about the bush when talking of love to their sweethearts. They just aren't made that way. The only thing they are concerned about is whether he, or she, is a good honest person.

Nor should you imagine that one girl marrying two husbands is something Chiuchih invented. Among the mountain people, especially the poorer ones, it is not unusual for two brothers to marry the same girl. In the first place this means only one more mouth to feed, not two. Secondly, under this arrangement the brothers can continue to live together in peace and not have to squabble about dividing the family property.

Of course, Chiuchih knew that Han-tsai and Yeh Hai were not brothers. Neither in build, looks nor voice had they anything in common. Yet she stubbornly told herself there was no reason why they shouldn't take a wife together. Needless to say, this was actually because she was unable to choose between them.

After her frank outburst, Chiuchih hung her head and toyed awkwardly with her "pinestone" ring. She was waiting for their answer. The men standing before her did not speak.

"Aren't you going to say anything?" she pressed. "Speak! All you have to say is 'We're willing' or 'We're not willing'!"

At last, Han-tsai replied, but not as directly as Chiuchih demanded. In a friendly but reproving voice he said:

"Really Chiuchih, you mustn't pull any tricks like this on us again."

And Yeh Hai immediately chimed in, "That's right. You've got yourself talking all sorts of nonsense!"

One moving to the left, the other to the right, they stepped around her and walked away, far away! . . .

Now Hui-tsung understood. Poor Chiuchih!

Every night, Han-tsai taught his helper Yeh Hai some of the fundamentals of tractor maintenance and repair. Although Yeh Hai had no previous knowledge of machinery, he learned rapidly. Of course this was due in some part to his intelligence and application, but the main credit belonged to his teacher. Han-tsai had learned everything he knew of mechanics with his own ten fingers. Although this method was much slower and more difficult than taking a course in some special school, it came in very handy in passing on his hard-earned experience to others. He could draw simple homely comparisons which novices could readily grasp.

Tonight, however, was different. At the end of the lesson Yeh Hai was vaguer than when they had started. Was this lesson harder than usual? Hadn't Han-tsai made himself clear? No. The fault lay entirely with Yeh Hai himself, with his confused thinking and emotions. Though he appeared to be concentrating, he hadn't seen or heard a thing. His mind was filled with Chiuchih.

Yeh Hai didn't remember when he had first began to take notice of her, and very special notice at that. Every morning, as he passed Szulan-wongdui's door on his way to the fields, he found himself longing for a glimpse of the Tibetan peasant's daughter, Chiuchih, working in the yard. He was disappointed if she happened not to be there. And on his way home, if he didn't meet Chiuchih watering her horse at the bend in the stream, he felt strangely empty. In a word, although there were several equally attractive girls in the village, Chiuchih had become an indispensable part of his life.

But now, Yeh Hai was confronted with a tricky problem.

Although in the heart of Chiuchih, he and Han-tsai were equal, that was not how Yeh Hai looked at it. Without even making any detailed comparisons, he was sure that he was far inferior to Han-tsai. He felt that Chiuchih would be much better off with the older man. Yeh Hai had no confidence in himself at all. What could he offer her? What responsibilities could he undertake? None. He could do nothing for her. Whereas for Han-tsai, it would be easy. He could be everything a wife wanted. Trying to be honest and objective, Yeh Hai told himself: You haven't a chance. If you really care for her, you ought to think of how to make her life fuller, happier. . . .

Yet he couldn't help picturing what such a future would mean to him. She would be married, with a home of her own, a home that had nothing to do with him. If he visited her, she would treat him courteously, like a guest. . . . This prospect made Yeh Hai miserable, and his mind grasped at another thought: What if Han-tsai wasn't interested in Chiuchih? But that was nonsense. He was only kidding himself. . . .

Well, what *was* the answer? Yeh Hai didn't know. He hadn't the faintest idea. The thing was hopelessly complicated. If only Chiuchih wouldn't look at him with that light in her eyes, if only she would dislike him. Maybe then he could begin to figure out how to unravel this knot.

Very late in the night, when the moonlight had already left his window-sill, he was still awake. And he knew from the absence of the usual faint snores that Han-tsai, lying in the bed beside his, was not asleep either. . . .

When they rose the next morning, Han-tsai said, "Light the blow torch. Get the engine warmed up."

Yeh Hai suddenly remembered: This was the day the station chief had set for their "show." At dusk the night before, a large crowd of Tibetans, young men and old, arrived from East Valley. They had crossed a hundred *li* of mountains and streams to come to the Agricultural Station to ask for a demonstration of the "Lion" — as the local Tibetans had dubbed the station's tractor — and to buy one of the new-style ploughs to take back with them. As a matter of fact they had overestimated by far the price of the plough, bringing several head of sheep to supplement the cash they had raised. With the money alone they could have bought not one plough but three! The fame of the "Lion" had spread and, anticipating requests to see it in operation, the station had set aside a stretch of land for this purpose at the foot of a hill.

Soon, licked by the blue flame of the blow torch, the tractor engine began to give off rising clouds of vapour. Because it was a bitterly chill day, twenty minutes would be required to warm up the engine. While

waiting, Yeh Hai and Han-tsai took a large iron bucket down to the stream. The "Lion" drank a lot of water.

In the early morning there was always an endless procession of village girls travelling to and from the stream with their water buckets. These they carried on their backs, slung from a leather strap across their chests. The girls leaned so far forward that their braids swept the ground, while the buckets stood out behind them practically at right angles, looking as if they would topple over backwards at any moment! But plainly this strained position in no way hampered the girls' chatter and laughter, and they waved and called to the approaching tractor men.

Chiuchih was there too. She did not raise her head, and walked by the two men as if she had not seen them.

"Yeh Hai," Han-tsai said in a low voice, "what do you think of her? Chiuchih, I mean."

The question was completely unexpected.

"Come on, speak up. The truth, now!" Han-tsai urged with a frank smile. "What do you think of her?"

"I don't know," retorted Yeh Hai uncomfortably. "I don't have any particular ideas one way or the other."

"You don't? *Aiya*, what a boob! In all the villages around here, where can you find a finer girl than the daughter of Szulanwongdui? If I were you, footloose and fancy free, believe me. . . ." Han-tsai laughed and prodded Yeh Hai with the bucket.

Yeh Hai shot him a surprised glance. He was talking like a regular matchmaker! Han-tsai had never mentioned marriage before.

Han-tsai could see that his helper was suspicious. "I wasn't like you when I was a youngster, I can tell you that," he continued. "You're much too timid."

"You have a sweetheart? Where is she?" Yeh Hai demanded.

"At home. In her own home, of course."

"Does she write often?"

"Oh yes, lots of letters. But I don't keep them. I tear them up."

"Got a picture of her?"

"Sure."

"Can I see it?"

"Why not? Certainly."

Han-tsai put the filled bucket down on a rock, and from his pocket brought out a small leather-covered, zippered notebook. Within the pages was a small photo. He handed it to Yeh Hai. The young helper saw a bobbed-hair girl who looked like a northerner, with positive, well-made features.

An expression of almost childish pleasure stole across Yeh Hai's face as he returned the photo.

Han-tsai quickly put the picture away. He had never shown it to anyone before. But Yeh Hai had to be fooled into believing that he, Han-tsai, had a sweetheart.

Han-tsai knew Yeh Hai's every expressed and unexpressed thought as well as he knew the inner workings of an automobile. He knew that Chiuchih had completely captured the young ex-cavalryman's heart — just as she had completely taken his own. Han-tsai had given the matter a lot of thought. The decision was a painful one to make, but his love for them both led him to adopt this ruse as the only way out.

The obstacles had to be removed from Yeh Hai's path, and Han-tsai was the only one who could do it. If he showed any interest in Chiuchih, even if he merely pretended to be indifferent, Yeh Hai would never take the initiative. Yeh Hai's doubts and self-reproach would prevent him from attaining what he desired above all. This, to Han-tsai, was unthinkable. "I can't hurt him, come what may," he told himself.

Well then, what about the photograph?

. . . During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Han-tsai's home town, near the border of a liberated area, had been under the control of Chinese puppets working for the enemy. Our government had people operating there secretly. One, a girl only two years older than Han-tsai, lived in his house for a long time, posing as his "aunt" (because the neighbours had once heard the family had such a relative somewhere). Han-tsai and she worked in the underground together, sharing the joys of rare, small victories, and the dangers of frequent investigations and questioning by the enemy. That Han-tsai, who had just reached the required age, could become a candidate member of the Communist Party, was entirely due to the painstaking education he received at the hands of this "aunt."

Later, it had become necessary for Han-tsai to lead a group of young men off to join the Eighth Route Army. She had walked half a mile down the road with him as they were leaving, and had given him careful instructions, as if to a child, on how to conduct himself in the army. But he didn't hear her. Frankly, not a word penetrated. He was full of things he didn't dare say, things he felt she was waiting to hear. But he never voiced them, and they parted.

They lost contact with each other. She was assigned to a new post; he was constantly moving about. It wasn't until two years after the Japanese surrendered that he finally located her by placing an advertisement in the "Missing Persons" column of a newspaper. She wrote to him. When he opened the envelope and saw the enclosed picture his heart began to pound. It was she, it was she! He wanted to shout it aloud!

Then he read the letter. He didn't even get beyond the first half. His fiery excitement was quelled, turned to ice. Crumpling the letter

and picture into a ball, he crammed them into his tool kit. Her letter said she had married the month before. Everything was fine. She was very happy.

As soon as Han-tsai was able to think clearly again, and put himself in her place, he was ashamed of his anger. After all it wasn't her fault. Nobody was to blame. . . . He smoothed out the crushed photo and carefully pressed it flat. From then on he preserved it as he preserved his feeling for her — in secret.

A nasty rumour was going around the village that the Agricultural Station people could not be trusted. Hadn't two of their men given a girl their shoe-laces? Why didn't they keep their pledge?

Among the Tibetans an exchange of shoe-laces indicated a solemn irrevocable compact. The laces were considered a love-token without par, because the person on whom they were bestowed was bound to look at them the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night.

Could it be that the Han men in the station scorned Tibetan girls? Even worse, did they look down on a fine girl like Chiuchih? To the mountain folk this attitude was insufferable.

The situation was serious. The station chief gave the task of dispelling the slander to the Youth League branch. The branch decided to send Hui-tsung to talk to Chiuchih's parents.

She was also to try and convince Szulanwongdui to select his best bit of land and sow it with winter wheat, as an example to the other peasants, who had a great deal of respect for his judgement. Szulanwongdui had become very attached to Hui-tsung after she helped his cow with a difficult delivery. Although he had rejected the suggestion about the wheat when it was made by the station, he might listen to her.

The lessons in Tibetan were over and it was time for Lin-yuan to begin her Chinese classes. She led the students to a clearing in the forest.

Shortly after she started class, she saw two men coming along the slope on horseback.

They were the Communist Party secretary — her father, Su Yi — and a guard. The region was about to hold its first People's Representative Conference, and Su Yi had been busy for days, running around to the various local chiefs and to the big lamaseries, as well as to the major villages and pasture ranges. He hadn't been back to the station for some time. Now he was making a special detour to visit it and, of course, on his way, he certainly wanted to drop in on the Kengta Primary School.

Lin-yuan walked to meet her father. Su Yi dismounted.

"Well, schoolmarm, how's it going?" he called cheerily. "Have you cut down any on the empty seats?"

"They're all filled," Lin-yuan replied with equal gaiety. "The last few days we haven't had a single absence."

As they talked, they strolled to the clearing. Su Yi could see the students, busy as ants, swarming around a felled red birch. The kids were hacking off the branches with axes and stripping the bark, revealing the wood, white as lotus root. Those without implements were breaking the branches by hand, snapping them crisply.

"What are you doing?" the Party secretary asked. "A fine young tree like that. Why did you cut it down?"

Lin-yuan smiled at the students, indicating that they should answer. A little girl came forward and, in what she obviously hoped was a grown-up manner, announced:

"It's not a young tree, it's a flagpole."

"A flagpole?"

"Yes. A flagpole to raise the national flag on," a little boy explained. "Have you ever seen our country's flag? Our teacher has one — in her room. We've seen it, we've all seen it."

"It's the best-looking flag in the world! It's so red — scarlet red! It's redder than the clouds at sunset!"

"Aha! So that's it!" Su Yi was delighted. "Then you mean your school wants to. . . ."

"Raise the flag!" the kids cried, all trying to talk at once. "Don't you know? A holiday is coming. A big holiday!"

"When is it going to be?"

"In October, the first day of October," a boy astride the tree trunk interjected. "We're going to raise the flag the first thing in the morning."

"Oh, I see. The morning of October First you'll raise the flag. And what will you be doing as you raise the flag?"

"We'll line up," chorused the students.

"We'll form very straight lines, and we won't talk and we won't move around. We'll stand very correctly — like this," said a little boy, pressing his arms stiffly to his sides.

"And we sing the national anthem too," said the little girl who had spoken first.

"Do you know it?" asked Su Yi, surprised.

"Of course we do! Why not!"

"Will you sing it for me now?"

"No." The little girl shook her head, dropping her long curving eyelashes. "I won't."

"Why?"

"It's not an ordinary song. You can't just sing it any old time."

Su Yi was very moved. He pulled the little girl towards him and smoothed her hair, gazing at her cleanly-scrubbed ruddy little face, at the long dark eyelashes like soft shadows beneath her eyes.

"What's your name?"

The child hesitated a moment, then said, "Tanhsia"

Su Yi was startled. How could she be Tanhsia? That was the name of the little boy who was the heir apparent of the *chungpon** of Kengta!

What had happened was this: Tanhsia was of school age, but how could the son of a *chungpon* sit together with ordinary children? Yet if only the descendants of peasants attended the new school and none of the nobles' children showed any interest in obtaining an education, it would mean a loss of face for the local aristocrats. Kesanglamu, the child's mother, was the local *chungpon*, and she was on the horns of a dilemma. It was her councillor Woma who finally came forward with a solution — hire a "replacement student" to attend school in the name of Tanhsia. Thus the problem was settled to the satisfaction of both the boy's family and his substitute.

As the school-teacher finished her explanation, Su Yi laughed. Again he asked the little girl:

"What's your name? Your real name, I mean."

Reluctantly, the "replacement" answered in a low voice, "I'm called Chahsi."

Chahsi was the pride of the school. Needless to say, she was also teacher's pet. Lin-yuan was always talking about "my little Chahsi." Now, in the presence of the Party secretary she certainly wasn't going to let an opportunity to praise the child slip by.

After listening to Lin-yuan's proud recital of the little girl's accomplishments, Su Yi thought he'd test her. He asked Chahsi to write a few Chinese characters. The child was shy, but when teacher gave her an approving nod, she picked up a twig and scrawled a few large hieroglyphics on the ground. At first Su Yi couldn't decipher them. But on closer examination, he found that she had written in both Tibetan and Chinese script. Slowly he read the words — Mao . . . Tse-tung. . .

October First — founding day of the People's Republic of China.

The mountain folk rose very early that morning. If you could have gone from house to house, you would have seen everyone dressing up for the holiday. Particularly the young women — married or otherwise — these went to special pains. As a protection against the burning sun and sharp wind, many usually kept their faces covered with an inelegant layer of resin. But today the girls washed the resin off — this was only done on special occasions — and spent a great deal of time recombining their dozens of braids, which they then tied behind them with a broad red ribbon. To the ribbon they attached strings of shells and silver coins that clinked loudly as they walked. The girls put on their best clothes and boots and brightly striped aprons. From wooden chests they brought out their holiday earrings, rings and necklaces. Some adorned their hair

*An administrative and judicial official equivalent to the head of county.

with precious turquoise stones — the mountain folk love hair ornaments.

Many of the girls — Chiuchih among them — could not afford such luxuries. But they did not, for this reason, let themselves be put in the shade. They ran up the dew-covered mountain slopes and picked wild flowers of many hues and weaved them into large fragrant wreaths, which they wore on their heads, much enhancing their beauty!

Climbing out of the east, like a red-faced benevolent giant, the sun bathed the landscape with its caressing beams. The vast untamed land awakened from its deep sleep and stirred, warm and vibrant! Reflected light from pink clouds on the horizon swathed the snowy peaks, the frozen rivers, the trees, the mountains and the pastures with a rare loveliness.

It was with hard work that the people of the Agricultural Station and the mountain folk greeted the day of celebration.

Everyone surged to the fields just about the same time crowds were hurrying to Tien An Men Square in Peking for the huge October First parade.

On reaching the newly erected school, all paused of one accord. In an atmosphere of unusual silence, the students were raising the national flag, its bright red folds rippling in the breeze.

As they continued on their way, someone started a song, and everyone joined in — how could they help but sing! — their voices rising high above the wooded slopes and striking against the distant cliffs and echoing back, so that the whole countryside seemed to be singing with them.

Then a hush fell on the fields, like the silence that precedes a battle.

An informal yet solemn ceremony commenced. The comrades insisted that Party Secretary Su Yi be the first to drive the horse-drawn seeder down the field. Su Yi knew he couldn't do it with much style — for he had little experience in farm work — but he was quite happy to try. He had risen very early that morning and hurried excitedly to the station. Not only did he want to see it done, but he wanted to take a hand personally in sowing the rich soil that had lain untouched for so many countless years.

Su Yi gripped the handles of the seeder. Chen Tzu-huang, chief of the Agricultural Station, took the horse by the bit and began to lead it slowly down the field. Silently, the others followed close behind — as if one little seeder required the services of the entire station. They were serious, stirred, and their eyes shone. For the seeder was sowing not just seeds, but all their hopes for the flourishing of this virgin soil, all their love for this beautiful highland! . . .

The mountain folk were plainly sceptical at first. They had their old and trusted method of sowing — you could clearly see the seed flowing from between your fingers down on to the soil. But now the station was using a "small cart" for sowing. True the "small cart" had a wooden box on it, and the box was filled with seed. But where did the seed come out?

And how did it get into the ground? Even after you'd gone a whole length of the field with that contraption, the seeds would probably remain just where they were in the box. . . . The mountaineers knelt and dug in the furrows the seeder had left behind. Sure enough, there were the golden grains, neatly and evenly spaced! To the mountain folk it was nothing short of a miracle.

Chen, the station chief, was hoping he could put all his other duties aside and work the whole day in the field. It was more than ten years since he had left the farm to join the army. Returning to the soil again today was like meeting a long lost friend. His body seemed to fill with strength; he longed to turn up every inch of soil with his own two hands.

But he didn't get his wish. First people from this village wanted to see the station chief, then from that. He had to meet them all, answer their questions, solve their problems.

Some of the Tibetans — only because the station had requested it — had set aside a small strip of land for the experimental sowing of winter wheat, a thing quite new to the local peasants. Now, after seeing the seeder in action, they decided to sow all their land with winter wheat. Even those who originally had no interest whatsoever, began thinking that it might do no harm to try it on a small scale. After all, if there were any risk in it, the station wouldn't be sowing half a big field!

They sought out the station chief and asked him for a loan of seed. Actually, in the first year of its operation the station should give seed away, not lend it. But if you gave it to them free, the mountain folk would be suspicious so a requirement was attached that the seed be returned after harvest.

Because everyone else was busy, Chen himself helped the storeroom clerk — his wife, Li Yueh-hsiang — bring the pre-soaked seed to the field and distribute it. At first, Chen wrote down the name of each borrower in a small notebook, while Yueh-hsiang carefully weighed out the seed on a scale. But peasants wanting seed swarmed around in such numbers that this became impossible. Handing out seed as fast as he could, Chen called:

"Keep your own records! Whatever you borrow today, return the same amount next year!"

After the seed was distributed, mountain folk again came to him.

"Station Chief, we want to borrow your 'small cart.' All right?"

"Please lend us your 'small cart' to seed our field, *Benbu*.* Our field isn't very large."

"*Benbu*, Station Chief. . . ."

The station had three seeders. It was decided to devote two of them to the use of those mountaineers opening up new land.

**Benbu* — "Your Excellency." A Tibetan term addressed to high officials.

The seeders were received like honoured guests. When the first one went into operation on the first plot of ground, the owners of the second and third plots were already standing on the sidelines anxiously waiting their turns.

But Szulanwongdui had different ideas. He sowed his winter wheat on a bit of land that was both narrow and steep, a place impossible for using a horse-drawn seeder. As usual, he broke up the ground with a pickaxe, while Chiuchih followed behind, sowing, carrying the seeds in a pocket she made of her apron.

Although he reminded her repeatedly to keep her mind on her work and sow the seeds evenly, Chiuchih kept looking off in the distance, where a neighbour was driving the seeder back and forth across his field.

"Watch what you're doing!" her father snapped. "Have you fallen asleep, or what?"

In turning to gaze at the fascinating "small cart," Chiuchih had unconsciously lowered the edge of her apron, and the seeds had trickled down like a thin mountain stream, spilling all over the ground. She hastily bent and scooped them up again.

"I don't know how many times I've told you," her father said fretfully, "sowing seed is not like twisting wool thread. You must look sharp and think of what you're doing. Otherwise you'll waste the seed. You know as well as I do, every single grain. . . ."

"Ah-Pa!" the girl's patience was gone, or she would never have interrupted her father. "We ought to sow a field of winter wheat too. Like everyone else!"

"Well, aren't we? What have you got in your apron? Isn't that wheat seed?"

"But what kind of land do you call this? I say we ought to use that level stretch of ours down by the bend in the river."

"Now that's enough out of you! I've been farming for over forty years; nobody is going to wave their finger at me and tell me how and where I should plant!"

"You think the station would deliberately fool people?"

"No, I know they wouldn't do that. But," Szulanwongdui evidently had given the matter some thought, "the station's seed is Peking seed. You understand? Whether Peking seed can grow in Tibetan soil — that's still hard to say!"

To make the maximum use of the seeders, Chen directed that food be brought to the fields and that the operators work in shifts.

The one who delivered the food was the old Tibetan soldier, Lochu. Just as Chen and Su Yi were about to sit down to their own meal, he approached them with a very stern expression.

"*Benbu*, people are occupying part of our land!"

"What? Occupying?"

"Yes. Occupying our station's land." The old man pointed to a section behind a hill. "When I was bringing the food I saw them."

"Really? Perhaps you're mistaken." Chen was sceptical. "Let's go. We'll have a look for ourselves."

Behind the hill was a little settlement of three families who raised *chingko* — a kind of local barley — on a narrow plot of ground that originally lay like a peninsula in a vast sea of surrounding untilled land. Now, the "Lion" had converted the virgin soil into a large cultivated field. Because there had been no clearly defined boundaries between the *chingko* land and that of the station, the hill families had doubled their holdings by the simple process of setting up a row of stones and a few ditches in a curving line that took a sizable bite out of station property.

By the time Chen and Su Yi arrived, the new "boundary" was already completed.

Chen was very angry. His first impulse was to fling the stones away and fill in the ditches. But before he could go into action, the Party secretary hurried forward and in a pleasant tone addressed the hill people standing in the field.

"Are you busy, neighbours?"

The peasants did not reply. They stood before the newly erected boundary, cautiously observing the facial expressions of the two *benbu*, waiting to see what they would do.

"What are you intending to sow here?" queried Su Yi.

"On this land? That's right. We are going to sow," an old peasant replied challengingly. "We've tilled this land for years."

"I know, I know," said Su Yi soothingly. "What I was asking is *what* you are going to sow. *Chingko*?"

"No, wheat. Winter wheat."

"Winter wheat? That's fine. Have you borrowed your seed yet?"

"Yes, all we need!"

"Good. Your soil is very rich. Winter wheat will grow well here." Su Yi picked up a handful of soil and kneaded it with his fingers. "Well, we mustn't keep you from your work," he said with a smile, then turned and walked away.

Though Chen was rather mystified he had no choice but to follow after the Party secretary. It was as if they had just been passing by and only had time to exchange a few words with the hill people before hurrying on to the office.

When they were a good distance away from the purloined field, Chen halted and said angrily, "Lochu was right. Those people have taken our land!"

"What do you think we ought to do about it?" Su Yi asked.

"I think. . . . Naturally, it isn't a very serious problem." The station chief was plainly annoyed. "But they certainly have a nerve! I went to them several times and pleaded with them to open up that virgin land. They did nothing but stall. When we set up the training class on the use of the new-style ploughs, every settlement fought for the chance to learn. But them? They wouldn't come even after we *invited* them three times. Now look at them. Pretty clever. We plough, harrow, spread fertilizer and get everything ready. Then they come along, move some stones, dig a few ditches and take over. . . ."

"Remember what you said a couple of months ago?" Su Yi interrupted. "You said Tibetans weren't really interested in farming. It looks as if you were jumping to conclusions a bit, doesn't it? If that was so, they wouldn't be so keen on expanding their fields. Of course it was wrong of them not to take our advice. But it was hard for them to do that, then. They were afraid!"

When a man had gone from the station to urge the peasants in the little hillside settlement to till the virgin soil, they were quite doubtful about the idea. Even though it was public land, how could people who had been serfs for generations dream of just taking over for themselves? During the years when the Kuomintang was in control, the more land a man had the bigger the tax he had to pay. Unless he could, by some magic, turn his earth clods into silver dollars, he simply couldn't afford to sow! What's more, the hillsiders had their suspicions of the Agricultural Station — when it first started, everyone working there was a Han.

But now? Now they saw with their own eyes that many who had been paupers today had their own land — and they were sowing it in winter. The hillsiders were sorry they had not prepared their field like the others, and they were worried too. So they figured out a simple direct way of catching up with the sowing of the winter wheat — they took a piece of the station's large field.

"Of course, I'm not saying it was the right thing to do," the Party secretary said as he and Chen slowed their pace. "But, since it's already done, must we insist that they return the land immediately? Must we put them on the spot? I think, when we get back, you ought to pass the word around through the Party branch — we're all to act as if we don't know anything about it. Let them have the land! The 'harvest' we'll get will be much bigger than anything that bit of land can bring in."

Chen made no reply. He continued walking beside Su Yi in silence. "What do you say?" Su Yi asked him after a pause. "You're the chief of station. The final decision rests with you."

"I agree!" Chen was striving hard to curb his displeasure. "But I'll have to tell Lei Wen-chu and let him change the map of arable land he's drawn for our plan to convert the station into a state farm. That stretch they've taken was included as part of our property."

"Let him change it, if necessary," said the secretary cheerfully. "And please give him a suggestion from me: Sketch the arable land area in pencil; that'll make it easier to correct later on. At the moment, because our neighbours have borrowed a bit from us, our area has shrunk a little. But once the station gets going, that area is going to expand a lot! Don't you think so?"

First, because it was a holiday and second, to celebrate the sowing of the winter wheat, that evening the Agricultural Station gave a big party.

In groups of two and three the girls came, hand in hand, arm in arm, carefree and gay. Several were blowing thin leaves between their fingers, emitting a shrill, but pleasant sound.

Behind the girls, boys followed like shadows. Some were as solemn as warriors escorting the girls through some place of grave danger. Others were bolder, nudging and jostling the girls at every opportunity—they knew that today they could get away with it.

The children came too, calling and shouting in high treble voices, running about, getting underfoot everywhere. Although no one paid any attention to them, for sheer noise and excitement the party wouldn't have been the same without them.

More slowly and somewhat later, the older folks arrived. Choosing good points of vantage to the rear of the clearing where the festivities were being held, they sat themselves down and stayed put. They plainly were taking a much more serious attitude towards the holiday than the young people.

The party was run in accordance with local custom—everyone sat cross-legged on the ground in a large circle. Around the inner perimeter of the circle, at intervals, were ten big camp-fires, their flames leaping as if to enkindle the sky, reflecting bright red on the faces of the people sitting around them. The girls looked exceptionally pretty in the firelight, and they inspected one another with boundless admiration. The mountain folk fed the flames with cedar and pine branches. Occasionally, they tossed in handfuls of *tsamba*, barley flour, which burned with a strange wild fragrance. In the centre of the clearing stood a huge wooden bucket filled with powerful *chingko* wine, sweet as yak's milk. A few dozen wooden bowls were placed around the bucket for the convenience of the drinkers. At any time, anyone could step through the fiery circle and scoop himself a drink. Whenever the bucket was empty, it was immediately refilled. . . .

Even before the more distant guests had arrived, the clearing was already a sea of merriment. Men's hats of wool and fox fur and gold embroidered peaks flashed in the firelight. The dazzling multicoloured dresses of the girls billowed and swirled. Hundreds of stamping danc-

ing boots raised clouds of dust. Romantic songs rose heavenward, soaring high and wide.

In previous years, at Harvest Festival, there had also been big celebrations with camp-fires and dancing and singing and laughter. But the mountaineers agreed that none of them compared with this one tonight.

Nearly everyone from the station was drawn into the whirlpool of the dance. Unless you went far away—and who wanted to leave the clearing now?—if you stood any place where you could be seen, you promptly were grabbed by a dozen hands. Chen's wife, Li Yueh-hsiang, had been hiding behind a group of old women. Now she too was dragged to the middle. She tried to imitate the dancers, swinging her arms and stamping her feet. But she was very clumsy at it, and the dancing was more of an ordeal than a pleasure for her. It was the same with most of the people from the station.

There were some exceptions, however. Lin-yuan, meteorologist and school-teacher, was as adept as any of the Tibetan girls. What's more, she was able to add the grace of modern dancing to the strength and primitiveness of the folk-dance movements. Her flowing suppleness attracted all eyes.

Station Chief Chen finally managed to escape from the circle of dancers. He saw Szulanwongdui talking to some children, and headed towards him. But before he could reach his Tibetan friend, one of the carters came running up.

"Chief, you order him to stop. He won't listen to anyone else."

"Who? What's wrong?"

"Our section leader. He's drining like a fish and won't stop. We've got to work tomorrow. Order him to stop!"

Mi Fu-sheng was at the wine bucket, taking on and beating all comers in a drinking contest. The mountain folk had a real capacity; one of them had downed nine bowls. Then Fu-sheng ambled forward and casually scooped up his twelfth. This won the praise of his competitors, who held up their thumbs in admiration.

Chen stepped into the circle of camp-fires, intending to call a halt to the competition. But by that time Fu-sheng had already quit. Had he reached his limit? No! (The devil only knows how many more bowls of wine he could have consumed!) Something else had broken up the contest. Just as Fu-sheng was filling his fourteenth bowl, the dancers suddenly withdrew, leaving the clearing empty.

Chuma had been invited to dance. With whistles and shouts, the young mountain folk begged her to perform.

Not in the least shy, the young Tibetan washerwoman stepped into the circle. After briefly sweeping the audience with her eyes, she began to dance, her every gesture beautiful, exciting.

Squeezed in among many people, Fu-sheng watched her hungrily. The bowl in his hand tilted, and the wine spilled to the ground at his feet. . . .

It was already quite late when the party came to an end.

But so far as the young lovers were concerned the night was just beginning. Leaving the clearing, they slipped away to previously agreed trysting-places. If, at that moment, you had been standing on a high rooftop, from all directions you would have heard the strains of songs like this, its verses sung alternately by male and female voices:

*Golden flower of the grasslands
If you're going to open, please don't delay!
I'm off tomorrow for distant places
I can no longer with you stay.*

*If your heart is honest and true
Even barefoot I'll follow you,
Do you dare to swear your love
To the pure chaste moon above?*

*You're like a lush ripe apple
Hanging high upon a bough,
I may not be so agile
But I'll pluck you yet, I vow!*

*Hush your chatter, hush your song!
Buy a lock that's new and strong,
Link our hearts with steel together,
Keep the key with you for ever. . . .*

The young mountain folk could compose these courtship lyrics almost without thinking. They conversed with them, expressing their love in song rather than in spoken words.

Chiuchih and Yeh Hai sat side by side on a thick old tree root at the edge of the forest. Because Yeh Hai had not learned the Tibetans' song-making skill, Chiuchih permitted him to address her in ordinary speech. They spoke very softly, their words audible only to the birds nesting in the tree above them.

" . . . What do you think of our calf?" Chiuchih asked suddenly, for no apparent reason.

"Not bad," said Yeh Hai. "She'll be a fine cow some day."

"Ah-Pa and Ah-Ma say she can be my dowry. Would you like that?" Chiuchih asked shyly in a low voice. It was obvious she expected Yeh Hai would be as pleased as she.

"Dowry? Who wants a dowry!"

To Yeh Hai, dowries were out of date. But Szulanwongdui and his wife felt the reputation of their family was at stake. Chiuchih was their only daughter. If they didn't give her a dowry, not only would they themselves feel uncomfortable, but their neighbours would be sure to gossip. Although the calf wasn't much of a dowry, it was a considerably more impressive bit of property than Chiuchih's mother had been able to bring when she married Szulanwongdui thirty years before.

Yeh Hai had to talk at great length before he could persuade Chiuchih. But she finally agreed — the day of their marriage she would bring nothing but the ornaments in her hair and the clothing she wore on her back. Yeh Hai had explained that where he came from they no longer gave dowries. At the same time it occurred to Chiuchih that in her new home a calf wouldn't be of much use.

"What about my hair? Shall I comb it differently?" she inquired. "And this? I suppose I'll have to take it off." She held up a silver Buddhist emblem hanging from a necklace of black rosary beads.

She had heard from older women in her village that whoever married a Han had to change her coiffure and remove her religious decorations. This had disturbed her. Not that she had anything against the way Han girls wore their hair. But if she bobbed her hair like Hui-tsung, or wore it in two short thick plaits like Lin-yuan, what would she do with the bright red ribbons and silver ornaments adorning her dozens of thin braids?

As to the silver Buddhist emblem, Chiuchih not only was extremely fond of it, the very thought of parting with it terrified her. The mountain folk believed that the rosary beads and silver religious emblems hanging on their chests protected them from harm. Chiuchih's mother had told her — the reason the bandits had been able to kidnap her that day in the mountains was because she had forgotten to put her beads and silver Buddhist emblem on again after drying her clothes by the fire.

"Of course not. Nothing of the sort," said Yeh Hai. "You can comb your hair any way you like. It's nobody else's business. And that," he pointed at the silver emblem, "that's your own affair too. If you want to wear it, nobody can make you take it off. If you want to take it off, nobody can make you wear it."

His answer was so positive that Chiuchih had to believe him.

"But," she said after a while, in a low tone, "Ah-Pa and Ah-Ma are still a little afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid that you'll go away."

"Go? Where would I go to?"

"They're worried. This isn't your home. Sooner or later you'll want to go home. Sooner or later you'll leave. Isn't that so?"

There was a pleading, sad look in her eyes.

"Are you worried too?" he countered.

"I . . ." She lowered her head. "I am and I'm not."

Chiuchih indeed didn't know whether she ought to worry or not. If Yeh Hai should go home, as his wife she would, of course, go with him. The thought of leaving her family, the mountains where she was born and bred, and going "outside," was strange, unimaginable and, in a way, frightening—like the feeling a bird must get when it flies too high and suddenly discovers that it may not be able to get down again. Yet, at the same time, the prospect of going "outside" was a pleasing one. There she could see the many wonderful things she had long been curious about. Besides, she belonged entirely to Yeh Hai, just as he was completely hers. As long as she travelled with him, all would be well. Even if he wanted her to float down the Kengta River with him in a cowhide boat, she would agree gladly. She didn't care where they drifted to—if only they were together.

But there was no question about the fears of her parents. Although they were busy preparing for her wedding, they were very uneasy. Originally, they had expected that when Chiuchih married, the groom would join their household. This was the custom when the girl was an only child. Not only did the parents thus retain their daughter as company in their old age, but they acquired a son to support them as well.

Although Chiuchih had found herself a fine young man, her parents knew there was little likelihood of his moving in with them. Yeh Hai couldn't very well leave his work at the Agricultural Station. Still, the girl's parents didn't mind that so much. What bothered them most was the fear that Yeh Hai would leave and take their daughter with him. That would be terrible! They might never see her again! Szulanwongdui and his wife couldn't picture a life without Chiuchih. . . . What's more, Szulanwongdui had heard that the country "outside" was unbearably hot. Even in winter the rivers didn't freeze and there was no snow on the mountains. How could a Tibetan girl live in such a place? . . .

"Don't worry, Chiuchih, I won't leave here," Yeh Hai assured her quietly. "Where would I go? This is my home!"

"Didn't you say you have your own home? Where your Ah-Ma lives?"

"That's right. But I'll bring my ma out here. This is where I live now." He pointed at the ground beneath his feet. "You needn't think it strange, Chiuchih. I'm not a Tibetan but Tibet is where I want to stay."

"Really?" Chiuchih raised her head. "When will you send for your Ah-Ma? Have you written to her already? Is she willing to come?"

"Yes, she's willing, but I want her to wait a while first. We haven't had time to fix things up yet at the station. Even the station chief is still living in a cave! In a couple of years all that will be changed. We won't be a little experimental station any more, but a state farm. You understand, Chiuchih? We'll really look like something then!" He

made a vague motion with his hand; he didn't know what gesture was appropriate for anything so magnificent. "When that time comes, I'll bring my ma out here. She can work on the farm; she's still strong. She knows how to milk, and feed pigs, and cure tobacco; or she could work in the children's nursery, or in the flour mill. . . ."

Chiuchih listened, enchanted, picturing her own version of the future state farm. Her eyes shone. Like an impatient child, she interrupted Yeh Hai.

"What about me? What will I do?"

"You? Didn't you say you wanted to drive the 'Lion'?"

"Yes. That's exactly what I want!" Impulsively, she squeezed his hands—four work-hardened palms pressed together. Then a worrying thought assailed her. "But will the farm let a girl drive a tractor?"

Her doubts were not without reason. Two days before, several of the local young people had dropped in on Han-tsai while he was cleaning the tractor and requested that he tell them in a few words all there was to know about the machine. Of course, Han-tsai knew this couldn't be done, but he did give them a few pointers on fundamentals. Still, it was obvious that only Chiuchih—who, with rolled up sleeves, was helping to wipe down the parts—got much out of it. Because of this, the village girls looked on Chiuchih with pride and admiration, and they ridiculed the boys, proclaiming that they were more stupid than donkeys. Naturally, the boys wouldn't take this lying down. To salve their wounded prestige they had insisted that no matter how clever a girl might be, it wouldn't do her any good—under no circumstances would a mere female be permitted to drive the "Lion."

"Who says she can't! Of course she can!" retorted Yeh Hai. "All you have to do is learn how. You can do that this winter. Han-tsai is a good teacher. I can help you do some of the work around the house, if you're too busy. Don't think just because we only have one tractor it'll always be like that. When we get to be a state farm, we'll have lots of them. Hurry up and learn, Chiuchih. In the next year or two you can become at least a helper—mine, for instance!" Yeh Hai seemed to have forgotten that he was still only a helper himself.

"Won't it be wonderful," he went on. "In the spring and autumn, we can work together in the fields. When we plough, or harrow, or reap, we can take turns driving. During the winter, we can go out together with the flocks. I used to tend sheep when I was a kid, a whole big flock of them. Of course, they weren't mine. They belonged to a rich man. . . ."

Elbows on her knees, Chiuchih supported her face with her hands and stared dreamily off into space. She could almost see the beautiful scenes Yeh Hai's words evoked.

A biting north wind swept across the valley through the night. Chiuchih shivered. She had forgotten to bring her fleece-lined vest, and wore only her thin holiday clothing.

"Are you cold, Chiuchih?" Yeh Hai asked.

"Yes!"

"Let's go home, then." He started to rise.

She grasped his arm. "No, not yet. It's early."

"Come on. You can't just sit here and freeze."

"Put your arms around me. That'll keep me warm."

Yeh Hai hesitated a moment, then crossed his brawny arms over Chiuchih's shoulders — but lightly, gingerly, as if fearful of crushing her. Chiuchih had no such reservations. She nestled herself firmly against him, her flower-wreathed head resting on his chest, her cheek against his faded cotton-padded army uniform. She could hear his heart beating, loud and fast, and she laughed to herself. An ex-cavalryman, yet so timid with girls!

"If you're going to hold me, do it right," she ordered. "Ah, that's much better. I'm not a bit cold now."

The night was very still. Except for the lute-like rippling of a little stream, not a sound came from the grasslands or forest to disturb the young lovers. They were visible only to the moon, peering jealously down on them through a rift in the clouds, secretly watching them and other young couples — also hidden away in secluded places, also burning with the fires of love.

Neither of them spoke for a long time. Finally, Chiuchih drew away from Yeh Hai and turned to look into his eyes.

"Yeh Hai," she said softly.

"Yes?" he replied, like a man speaking from the depths of a dream.

"Do you really want to marry me?"

He looked at her, surprised.

"Answer me. Do you really want to marry me?"

"Of course I do," he answered, reproachful that she should ask such a question. "If you're willing, we can get married after we've finished sowing the winter wheat."

"You're fooling! I don't believe you!"

"Why not?" he asked, very upset. "Have I ever lied to you?"

"You're a Youth League member, aren't you?" she countered.

"Yes. What if I am?"

"Well, I'm not," the girl said mournfully. "I'm not in the Youth League!"

Chiuchih had long known of the existence of a "Youth League" at the Agricultural Station. What it was precisely, she was none too sure. At first, when she saw members paying their dues she thought they were collecting money so that people coming from the market centres in other

provinces could buy them things to eat or wear. She even asked Yeh Hai how it was that they only paid out money but no one ever brought them anything in return. Yeh Hai explained what the dues were for; he said the only purchases that might be made with the money would be some books or magazines for all the League members to read.

After attending the last enlarged meeting of the League branch as an observer, although it was difficult for her to grasp the whole idea in so short a time, Chiuchih began to understand something of the nature of the organization. A Youth Leaguer, she told herself, must be a completely honest person. He, or she, was different from other young folks in that people especially relied upon and love them.

When the meeting ended, she went up to Hui-tsung and asked whether she could be considered a League member. Delighted with her interest, the Han girl told her the functions of the League and explained what kind of persons could become members. Chiuchih realized that joining the Youth League wasn't as simple as she had thought.

That was where the matter stood. Although she had succeeded in exchanging shoe-laces with Yeh Hai, and was privately urging her parents to hasten with the marriage preparations, whenever Chiuchih thought of the Youth League question she became panicky. She felt that a person who was a non-member was unworthy of marrying a Youth Leaguer, and that he wouldn't really want such a girl for a wife.

"That's nothing to worry about. You can join," Yeh Hai assured her.

"Really?" she asked excitedly. "You really think I can?"

"Sure! But do you know what you must do before you can be considered a genuine Youth Leaguer?"

"I know!"

"You do? Well, let's hear it."

"I have to be like Sister Hui-tsung," Chiuchih said simply. "Yeh Hai, you must wait for me! I'm sure I'll be a Youth Leaguer too, before long. Then we can get married. Wait for me, will you?"

"Of course!" Yeh Hai hugged her. "I'll wait for you!"

After working all day, in the fields and dancing and singing half the night, the revellers were hoarse, exhausted. One by one, they dragged themselves back to their cave dwellings and fell into bed.

Mi Fu-sheng, head of the carters' section, was unable to sleep, though he closed his eyes tight to shut out the snowy moonlight shining in through the window. He wasn't very drunk. As he would have put it, he had "had just about enough." He felt stimulated; he had an urgent desire to talk. But where could he find anyone still awake at this hour? The cave was cramping, stifling him; the roof seemed to be crushing his chest. He flung off the cotton-padded jacket and overcoat with which he had been covering himself; but he still felt weighted down, and his throat burned like fire. He had to get a drink of cold water.

He stood up abruptly — and lurched back against the wall. Groping his way through the door and maintaining his equilibrium with an effort, he plodded to the cave housing the kitchen. As he took up the gourd ladle, he recalled having heard somewhere that you shouldn't drink cold water when you're drunk — it inflames your lungs. He put down the ladle and came out of the kitchen.

Where to? Back to his quarters? No! He was sick of that stuffy "jail." The cold night wind was so comforting, he wanted to walk and walk. But walking was very tiring, and he leaned, half-lying, on a cart in front of one of the caves. When it penetrated his consciousness that this was a cart he was resting on, he flared into anger. A cart! He furiously kicked the rubber tire. What am I? The leader of a train of carts! To be more honest — a mule driver! What right have they to grade me so low? Mr Fu-sheng seethed with rage. It wasn't fair! No matter how you looked at it, he deserved better than this! . . .

Suddenly, as in a dream, he heard someone softly call his name. His fury ebbed, and he listened. It was a woman. He almost grew angry again — women had been the cause of his downfall — but then he relaxed. The woman was Chuma, the young Tibetan washerwoman. He did not answer, however.

"Mi Fu-sheng!" Chuma leaned out of the door of her cave. "Mi Fu-sheng!"

"What do you want?" he replied glumly.

"What are you doing out there in the middle of the night? And the wind's so strong!" she said concernedly. "Come in and rest a while."

"No. It's fine out here."

"If you don't want to stay . . ." Chuma hesitated, "at least come and take your shirt and socks. They're all washed. You can take them back with you. Come in a minute."

Although he was still rather fuddled with drink, Fu-sheng knew very well that she didn't have any of his laundry; she had returned the shirt and socks to him the previous afternoon. But he said nothing. Raising himself from the cart, he stood up and staggered into the cave.

Chuma's low voice enchanted him; her face was lovely and flushed in the lamplight. Drawn to her irresistibly, Fu-sheng stared avidly at her white neck and bosom. . . .

II

The first snowfall that year was exceptionally heavy.

In the old days, by now every street and lane in Kengta would be wrapped in a frozen mantle of snow and ice. But this year the roads

were unobstructed, flowing freely like huge arteries. Trucks flew by frequently, churning up clouds of powdery snow. . . .

Early one morning, Hui-tsung, the girl in charge of stock-breeding at the Agricultural Station, stood by the highway waiting for a lift. Kengta was on the bus line, but tickets were hard to buy and people going to the eastern provinces often caught rides on returning trucks. Hui-tsung was taking her proposals "On the Administration of the Grassland Pastures" to the Agriculture and Forestry Division. At the same time, she wanted to get more information on the state plan for developing new breeds of sheep.

The previous evening, she had gone around to her comrades at the station and said goodbye. She had insisted that she didn't want anyone to delay their work to see her off. But now, she felt rather lonely. There was someone she had to see again, or she couldn't leave with an easy heart. She admitted to herself that the "someone" was Lei Wen-chu, the station agronomist.

The young man in question was, at that moment, busily engaged in the hothouse, humming cheerfully under his breath. Every time he saw the young plants he was raising with his own hands he felt happy, and a little proud. For he was proving that the guess-work theories which certain agronomists had advanced in the past about the Tibetan highlands were utter nonsense. The soil here was not barren, hopeless. No. This soil could nourish all kinds of roots and leaves and fruits that it had never known before.

"You look busy, Lei Wen-chu!" Hui-tsung had appeared outside the hothouse and was shouting to him through the glass.

"Leaving already? I didn't think you'd go so early. Wait a minute. I'll see you off," Wen-chu yelled.

"No, I said I didn't want you to do that."

Wen-chu had already come out. A blast of cold wind drove him back for his overcoat. Working in the hothouse in light clothing, he had forgotten it was still winter outside.

The two walked shoulder to shoulder towards the highway. Neither could think of anything to say. Their farewells had already been spoken the night before. What more was there?

"I'd like to give you something as a little memento," Wen-chu at long last broke the silence. "Even though you'll be back soon, still you are leaving."

"Oh?" said Hui-tsung, pleased. "What is it?"

"It's — But wait. I'd like to offer you a criticism, first," Wen-chu said, half in earnest.

"A criticism?" Hui-tsung was a bit startled. "Please do! What about?"

"A couple of months ago, when you were wounded; you were in the infirmary. Remember?"

"How could I forget!"

"We were all worried about you. I went to see you too . . . but you told the nurse not to let me in."

"I did? Impossible. You must be mistaken." Hui-tsung was upset. "How could I do a thing like that?"

"That's what I thought! I asked the nurse at least to give you the gift I had brought. She said you refused that too. I don't know what I've done to offend you. Perhaps now you can tell me."

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry. I beg your pardon. It must have been that . . . my wound was very painful. I was so miserable I didn't want to see anyone or anything. . . . Please forgive me, Comrade Wen-chu!"

The young man gave no indication of whether he was satisfied with her explanation. "Originally, I wanted to bring you a few things to build up your strength — some sugar, some powdered milk," he said. "Then I thought — you can get all that in the infirmary. So I went to the river valley and picked you a bunch of wild flowers. I was very embarrassed when the nurse said you didn't want them. . . . I'd like to give them to you now. That's how stubborn I am — When I give something to someone, she has to take it whether she likes it or not!"

Wen-chu brought out a diary and from between its pages produced a small flattened cluster of withered wild flowers. With the utmost solemnity, he presented it to Hui-tsung.

They were the girl's favourite — odd, amusing little flowers of eight petals, the top three a bright gay red; the lower five green petals were actually leaves. Hui-tsung was very touched that he had kept this gift for her so many months. Accepting it silently, she carefully put it in a book of her own.

The two continued down the road.

For some reason Hui-tsung felt Wen-chu was going to say something to her, and she waited eagerly, tensely, for him to speak.

But he didn't utter a syllable. He was more like a stranger who happened to be walking in the same direction than a friend seeing her off.

Then Su Yi, the Party secretary, panting, caught up with them. His short, laboured breaths vaporized in the icy air.

"Comrade Hui-tsung!" he scolded. "There shouldn't be anything wrong with your ears at your age. I called you half a dozen times!"

"Really? I'm sorry. I didn't hear you," Hui-tsung apologized.

"Where are you going, Comrade Secretary?" Wen-chu asked him. "Or have you come to see Comrade Hui-tsung off?"

"No," he replied. Turning to Hui-tsung, he said, "If I didn't have something to ask you to do for me, frankly I wouldn't be here. What a chase! I was afraid you had already gone!"

"What is it?"

"First, you must be sure to go to the Teacher's College and see Lin-yuan."

Hui-tsung laughed. "I was going to do that anyhow. Just as soon as I've checked in, I'm going to look her up. I've got over ten letters to her from friends here!"

"Good! Then you can strike that request out. Number two, please find out about her health, and let me know in detail when you come back." The Party secretary had dropped his bantering tone. "She always writes that she's feeling fine. But I know it can't be entirely true. That Teacher's College course isn't easy for her."

"Right. I'll do my best."

"Number three, here's a list of things to buy for her and a postal money order. That girl! As big as she is, she still doesn't know how to take care of herself."

From Su Yi's tone you'd think his daughter was half Hui-tsung's age. Actually there was only a year or two's difference between them. But the Party secretary was sure Lin-yuan couldn't manage on her own; he began to give Hui-tsung lengthy instructions to be passed on to Lin-yuan.

Before he could finish, a Soviet-made Zis truck came rolling down the highway. It showed signs of hard wear, but it tore along like the wind. Hui-tsung quickly waved her hand, and the vehicle braked to a sliding stop. A young driver, his cap cocked at a rakish angle, stepped out of the cab. To Hui-tsung he said cordially:

"Are you sending a message, or do you want a lift?"

"I want a lift."

"Fine." Plainly, the driver was very hospitable. "You can ride up front with me."

Wen-chu recognized him. He and Hui-tsung had caught a ride with this same driver several months before. The young fellow was quite a character.

"You drivers are all alike," Wen-chu said with mock severity. "When a man hails you, you step on the gas and pass him by. But you stop quick enough if it's a girl. You even invite her to ride in the cab!"

Startled, the driver looked carefully first at Wen-chu then at Hui-tsung. Then he pushed his cap to the back of his head and laughed. Pulling off his glove, he shook hands with both of them.

"I owe you an apology. Last time I was pretty officious. But it's all the fault of birds like you. You were sending in too many complaints about that very thing, and we were catching hell. I didn't want to pick up any girls at all! Ha-ha! This way please, Comrade Stockbreeder!"

As Hui-tsung and Wen-chu were again saying their final farewells, Su Yi got to talking with the driver.

"How's it going?" asked the Party secretary. "This is a pretty rough road, isn't it?"

"What's rough about it? So far as I'm concerned, it's first class. The real rough road is up ahead, where we're just cutting through to the west. I put in a request to be transferred to that run a long time ago, but it still hasn't been approved. Ah, that's the place to be. Right up front. Every time a new section of the road is finished, there's another opening ceremony, and then the trucks go through! We bring men to new construction projects, and we bring their food and tools."

"According to you, this section of road is already behind the lines!"

"Of course." The driver waved his arm despondently. "It's a dull run with a lot of dull freight. What do you think I carried this trip? Paper for the State Trading Company—a whole truckload of paper!"

"Paper?" Su Yi said quickly. "What kind of paper?"

"Ordinary white paper. The kind you use for printing. Now I ask you—what are they going to do with all that paper out here? Who can they sell it to? Nobody will buy that much."

"I wouldn't be too sure," the Party secretary replied. "Paper is a very useful thing!"

Councillor Woma had been away in East Valley for more than two weeks, settling a dispute over the ownership of a piece of pasture land. He had returned only the day before. The moment he entered the door, his steward hurried up to him with the tidings that the State Trading Company had delivered the paper he had ordered—it filled an entire small room. They had also left him a bill for two thousand yuan.

Several months before, the councillor and the company had concluded a formal written contract. This was required by local custom where large quantities were involved.

Originally, the councillor, in the name of the *chungpon*, had ordered the local peasants to the pulping grounds to manufacture paper. Many of them were just about to start their autumn planting; some, under the influence of and aided by the Agricultural Station, were preparing to expand their holdings by opening up virgin land. But this free labour for their overlords had a tradition of centuries behind it, and it never occurred to the peasants to protest.

When the matter came to the attention of the Party committee, Secretary Su Yi felt that something had to be done about it. He sent an emissary to call on Kesanglamu, the *chungpon*, or head of county. Kesanglamu was quite co-operative. She said it was all right to deal with her councillor directly. Su Yi invited Woma to his office. To the secretary's surprise, the matter was solved without much difficulty.

". . . How long will it take them to finish making the paper?" he had asked the councillor.

Woma toyed with the rosary beads which he always carried around his wrist. "About three months."

Three months! By then the ground would be frozen solid. You wouldn't be able to plough even cultivated fields, to say nothing of virgin ground!

"Can't you make the paper a little later? What would be the harm?"

"I'm afraid not, *Benbu* Secretary. Haven't you seen what a state the monasteries' holy scriptures are in? Simply falling apart. Living Buddha Yasa has ordered that they all be reprinted. I've already hired the binders."

"Yes, they are rather old." Su Yi handed the councillor a cup of tea. "But you can print them just as well during the winter. With land it's different. No one will be able to plough once the snow falls."

"Mm . . . that's a problem. But I'm afraid the ploughing will just have to wait," Woma poured a pinch of snuff on his thumb nail and hopelessly shook his head. "What can I do? Kengta isn't like your big Han cities. We have no paper merchants. I'd gladly buy it, if there was any to be had. It costs money to make paper too. It would save me a lot of trouble if I could buy it ready-made."

"Oh?" said Su Yi, rising. "I can help you do that."

The councillor raised his eyes, forcefully inhaled his snuff, then gently massaged his nose. He suppressed an amused smile.

"Fine," he replied slowly. "But, you know, we have many monasteries in Kengta. We'll need a lot of paper."

"How much?"

"Thirty-five hundred catties!" The councillor impressively enunciated every syllable.

"Will that be enough?"

"Just about."

"Good. Thirty-five hundred catties, then. When do you want it? Oh yes, you said it would take you more than three months to make the paper here. Suppose we deliver in three and a half months, how will that be?"

"Very good!"

Su Yi asked the State Trading Company to attend to the details. Its manager promptly entered into a contract with the customer.

It all happened so quickly, the councillor was rather bewildered. When Su Yi asked him how much paper he needed, he had mentioned a specific figure. Now a contract was formally signed and sealed! There was no way out of it. But on further thought, the councillor felt reassured. Where would they get thirty-five hundred catties of paper? Even if they had it, how could they deliver it? With porters? On yaks? The mountain passes would be blocked by deep snow—no one could get through until spring.

Last month Woma had got himself into a difficult position financially by his dealings in tea and salt. He had begun to worry about the contract signed with the State Trading Company. But most probably they

wouldn't be able to deliver on time. He smiled as he recalled the last clause of the contract. "If the paper is not delivered on time, the company would remunerate the customer for all losses thereby entailed. . . ."

Let them be just one day late. He'd refuse to accept a single sheet!

But today, exactly three and a half months later, the paper was here — according to contract.

Again he examined the bill, exasperated. He decided to speak to his finance officer, Chakeduoji, whom he often relied upon for counsel in difficult matters.

Woma's daughter, Tsetunyichen, was altering a skirt as he entered her room. Without even raising her head, she asked:

"What is it?"

"I'm looking for the finance officer."

"Why don't you go to his room? Why come here?" Tsetunyichen retorted, as if annoyed at the suggestion that a man might be found in the quarters of an unmarried woman.

As a matter of fact, experience had taught Woma that his daughter's room was precisely the place to seek the finance officer: not finding him here was an exception to the rule.

He didn't know of course that his daughter's anger was directed not against him but against her lover. For she had heard, from someone who had seen it with his own eyes, that the finance officer had gone into the woods again with that woman who washed clothes at the Agricultural Station. This was already the third time. Who knew what they were up to?

The finance officer's door was locked from the inside. Woma knocked.

"Who's there? Oh, the councillor. Just a moment, please. I'm changing my clothes."

Leisurely, Chakeduoji finished writing a message in numerical code, put it away, rumbled some clothing lying on the bed, then opened the door.

Woma silently showed him the bill for the paper. The finance officer lit a cigarette.

"I told you they were building a road," he said irritably, "and that once they put it through, nothing would stop them. They can bring anything in! You thought you were being so clever. You had to make a contract. Now see what's happened! Here's the paper, right on time! . . ."

True enough, the finance officer had warned him. But the day he had signed the contract, the councillor had felt very sure of himself. They weren't gods. And even if they were, it would take years to build a road through those huge wild mountains. . . .

"Contract! Contract!" Woma said angrily. "Is that all you can talk about? What I want to know is what are we going to do?"

"Accept the merchandise and pay the money," replied the finance officer in the flat tone of a professional merchant.

"Pay, I know I have to pay, but. . . ." Woma held out the bill as if it weighed a ton.

"Yes, two thousand yuan is a lot of money." The finance officer spoke in a more conciliatory voice. "But the monasteries' scriptures do have to be reprinted. If you made the paper yourself it would cost you two or three times as much."

"They don't need reprinting at all," the councillor interrupted. "I've examined them. They can be used at least another fifty years. What if they are a little worn? They still can be read, can't they? Living Buddha Yasa didn't say they absolutely had to be reprinted. Besides, it's not up to me. If the head lamas don't ask for it, why should I bring the question up?"

The two men talked for some time without arriving at a satisfactory solution.

"Why not do this," the finance officer proposed finally. "Since the paper has been delivered, you'll have to take it. But you can ask the State Trading Company to sell it for you. I think they'll do it. What do you say?"

"We can try," said the councillor hesitantly. "But how can I face them? It would be very embarrassing. When we signed the contract I said we needed paper badly. . . ."

"Why should you go in person? You can speak to Kesanglamu. It will be much better if she puts in a word for you. She's going to the government centre tomorrow as a delegate. They're holding a meeting of the People's Representative Conference!"

The mode of life to which Kesanglamu had clung for years had been undergoing some surprising changes in recent months. She came out of her quiet dark chamber in her four-storey building quite frequently now, riding her horse out into the country, or travelling along the highway, or looking around in the State Trading Company, or dropping in on the Party committee headquarters.

She spent more time in the county government office, too. There had been a period when few of the people working there knew what she looked like — although she was the county leader. Now they saw her almost every day. At first they had expected her to be like the wives of other nobles — only good at managing household affairs. But she proved to be extremely competent at her complicated job.

The coming conference would be of historic significance to the region. The Party committee had been preparing it for a month. All of the local religious and political leaders, prominent public figures, as well as representatives of the peasants, shepherds and merchants, were going to attend. Naturally, Kengta's Living Buddha, Yasa, would also be present. He was now well enough to leave the monastery.

In order to reach the meeting hall, Living Buddha Yasa would have to travel on horseback the entire length of the Kengta plateau. To the lamas who were to accompany him, this journey was much more important than the People's Representative Conference itself. They were up before dawn, busily preparing. It was very unusual for a Living Buddha to leave his monastery. These rare events were attended with tremendous pomp and ceremony.

To the accompaniment of the deep beating of many drums and the droning of conch-shell horns, the gates of the monastery swung open. About twenty brawny lamas first emerged and lined up on either side of the gateway in militant poses. They were clad in armour and carried iron-tipped staves. Next came the monastery's high officials, and finally the Living Buddha himself. He was dressed in a golden robe of figured satin. A broad red *hata* sash came down diagonally across his chest from his left shoulder. On his head was a high pointed crown of bronze, attached to a string tied around his neck. The horse he rode was tall, with trappings of red and green; he sat the animal quietly, his eyes slightly closed. One man led the horse; on either side walked a groom. From behind, a lama held a large ornate canopy to protect the Living Buddha from the rays of the sun. Another company of iron-staved guards brought up the rear.

In the midst of this assemblage, the Living Buddha left the monastery and started across the plateau.

Had the people known of this in advance, they would now be lining the roadway by the thousands. But although the monastery had not previously announced it, word had quickly spread. Any Tibetan who happened to meet the procession along the road considered it a heaven-sent opportunity. All crowded to get close to the Living Buddha. The Tibetans believed he had only to touch a person's forehead and that man would be prosperous and free of troubles for life.

Szulanwongdui was on his way home from the State Purchasing Post, where he had sold a bag of medicinal grass he had been a long time accumulating, when he saw in the distance the mounted figure of the Living Buddha surrounded by throngs of people. Rushing to catch up, he strove with might and main to get close to the venerable old man.

Yasa had been Kengta's Living Buddha for over twenty years when Szulanwongdui was just entering childhood. Today the peasant was fifty-five; but although he lived near the monastery, and every year had exercised his utmost ingenuity to find some way to get the Living Buddha to touch his head, he had never succeeded. Now he could see the Living Buddha with his own eyes. Perhaps his dearest wish could come true. Is it any wonder he fought to push forward?

The iron-staved guards served as police within the monastery. When the Living Buddha left the monastery, it was their duty to protect him

from the contamination of ordinary mortals. Now they flailed their staves lustily against the foremost ranks of the pressing crowd.

Some of the weaker souls fell back, but not Szulanwongdui. Warding off the blows with his thick bare arms, he continued to plough ahead until at last he stood before the Living Buddha. He parted the locks of hair hanging over his forehead and waited breathlessly, not even daring to look, waited for the beneficent hand of the Living Buddha.

Yasa was always generous about such matters. Why not? He could give a man eternal good fortune with so little effort. Whenever the occasion presented itself, with loving sympathy he extended both hands toward his believers. Now he lightly brushed Szulanwongdui's forehead with his fingers, while the peasant stood pale with emotion.

Long after the procession had swept away, the trembling Szulanwongdui remained rooted to the spot, happy tears streaming down his weather-beaten face.

After a while he noticed that a monastery official was waiting behind him. Immediately he recalled that he still had not made his Donation of Gratitude. This was ordinarily given before the event by those seeking to have the Living Buddha touch their foreheads. Meeting the procession by accident, Szulanwongdui had not had any opportunity to prepare. But he did have the money for the medicinal grass, and he respectfully presented the silver coins to the official with both hands. Even as the other accepted his offering, Szulanwongdui shamefacedly berated himself. It's far too little. Only thirty dollars!

He walked home in a daze. His wife and daughter were heating the buttered tea. The noonday meal had long since been prepared.

"Look at the time," his wife scolded. "Why are you so late?"

"Yes, it is late," he replied indifferently, and sat down beside the fire.

"Did you sell the medicinal grass, Ah-Pa?" Chiuchih asked.

"What a question. As long as it's the real grass, the State Purchasing Post will buy as much as you've got."

"How much did they give?" his wife asked anxiously.

"Thirty dollars."

"Thirty dollars?" asked Chiuchih, surprised. "Thirty silver dollars, Ah-Pa?"

When Szulanwongdui was leaving that morning, the family had estimated that he might get in the neighbourhood of twenty dollars, for they knew the State Purchasing Post paid high prices. If he sold to a local pedlar, even ten dollars would be a lot. Yet the post had given not twenty but thirty!

"That's right, thirty silver dollars!" cried Szulanwongdui, suppressing his excitement. "Chiuchih, bring a bowl of rice wine. Your father wants a drink!"

"Drink, is that all you can think of?" his wife berated him. "Finish your meal and hurry to the temple."

"What for?"

"What for! To pay back the money you owe!"

In spring the year before, Chiuchih had fallen ill, and Szulanwongdui had asked the monastery in Kengta to carve three scripture verses in stone; he had also engaged two lamas to pray for one day and one night. The total cost came to fifteen dollars. He had no money at the time; the monastery had to extend him credit. Had he been able to repay that winter, it might not have been so bad. But then there was no State Purchasing Post to which he could have sold his medicinal grass. With the passing of another winter, because of the high local interest rates, the debt had doubled.

"Have they been around again?" he asked in a heavy voice.

"One of their book-keepers was here only a little while ago," said Chiuchih. "He says he's tired of having to ask so often. He wants you to bring the money to the temple yourself."

Needless to say, if Szulanwongdui had come straight home from the State Purchasing Post, he would now, without the slightest hesitation, be on his way to the temple, to repay the thirty dollars. Being in debt made him feel very uncomfortable. But on the road he had run into a rare opportunity, a priceless opportunity that could not be measured in terms of money.

On hearing Szulanwongdui's simple recital of what had occurred, his wife was thrilled with the same ecstasy. But she quickly came back to cold reality. Originally the couple had been counting on that bag of medicinal grass to earn the means of repaying their debt. Now the grass was gone and so was the money.

The buttered tea was bubbling on the fire but parents and daughter sat motionless and silent.

"Wine!" Szulanwongdui suddenly shouted at Chiuchih. "Didn't I tell you to bring me wine? I want to drink!"

Chiuchih filled a wooden bowl and handed it to him. Draining the bowl, he flung it angrily down on the low table.

By happy coincidence, who should come in at that moment but the Agricultural Station's accountant. He apologized for being so long in settling accounts — after the ploughing, he had taken part in the road building; then he had been busy with sowing and building dikes. He couldn't bear sitting in an office all day; he had to get out and do some physical work.

The accountant had brought Chiuchih's pay. He said from the day she had officially begun working as a herder at the station, she had earned a total salary of fifty-six dollars.

Chiuchih was completely taken by surprise. Red in the face and rather angry, she argued with the accountant. She didn't want any money. She had considered herself "one of the station's people" right along. Why did they have to pay her just because the relation was now official?

Finally, the accountant simply put the money on the table and walked out.

Chiuchih picked it up and started after him. Her mother stopped her. "Take it," the older woman urged quietly.

"How can I possibly do that?" Chiuchih cried distractedly.

"Why not? You herded horses for the station. . . ."

"Can I take money for herding horses?" the girl demanded heatedly. "After all the station's done for us! They've never asked us for a single copper!"

"Don't get yourself all worked up," said her mother soothingly. "What I mean is that we should take this money now and clear off our debt to the temple. Later, when we earn some more, we can repay the station."

"No!"

"No! No! All you know is how to be stubborn! What are we going to do about the temple? The only reason we borrowed the money was because you were sick. . . ."

"I don't care, I don't care!" the girl wriggled with determination. "I won't take any money for herding horses for the station. I did it because I enjoyed it; I never even thought of money!"

Neither mother nor daughter would yield. At last, they both turned beseeching eyes on Szulanwongdui, both seeking his support.

"Go, Chiuchih," he said decisively. "Return the money to the Agricultural Station."

The girl picked up the packet and flew out of the door.

"What about the temple?" the mother asked in a trembling voice.

"I'll speak to the book-keeper. I'll ask them to wait another year," Szulanwongdui said dully.

The temple could wait another year all right. Only, of course, according to custom, after another winter had passed, Szulanwongdui's debt would no longer be thirty dollars.

During the first morning session of the conference, Su Yi gave a four-hour talk on "The Autonomy of National Minority Areas" — the first item on the agenda. In the afternoon, the delegates divided into groups to discuss the speech; they also were given some printed reference material. Although a few of the arguments were quite heated and although it was not possible to reach agreement on all the details in so short a time, on the main point the delegates achieved unanimity — an autonomous form of government was best for national minority regions. They also agreed

to choose from their numbers a committee to visit the Kangting Tibetan Autonomous Area and see how they had handled the matter. There, they would also find answers to many of their practical questions.

Then the meeting adjourned until the following morning. Food and lodging were provided by the Party committee for delegates from out of town. Living Buddha Yasa and County Leader Kesanglamu, being local residents, decided to return home for the night. The Party secretary ceremoniously escorted them towards the main gate.

On the road, a large crowd was waiting. People said this was the first time in twenty years the Living Buddha had left the temple. (As a matter of fact, it was the second. The month before, when the first truck passed through Kengta along the new highway, Yasa had come out of the monastery to watch. Because he was far from the road and every one's eyes were on the truck, he had not been observed.) And so today, many believers were assembled, hoping to attain the same good fortune which had befallen Szulanwongdui. The difference was that they were fully prepared; nearly all bore expensive gifts.

About thirty yards diagonally opposite the gate was an old crumbling semi-circular earthen wall. Behind this wall, talking in low tones, were the washerwoman, Chuma, and the leader of the Agricultural Station's carters' section, Mi Fu-sheng.

Fu-sheng originally had intended to repair some harness equipment that day. But Chuma had coaxed him, saying it would be very thrilling — the Living Buddha hadn't appeared in public for years. In the end, Fu-sheng let himself be persuaded. But he felt very uneasy. He had already been criticized by the station chief several times for going off on private business during working hours.

"Enough," he muttered. "You can stay here. I'm going back."

"What's the hurry?" said Chuma. "The Living Buddha will be coming out in a minute."

"I've seen him before — when I went to the Kengta Monastery." Fu-sheng stood up.

"Don't go!" Chuma held him by the sleeve. "There's something I want to talk with you about."

"Sure you do!" Fu-sheng said sceptically. "I'm going back. I can't stay here all day!"

"Listen to me. It's true. There is something I must ask you, beg you!"

Chuma's red cheeks twitched and her eyes burned with such intensity that Fu-sheng was startled.

"What is it?" he asked.

"You know. I think you've known for a long time what I want to ask of you," Chuma replied darkly.

Fu-sheng was becoming increasingly alarmed. "What is it? Speak up!"

"You really don't know? Think. You must know. I've told you. We were a chieftain's family for generations. We owned five holdings of land. Girl water-carriers alone — we had over forty. . . . But, listen to me," the washerwoman cried tragically, her voice trembling, "they wiped us out. They killed my whole family, every one of us! It was her husband — Kesanglamu's husband — he and his men broke in. . . ."

Chuma couldn't go on. She wanted to scream. With palsied hands she clutched the lapels of her jacket and shivered violently. Drawing close to Fu-sheng, she stared up into his eyes. In a leaden, mechanical voice she said:

"I beg you to do it for me. I'm yours completely now; I've given you everything. There's only one thing I want for myself."

"What? What is it that you want?" Fu-sheng was shaken by a terrifying premonition. He instinctively recoiled a step. "What do you want me to do?"

"It will be easy for you." Chuma's voice suddenly became soft and persuasive. "You see that big gateway over there? Kesanglamu is going to come out any minute now. I want you to fire one shot at her — only one!"

From beneath her skirt the washerwoman produced a dark gleaming little automatic.

Fu-sheng was absolutely paralysed. Standing before him was not the seductive beautiful young woman he knew so well, but a warped, misshapen monster — like a figure seen in a defective mirror. He wanted to yell, to knock her down. But he was powerless; he hadn't an ounce of strength! . . .

At that moment, noisy exclamations broke from the crowd, and they surged forward. The delegates must be coming out of the compound.

Extremely agitated, Chuma tried to thrust the pistol into Fu-sheng's hand. It dropped from his nerveless fingers to the ground.

Kesanglamu was the first to appear in the gateway. She was followed by the Living Buddha. Su Yi came next, then several others. Probably they had not expected that such a large crowd would be waiting to greet them; Kesanglamu and those with her paused on the platform just outside the gateway. In a moment they would start down the steps.

The washerwoman glared at them, a fearful hatred burning in her eyes. Her face was twisted beyond recognition. She wheeled and looked at Fu-sheng. He was still standing woodenly beside her. Viciously, she spat in his face, then bent and snatched up the automatic with animal swiftness.

A loud report shattered the clear mountain air.

On the platform, a delegate swayed from side to side, then collapsed in a heap.

The crowd began milling about, shouting, pushing. Half of them didn't know what had happened. . . .

Fu-sheng finally recovered his wits. He realized at once — he had to get away, quickly. But as he lunged to scale the side wall, a heavy hand grabbed him from behind and pulled him back. He turned his head and found himself looking into a familiar, crafty, horrible visage — the face of the finance officer, Chakeduoji!

"Trying to get away, eh?" the man yelled, and flung him to the ground.

People began running towards them. In an instant they were surrounded by a solid wall of humanity.

"He did it! He's the one who fired," shouted the finance officer. "You see? What's this?" He pointed at the black automatic lying at Fu-sheng's feet and the empty brass cartridge shell nearby.

An angry, frightening rumble rose from the crowd.

"He's the one! He fired the gun!"

"Who is he?"

"A Han. He's a Han!"

"He's not a Han, he's a living devil!"

"Grab him! Hit him! Beat him to death!"

"Beat him! Make way! Beat him!"

Fu-sheng lay like a man in a plaster cast. He couldn't plead, or argue, or struggle, or resist. He seemed to see it all from a distance, as if it had nothing to do with him.

No one knows who threw the first stone. It was followed by a second, and a third. . . . Then someone brought a rock down on Fu-sheng's head. . . .

It was all over very quickly. In less than fifteen minutes Fu-sheng was an ugly, battered corpse lying on a rubbish heap behind the crumbling old wall.

As was his custom, Ma Yin-shan, the "Holy Man," first hauled up the ladder leading to his apartment, then turned to greet his guest.

"Water!" Chakeduoji, seating himself, called with a lordly air, as if the Holy Man were not his host but a waiter in a restaurant.

Ma Yin-shan hurriedly brought the water, and Chakeduoji finished off two bowls in succession. Where the road was good, the finance officer had driven his horse hard; where it was poor he had led the animal at a run. His lungs were burning, he was so dry and exhausted. Only after he had consumed the fifth bowl and lay back on the wooden bed and rested for a few minutes did the Holy Man presume to ask him a question.

"Was your 'business' successful? Did it go as we planned?"

"Much better! Everything worked out beautifully!" Chakeduoji looked at the Holy Man's expressionless face. "Don't you believe me?"

"I — I don't dare."

"Nothing strange about that. If I were you, cooped up in this silent hole all the time, I'd be afraid to believe it myself. But I'm telling you formally — that automatic of yours brought down not the *chungpon* but the Living Buddha, Yasa, the Living Buddha of Kengta! Of course he also has other titles — principal of the primary school, delegate to the People's Representative Conference. . . ."

The Holy Man showed his rat-like teeth in a fleeting grin. The more excited he was, the more solemn he tried to appear. Actually, he was exceedingly pleased. He originally had planned to have Kesanglamu killed by a Han, moreover a Han who worked in a government organization. Thereafter, all the Kengta peasants would be assembled, with whatever weapons they had at hand, and led in a wild attack on the government offices to revenge the death of their *chungpon*. The flames of the uprising would spread throughout the Tibetan region. . . .

Now, the one who had been shot was not Kesanglamu but Yasa — the Living Buddha who could bring happiness and good fortune to the people of Kengta. Unquestionably, this was a wrong which no Tibetan could permit to go unavenged. As Chakeduoji put it: "The Tibetans will never forgive them!"

"The leader of the carters' section must have had a bit too much to drink," said the Holy Man, with amusement. "A marksman like him shouldn't have missed at such close range. . . . Ah, I see! He probably didn't want to shoot a woman!"

"No, it wasn't that," the finance officer explained. "He showed up, but he wasn't willing to fire. At the last minute, Chuma had to do it."

"Where is he now?" the Holy Man asked tensely.

"You don't have to worry about him," Chakeduoji replied smugly, settling himself in a more comfortable position. "His cart-driving days are over!"

"And the washerwoman? Did you make a final disposition of her too, as you said you would in your letter?"

"No. I waited, but she never went back."

"Didn't she? But you wrote she had promised to go straight home. . . ." The Holy Man was alarmed.

Yes, she had promised to return immediately and act as if she had never gone out. Had she kept her word, the roof of her cave would have suddenly collapsed, according to plan. But the washerwoman had not gone back.

"Aiya, this will never do!" Ma Yin-shan worriedly shook his head. "You've got to get hold of her at once. We can't let her slip away. Find her, the quicker the better! Have you any idea where she's gone?"

"What are you getting so excited about? Would I dare say 'Everything worked out beautifully' if I wasn't pretty sure where to find her?"

The finance officer's tone was respectful, but he looked at the Holy Man with mockery in his eyes.

"Oh? You've got her hidden somewhere?"

"Not I. Someone is doing it for me."

"Where?"

"Don't worry. The best possible place."

"Be very careful! We're in great danger!" The Holy Man was a Kuomintang agent who had disguised himself as a deeply religious person and had come to Tibet before its liberation. His present assignment was proving to be quite difficult. He was extremely agitated. "If they should find her and she should talk. . . ."

"Bah! Let them look! They'll never find her, even if they're all magicians!" Chakeduoji carelessly blew a few smoke rings.

. . . Chuma's hand had trembled and the gun had gone off. For an instant, she didn't realize what had happened. But she quickly came to her senses. Tossing the automatic at Fu-sheng's feet, she scaled the wall and ran! The crowd was in too much confusion to notice her. Instead of going home, she fled along a small secluded path to the woods in the rear of the house where Chakeduoji lived. She hid behind a tree and watched the backdoor, hoping that he might come out. But although she waited a long time, he did not appear. He was, at that moment, standing beside the body of the "criminal," again telling the crowd how he had seen the tall Han aiming at the Living Buddha. Chuma had no choice but to risk rapping on the finance officer's backdoor.

The councillor's daughter, Tsetunyichen, was waiting for the finance officer in his room to show him the new necklace she had just bought, when she heard the knocking. Why the backdoor? she wondered. She hurried to open it. Oh! It was that woman! Anger filled Tsetunyichen's bosom. It wasn't enough for the hussy to meet him secretly in the woods! Now she was calling for him at the backdoor! Tsetunyichen wanted to slap her face, to drive her out with a stick, to beat her so that she'd never dare come again. But the councillor's daughter was much too clever to do that. She thought of a better plan. Yes, she'd let the finance officer find his bewitching little washerwoman in his own room!

She led Chuma to Chakeduoji's apartment and invited her to be seated, saying the finance officer would be home soon. Then she went out and prepared a bowl of strong "battered tea" sweetened with sugar.

Staring, mouth agape, Chuma stood against the wall. She neither recognized nor paid any attention to her hostess. Only after she mechanically accepted and finished the proffered bowl of "battered tea," did she emerge somewhat from her daze. Her face distorted with anger, her hands insanely clutching her opened collar and dishevelled hair, she ground her teeth and muttered, "Missed her! Missed her. . . . Wait, just wait. I'm not through yet. . . ."

What was she raving about? Tsetunyichen understood nothing. How could she? But the washerwoman's mad appearance frightened her. She fled from the room, locked the door from the outside, then leaned against it, listening.

At first there were only bitter, agonized cries. Then came the sound of crashing furniture and crockery, as if two people were engaged in an increasingly violent battle. But this did not last very long. Gradually the struggling and the cries became weaker — then stopped altogether. The poison Tsetunyichen had put in the "battered tea" worked quickly.

As a matter of fact, the estimate Finance Officer Chakeduoji and Kuomintang wrecker Ma Yin-shan had made of the situation was overly optimistic.

They knew that there were not many people in the government organizations in Kengta and that the bulk of the army had moved on, building the road, leaving only a small armed police force behind. On the other hand, there were many Tibetans, nearly all of whom were armed — if not with rifles, at least with short swords. The plotters had assumed if they operated cleverly and swiftly that all would go well.

But they soon discovered that the government authorities had not been asleep, nor were the Tibetan people so easily fooled. The mountain folk had seen a great deal in the past year, and things gradually were becoming clear to them. Could they be gulled into a blind attack on a government which had been doing so much for their vital interests?

It had not been the intention of the Holy Man to trouble the "Prince" whose hospitality he had been enjoying in the mountains. This was understandable — no experienced gambler is willing to expose all of his trump cards too early in the game. But due to the turn matters had taken, the Holy Man decided he had better impose on His Highness' beneficence. He would ask the Prince to lead his few hundred warriors on an expedition.

For some time now the Prince had been waiting for a chance to strike a blow at Kesanglamu, whose husband had destroyed his family in tribal warfare a few years previously. The Kuomintang agent had joined him in his mountain lair, hoping to make use of the Tibetan's ambition and hatred to injure the people's rule. The important thing now was to light a fire, thought the Holy Man, and fan the flames high. If the fire was hot enough, all of the kindling — damp or dry — would burst into blaze. What was the use of a lot of kindling if it didn't burn?

. . . Ma Yin-shan handed the Prince a wooden bowl filled with potent colourless wine, and confided softly:

"I've received news from Kengta. Your niece Chuma. . . ."

"What! Is that where she's gone?" He had been worrying about the girl ever since she had run off several months before. But he couldn't quite believe she had gone to Kengta. "What's happened to her? We've got to get her back right away. . . ."

"It's too late," said the Holy Man regretfully.

Shocked, the Prince paused in the middle of raising the bowl to his lips. He stared at the Holy Man with apprehension.

"She's been arrested by the government. You know Kesanglamu is head of the county now. A big *benbu*, a big government official. . . ."

The Prince said nothing, but his eyes were burning.

"I never believed they'd do a thing like that," the Holy Man continued. His voice was thoughtful and full of sympathy. "It seems to me the time has come for you to strike. Kesanglamu may be a *chungpon* but she's got no real strength. You have plenty of strong fighters. What's there to be afraid of?"

The Prince's eyes gleamed brighter, but he maintained his silence.

"It's now or never," the Holy Man urged. "Besides, they've captured Chuma. They'll probably kill her, cut her to bits. If you don't hurry. . . ."

The Prince smashed his wine bowl to the ground. Leaping up, he shouted:

"We'll fight!"

Ma Yin-shan had not expected such quick action. He was quite pleased with himself. But then the Prince said something which caused him pained dismay:

"I'll send a man with a message immediately."

"A message?"

"Yes, a message to Kesanglamu. Fixing the date."

It was an old Tibetan custom. Anyone who wanted to give battle had to notify his opponent of the date; each was also allowed to send observers to the other's position to see what forces the enemy had at his command. Whoever attacked secretly, without first carrying out these preliminaries, was scorned and cursed by everyone, whether he won or lost. Certainly no prince would ever stoop so low!

The situation was serious. Every day, hundreds of people gathered on the clearing in front of the government compound; the overflow waited on the slopes behind the buildings. Nearly all were armed.

When the Living Buddha had been struck down, Su Yi had him carried inside and immediately sent for a doctor. Then he had formed an emergency committee to analyse and investigate the shooting. It was decided that all government organizations would temporarily suspend their normal operations and send out every possible man and woman to go among the people and explain what had happened. The People's Representative Conference, however, continued its sessions.

It discussed the problem of getting food supplies to the army road builders, who had bored deeper into the snowy mountain wilderness. Before the road was completed, it would be impossible to send food in to them by ordinary vehicle. Sometimes they had to get along on only one

real meal a day, supplementing it by thin gruel in the morning and evening. A proposal was made to organize a convoy of yaks to serve as a supply transport link.

Of course, the mountain folk knew very well for whose sake the road builders were struggling through such formidable hardships, and they would have been willing enough to hire out their yaks for transport work. But the government made a point of observing local customs. In Kengta, for example, the order had to be given first by Kesanglamu, the *chungpon*, or no peasant could remove his animals from his own farm.

At noon, loud wrangling outside interrupted the session. A few people even threw stones into the government compound from the mountain slopes.

In the clearing before the gate, Party and government administrative personnel, hemmed in on all sides by armed angry mountaineers, were talking and explaining themselves hoarse. Chen, chief of the Agricultural Station, was there too. His work brought him into frequent contact with the mountain folk. They liked him and knew him to be a man of his word. And so the crowd around him was particularly large.

Chen explained the shooting as best he could, but there were some questions he was unable to answer.

"Why did that big Han, the chief of the carters' section, shoot our Living Buddha?"

Yes, why indeed? Chen could only repeat that they were investigating; nothing was definite yet. Next, the mountain folk demanded to know the Living Buddha's condition. On this Chen was able to reassure them.

"It's not serious. The bullet went through here." He raised his right arm and pointed at his armpit. "No bone was hit. Because the wound was treated promptly, he didn't even lose much blood."

"Are you telling the truth? Were you there?"

"Yes, I saw him. Have I ever lied to you?"

"We want to see for ourselves. Let us go in!"

"Sure, you can go in. But wait a minute!" Chen blocked their way. "You don't want to disturb him with a big crowd like this. The conference is in session in there too. Why not choose a few people from among yourselves and let them see the Living Buddha. Then they can come out and tell you how he is. How's that?"

"All right! That's all right!"

Two respected old men and two lamas were promptly selected by the crowd as their representatives. Chen thought it would be more convincing if there were more of them. "Would anyone else like to go in?" he invited.

"I would!" a clear voice called from the rear.

Chen was surprised and a little distressed to see that the speaker was his old friend Szulanwongdui.

Szulanwongdui had come early. For some reason he had been reluctant to let the "government men" — especially the people working at the Agricultural Station — see him. He had kept to the rear of the crowd. But he was very concerned about the Living Buddha. Now, as people made way for him, he came forward with solemn tread.

Chen observed that the peasant had not brought his rifle, or even a dagger. Of all the mountain folk, Szulanwongdui probably was the only one who was unarmed.

The five delegates, with Chen at their head, entered the large gate. . . .

After a short interval they emerged again. The crowd waited tensely. But from the delegates' expression it was plain that Living Buddha Yasa was safe and sound.

Party Secretary Su Yi came out with them. Natural and relaxed, he gazed smilingly at the crowd from the top step.

"I've good news for you, friends," he called. "The doctor says the Living Buddha's wound will heal very soon! . . . You've come at just the right time. Your *chungpon* Kesanglamu wants to say a few words to you."

He stepped back two paces and made way for Kesanglamu.

A hush fell over the crowd as their *chungpon* came forward.

There was something different about her today. The eyes of the mountaineers were struck by the broad satin ribbon pinned on her chest. Those in front could see that it was inscribed in Tibetan with the words "Presidium of the People's Representative Conference." Standing there on top of the steps, Kesanglamu seemed wrapped in a new dignity.

"Go home, all of you," she said with the calm kindness of the head of a family. "Don't hang around here. The government is investigating the case. Sooner or later, we will be able to tell you all about it. Now go home."

To the people of Kengta, these few words — coming from their own leader — were enough. Kesanglamu started down the steps. Then suddenly remembering something, she went back to add:

"One thing more. You've all seen that the road builders of the Liberation Army have pushed on ahead. They are deep in the mountains. Yaks are needed to send them rice. All families having two or more yaks shall keep one at home and lend the others for transport work. We in Kengta will contribute six hundred head. Is that clear?"

Although, at Kesanglamu's command, the mountain folk had gradually dispersed, from many manifestations it was evident that the situation was still far from settled. And so, when darkness began to fall, each of the government organizations took on the appearance of a military camp.

It was the same at the Agricultural Station. During the day, when the station workers were out among the mountaineers, they went unarmed.

But with the coming of dusk every man carried either a rifle or pistol, and roving sentries were posted in the area of the cave dwellings.

The former beggar Lochu was more alert and busier than anyone. Although no one expected much from this aged Tibetan, Lochu himself felt that since he was now the Agricultural Station's night watchman, he ought to do his best for it in its time of crisis. As soon as it was dark he set out on his rounds, carrying a long spear.

In a grove, he suddenly observed a horseman riding towards the station.

"Who goes there?" he bellowed.

The rider did not answer, but continued to urge his horse forward. Lochu could see in the moonlight that he was a big burly fellow with a rifle slung across his back.

"Who are you?" roared Lochu, shaking his spear. "Halt, I say!"

Sitting casual and relaxed, the rider drew up and looked the old man over. Lochu was dressed in the cotton-padded clothes of the Hans.

"Do you work in the government?"

"That's right, I work in the government. And what do you do?"

"Good. I have a letter here. Take it. Deliver it to your highest *benbu*. I really should give it to him myself, but it's late and I have to hurry back." As he groped in an inner pocket, the rider added proudly, "I can tell you now — We are challenging you to battle; our Prince has sent me with this message. The Holy Man was against sending any messages, but our Prince insisted. He's not the kind to shoot without warning."

Although the old watchman couldn't follow all this, he stepped closer to accept the letter. When he saw the face of the young rider, he uttered a cry and fell back two paces.

"Langcha, Langcha! . . ." he said hoarsely.

The rider went stiff with surprise.

"Langcha, my son! Don't you recognize me?"

The young man leaped from his horse so quickly that he stumbled and fell. Lochu hastened to help him rise.

"Stand up, son! Let me get a good look at you!"

The old man grasped the youth's arms fiercely with trembling hands, as if fearful that the instant he relaxed his grip the young man would run away. Langcha was at a loss for words. He stared at the old man's wrinkled, overwrought face.

"Speak to me! Can't you at least greet your father?"

"Ah-Pa!" There was a childish quaver in Langcha's voice.

"Ah, that's more like it!" Two tears ran down the night watchman's cheeks.

"Ah-Pa, is it really you?"

"I know what you're thinking. You're wondering how I managed to stay alive these past two years, isn't that it? But first tell me about yourself. Where are you staying? What are you doing? Tell me all — No, not so fast. We'll have plenty of time to talk later. Now let's go back."

"Go back?" said Langcha. "Go back where?"

"Home. We have a home now!"

Lochu was over seventy. He had been a soldier, a lama, a camel driver — he had done everything, gone everywhere, travelling the length and breadth of Tibet as far as India. But he had never had a home of his own. Now addressing his son, he used the word "home" with reverence.

"Listen to me, Langcha. We have our own home, with everything we need! Come on. Let's go home!"

To be able to return to his own home with his long lost father — Langcha should have been very happy. But he only stood woodenly. He had to get back to the mountain stronghold, he was thinking. Otherwise, after the battle was over, the Prince would punish him severely!

"Come on," his father urged. "We'll find the station chief first. I'll introduce you to the station's *benbu*."

This prodded Langcha out of his daze. Now he remembered. Several months before, in this same grove, he had ambushed the station chief and stabbed him several times, wounding him badly. (There was a local superstition that if you killed a lucky man, you could "capture" his good fortune.) Though Langcha had been caught, he had escaped. But he did not dare fall into their hands again. He certainly wouldn't get away so easily this time!

"Ah . . . no, not now . . . maybe later," he mumbled. "Now, I have to go. . . ."

"Go? Nonsense! Where would you go? Come home. Come home with me!"

Lochu took the horse by the rein. Just then, several armed men approached from the Agricultural Station, with Chen at their head. Langcha started with alarm. It was he! Seizing his horse's mane, Langcha nimbly leaped into the saddle.

"What are you doing, Langcha?" the old man demanded, tightly gripping the rein.

With an urgent tortured cry of "Ah-Pa!" Langcha wrenched the horse's head around and dug his heels into the animal's belly. The excited beast leaped forward, tearing the rein from the old man's hand and flinging him to the ground.

For a moment, Lochu lay motionless, his brain reeling. Was it all a dream? No, he had distinctly heard his son say, "We are challenging you to battle; our Prince has sent me with this message." Lochu uttered

a cry like a wounded animal and punched himself in the chest. Then he grasped his spear and scrambled to his feet.

"Stop! You young whelp! Stop!" the old man shouted.

The horse and its big rider flew along the forest path. Drawing back his arm, Lochu furiously threw his spear. But his son was gone, and the spearhead embedded itself with an angry twang in the trunk of a tree.

Lochu gave Chen the letter his "young whelp" had delivered. Chen promptly turned it over to the Party committee. Su Yi was not particularly impressed. After glancing through the missive, he tossed it on his desk and asked:

"How about that other matter? Have you got any clues?"

"What? Oh you mean her," Chen replied. "Nothing very reliable yet. It's a devil of a job to find her. She is not a native of these parts, you know. But we think. . . ."

"All right, all right, where she's from and what we think — we can go into those details later. The job now is for us to find her. The responsibility is on our shoulders; no one can do it for us!"

"We're looking," said Chen gloomily. "This afternoon we sent another two men to work with the police bureau."

"Right. It's very important that we find her. If we do, we'll have won the initiative. If we don't, the enemy will have us by the ears," the Party secretary said. A scornful smile crossed his lips as he picked up the "challenge" from his desk. Flicking it with his finger, he said, "As to this, they're a bit late!"

After some of the station's workers had been attacked by bandits while out in the mountain pastures, various government organizations had made secret investigations. They learned a good deal about the "Prince" hiding in the mountain fastness and the "Holy Man" who was his adviser. But because the army was occupied with a more important task — building the road — it had no time to call on them and pay its respects. Now it appeared that this courtesy could be delayed no longer!

A cavalry unit of nearly five hundred men and horses was summoned. Perhaps this seems like rather a lot, merely to dispose of a bandit gang only about one-third that number. But as a matter of tactics we always prepare to destroy a cat as if it were a tiger.

The troop hurried to Kengta, arriving that same night. When we say "hurried" it is not just an idle phrase — the gruelling march had been made with incredible speed. The men were so exhausted they could have leaned forward and gone to sleep on their horses' necks. But they were allowed only forty minutes rest, and in this period they also had to eat, feed their mounts and make all necessary preparations for battle.

The break over, the troop split into three columns. The right and left columns were to form the encirclement. A long and difficult ride

lay ahead of them—they would have to traverse steep trackless snow-covered mountains and ford icy mountain rapids. What's more, they had to reach their destination and surround the enemy before dawn. When the Prince and his cohorts got ready to sally forth at break of day they were to be greeted with calls to surrender thundering down at them from all sides. If they failed to comply, the cavalymen would be in a position to rain down a hail of lead and charge into the encircled foe with flashing blades. . . .

The central column would advance directly along the valley. Here the road was somewhat better, but for the sake of secrecy they would have to avoid any villages or shepherds' encampments. Fortunately they had a guide who knew all the paths. Otherwise they would have lost a lot of time.

The guide was a local girl. Because she rode at the head of the column, the cavalymen could see only her straight back and the rhythmic swaying of her shoulders to her horse's canter. On her head was an army cap lined with black fleece which the men had given her—the night wind was biting cold—so that from behind she was not readily distinguishable from the other riders.

Bringing up the rear was a tall young man on a horse laden with ammunition—Yeh Hai, helper to the tractor driver at the Agricultural Station. At first, Chen, the station chief, knowing of the night blindness Yeh Hai had contracted while a cavalryman himself, had refused to let him go. But the young man had pointed out that it was a moonlit night, with plenty of snow to reflect the light; he insisted he would be perfectly all right. To prove his point, he had tossed a copper coin a distance of several yards, then found it and picked it up. Chen had to give in.

But now the moon spitefully hid behind a cloud, and Yeh Hai couldn't see a thing. He sat his horse very forlornly as it trailed behind the others and he felt like a fool. Still, he could comfort himself in the knowledge that he was the one who had found the excellent guide now leading the column. It had come about like this:

As soon as Yeh Hai learned that the troop had arrived at Kengta, he had rushed to tell Chiuchih. Light was gleaming through the cracks in her front door, but when he knocked the lamp inside was immediately extinguished. There was no response to his calls either. Apparently the whole family had retired early and everyone was sleeping like the dead. Yeh Hai was already virtually one of the family. Why was he being treated so coldly?

Szulanwongdui had seen with his own eyes that the Living Buddha's wound was not serious; he had personally heard the instructions of his *chungpon*, Kesanglamu. But the doubts and anger aroused in him by the shooting had not been completely dispelled. No matter how you looked at it—the shot had been fired by a Han! At the same time Szulanwong-

dui was rather ashamed that the Agricultural Station *benbu* had seen him at the gate of the government compound. They were such good folk. They had done so much for the people of Kengta. Yet the local peasants had surrounded the government buildings, armed with guns and knives. . . . Szulanwongdui's mind was in a whirl. He didn't know what to think. And so he locked his door. He wouldn't go out, and he didn't want to let anyone in. He wanted to shut out the whole world. This bad thing had happened of its own accord; well, let it settle itself in the same way!

Yeh Hai was burning with impatience. The column was already in motion! He could see the line of horses walking along the mountain path. He ran to the back of the house and, pressing close to the wall, whistled softly.

Chiuchih, who had been dozing by the fire in the upper storey, immediately awakened—she recognized the signal. Taking an armful of hay from a corner, she went out as if to feed the calf. The door opened on to a roof. Chiuchih walked to the edge and tossed the hay down into the calf's enclosure in the courtyard below. Then, with feline grace, she turned swiftly and ran to the rear edge. Although she couldn't see the whistler, peering over the parapet, she whispered:

"Devil! Who told you to come? What do you want!"

"Chiuchih!" Yeh Hai stepped out of the shadows and looked up, his face tense. "How can you be lying around the house at a time like this! Our cavalry has come! Cavalry!"

"Really! Where are they? Why hasn't anyone told me!"

"They've come—and gone! To fight the bandits! Have you forgotten? The bandits who kidnapped you in the mountains!"

"Gone?" Chiuchih's voice rose with surprise. "Already?"

"Not so loud! Yes, they've gone, but not very far. Chiuchih, would you like to go? They need a guide."

"Would they take me?" the girl asked excitedly.

"Of course they would! What do you think I've come for?"

"Wait a minute. I'll tell Ah-Ma." Chiuchih turned to go.

"Hist!" Yeh Hai whispered urgently. "Not a sound! She'll never let you go!"

"What shall I do? Just go off with you?"

"Sure. That's right. Come down. Hurry!"

"All right. Stand closer. Closer! Next to the wall."

Yeh Hai braced himself. Chiuchih rolled over the parapet and, grasping the edge of the roof with both hands, lowered herself till her feet touched Yeh Hai's shoulders. When the young couple ran to the big tree, they found only one horse tethered there. Yeh Hai cursed. He had forgotten to bring an extra mount.

"Never mind," he said. "The cavalry has pack horses!"

He vaulted into the saddle. Chiuchih tied her long braids on the top of her head, hitched up her skirt and, taking Yeh Hai's outstretched hand, put one foot in the stirrup and swung up behind him.

"Wrap your arms around my waist. Hold tight!"

Yeh Hai jiggled the rein and his well-trained steed shot forward like an arrow into the night. . . .

III

Probably around early autumn — the dividing line between the seasons is not too clear on the Tibetan highlands — the mountain tops were already covered with a thick layer of snow. But down below people were enjoying typical autumn weather.

The wheat sown last winter and the wheat planted the spring of this year both had ripened together, and the plateau was an endless sea of rippling yellow, as if a golden sunset cloud had drifted down and settled upon it.

Although the Agricultural Station had no combine as yet, the mountain folk were still very impressed. A row of horse-drawn harvesters advanced steadily through the fields, their revolving arms reaping a wide swath. Behind them came teams organized by the girls of Kengta, gathering the cut wheat and tying it into sheaves. . . .

To keep up with the speed of the harvesting, what was really needed was a few trucks to rush the sheaves from the fields to the threshing grounds. But the station had only carts and horses. Chen fumed that they were too slow. He yanked off one carter who was afraid to race his horses and took over the reins himself. On his third trip to the fields, he saw Su Yi walking along the road. Chen pulled up beside him.

"Coming to watch us reap, Secretary Su Yi?"

"Watch nothing!" Su Yi retorted gaily. "I want to try my hand at one of those harvesters, what do you say? I'm no amateur you know. Last year I drove a seeder!"

"Fine! Hop in!"

Chen flipped his reins and his team of army horses broke into a trot.

"I've got some news that will interest you," said Su Yi after he had seated himself. "You've probably got wind of it already. We've discussed the matter several times and finally it's been decided. We want you to go back and do some studying."

Chen had heard something about this before, but he had thought it was just a rumour. Now, with this formal notification by the secretary of the Communist Party committee, he had to believe it. Chen took the news hard.

"I know . . . I've done a poor job! I don't deserve this post."

"On the contrary, it's because you've done such a good job that you're being sent. Of course," the secretary added evenly, "we don't have to kid ourselves; in some ways you don't measure up to the job — far from it. Because you're no longer just the chief of an experimental agricultural station; this place has become the 'Morning-Star State Farm' and you've been appointed its director!"

Silent, Chen stared straight ahead, his eyes on the road.

"A couple of days ago I looked at the 'Ten-Year Plan' you people have drawn up. You know more about that than I do. Such a huge area to be cultivated, so many different kinds of crops . . . and you'll also have timber forests, tea groves, pastures for livestock, machine shops, canning and bottling plants, a hydro-electric station. . . . All these things are waiting for you to set to work — it isn't enough just to put it down on paper. Of course, the administration will send us many experts and technicians. But, Comrade Chen, they'll have to clear everything through you. You'll have to understand their problems!"

"But how can I learn so much?" Chen suddenly faced Su Yi. "How can I possibly do it? . . ."

"That's something you can work out when you get to the provincial capital. Anyhow, you won't be going to any school — there's no time for that. Perhaps you'd better pick out a state farm that's been in operation a few years. Do some practical work there — as Party secretary, or section chief, or something. Get the feel of things there for a while and then come back. What do you say?"

Chen's glumness was replaced by a sensation of uneasiness. The decision of the Party committee was correct, no question about it. He would have to study for all he was worth. But — Old Lord of the Heavens! — what a lot there was to learn! And what a job it was going to be to learn it! With considerable trepidation, he asked:

"When am I going?"

"That's up to you. The sooner the better. There are some people from the autonomous *chou* government leaving for Peking tomorrow. You can get a ride on their truck."

"Tomorrow?"

"What's wrong with tomorrow?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking . . . you see how busy we are here. Maybe if we waited a little while. . . . Of course, if there's a truck leaving tomorrow, then I'll go tomorrow!"

"I know how you feel. To a man who tills the soil, harvest is the happiest season of the year. Isn't that it?"

Chen only smiled.

"We'll have bigger and better harvests in the days to come!" said Su Yi. "It's agreed, then. Get ready. Tomorrow you leave!"

Chen had made provisions for every phase of the station's work being carried on in his absence. All was in order. But he had to make one more trip to the fields to see how the harvest was progressing. And he wanted to bid farewell to the countryside.

As he walked through a grove, a man suddenly emerged from behind a tree and stood blocking the narrow path. Chen gave an involuntary start. About a year ago, this same young Tibetan, in this same place, had leaped out, pulled from its sheath a gleaming blade a foot long and. . . . But standing before Chen now was not a half-starved, dirty, savage youth, barefoot and dressed in rags. Confronting him was a healthy, neatly clad, handsome young Tibetan — Langcha, a member of the station's production team.

How did Langcha happen to be working at the station? For that we have to go back to the time of that unexpected "storm" which had arisen the previous winter.

. . . With aching heart, Langcha had cast his old father aside, and galloped his horse through the night back to the bandits' mountain lair.

The following morning, armed to the teeth, the bandits had gathered in a clearing and mounted their horses. Where they were going, or with whom they would battle, the horsemen had no idea. They had only one thought — fight to death. If they won, there would be food and loot and money and women. . . . But as they waited for the order to set forth, they suddenly discovered that they were surrounded. At the same time, a shepherd delivered a message to the Prince, demanding that he immediately cease any militant action; other matters could be discussed in a face-to-face talk.

The Prince furiously tore the letter to bits. Pulling his pistol from its holster, he fired one shot into the air. At this signal, the horsemen rode, shouting and yelling, towards the pass. Needless to say, the heavy fire pouring down on them from all sides quickly dampened their ardour. The Prince, standing among his dead and wounded, hastily penned a message and had one of his men shoot it up with an arrow to the People's Liberation Army forces on the heights.

The parley took place on a field of grass between the positions of the two belligerents.

Representing the army were two men who spoke Tibetan fluently. As they walked across the field, from the opposite side came a piercing, tragic cry. Startled, they wondered what had happened.

It was this: When the Holy Man, Ma Yin-shan, who had been sitting in front of the Prince, saw the emissaries approaching, he stealthily drew a pistol from beneath his lama's robe. Only Langcha saw him do it. Langcha was at once aroused. It was dishonourable to shoot men whom you were meeting under a truce. Besides, they were "government men." Because his father too was a "government man," Langcha had a certain

feeling of affinity for them. Whipping out his short sword, he slashed down hard, severing Ma's hand at the wrist. The Holy Man uttered a horrified scream as his hand and the pistol fell to the ground together. . . .

News of Langcha's deed quickly spread through the Kengta region. To this day, people speak of him with praise.

"Ah, it's you Langcha. What are you doing here?" Chen smiled, walking towards him.

Langcha did not reply, but plainly he was quite upset.

"Are you waiting for someone?" Chen asked.

"They say you are going away!"

"That's right."

"It's true?"

"It's true. I'm leaving today."

Langcha fell back as if he had been struck. Chen could see tears in his eyes.

"What's the matter?" Chen asked with a laugh. "Just look at you — a big fellow like you, a member of the production team — crying!"

"Why are you leaving?" Langcha asked reproachfully. "Don't go. Why do you want to go?"

"Who says I want to? I *have* to!" Chen sighed. He smacked Langcha on the shoulder. "Buck up. There's no need for tears. I'll be back!"

"You're coming back?" Langcha was surprised.

"Of course! Where else would I be going!"

Langcha said nothing. Tears glistening in his eyes, he again looked at Chen, then picked up his carrying-pole and ran swiftly down the path. After he had gone a short distance, he turned and called:

"I have to move some wheat sheaves, Station Chief. Sorry I can't see you off!"

Emerging from the grove, Chen made a brief tour of the wheat field. He was intending to drop in on the autonomous *chou* government office next, but then he noticed some activity in the experimental plot. He peered more closely. Amazed, he rushed towards the plot, in a flurry of agitation.

A dozen mountain folk were removing stones, one by one, from a large pile in the centre of the plot and carrying them to a clearing at the foot of the mountain. Carved with phrases from the Buddhist scriptures, the stones, and the pile on which they were heaped, had a deep religious significance to the Tibetan believers. A flock of primary school children were merrily helping their elders. It looked as if they were unloading some boat that had come in to shore.

When Chen saw that there were no people from the station present, he felt a little relieved. But he still thought he ought to stop them.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

"Moving the Sacred Stones!" one of the mountaineers replied.

"But is that allowed?"

"Why not!" said an old man, standing up and straightening his back. "As long as you erect the pile again, it doesn't matter where you put it. Gods are like people, you know. They don't like staying in any one place too long." He again bent and grasped a large stone carved all over with religious phrases, his lips moving in prayer.

Just then, Szulanwongdui, returning from delivering a stone to the clearing, approached Chen.

"You've come, Station Chief. I was about to look for you."

"What's on your mind?"

"I hear you've drawn a map of the land the state farm will cultivate. Is that right?"

"Yes, we have such a map."

"Does it have the pile of Sacred Stones on it?"

"It certainly does!"

"Well, you'd better change it to over there!" Szulanwongdui pointed to the growing pile at the foot of the mountain. "The next time the 'Lion' pulls a plough or a seeder through here, it won't have to go around the pile. We can't have it circling around all the time. That's extra work, and it wastes oil."

Chen was about to say something, but he had no chance. Szulanwongdui went on:

"There's another thing. I don't know whether it's possible or not. I thought I'd ask you anyhow. If it can't be done, forget it.—I'd like you to put my two pieces of river-bend land on your map too. Then when the 'Lion' ploughs or harrows or seeds, it can go in a straight line. It won't have to make a detour. . . ."

"Excellent! I don't know how we can thank you, Szulanwongdui. Needless to say we'll give you a fine plot of ground somewhere else in return for the land you're giving us." Chen had long been hoping that he might convince him to make such an exchange.

"What are you talking about! I don't want anything for it."

"Oh? Then your idea is. . . ."

"What I've been thinking is this. I don't know whether it's possible or not. If it can't be done, forget it. I was thinking—let's sit down here and talk this thing over. . . ." The two men sat down on the ground, and the Tibetan continued, "My daughter Chiuchih has been working as a herder at the station for almost a year now. We feel that we're practically one of you! Why not just treat us as part of the station? Of course I'm not so young any more. But when it comes to working in the fields I'm as good as any of the young fellows—except when they drive the 'Lion'. . . . I've had this idea for a long time. Tell me frankly—do you think it can be arranged?"

Szulanwongdui got it all out in one breath. With his head cocked to one side, he waited anxiously for an answer.

Before Chen could reply, several other mountain peasants who had been standing around listening joined in the discussion. Chen knew these men quite well. They were the ones who had carved out a piece of the station's tilled land for themselves when the wheat was being sown the previous winter.

"It's easy enough, if only the station is willing," said one. "You simply move away Szulanwongdui's boundary stones and fill in his outside ditch."

"Sure, there's nothing to it," said another. "Move the stones, level the ditch. Then when you plough or harrow or plant, it's one straight stretch of ground."

"Can we do it, Station Chief?" urged Szulanwongdui.

"Yes!" Chen answered promptly, carried away by excitement. Why not? he thought. Of course!

But upon reflection he realized that this would make Szulanwongdui a member of the state farm. It was not so simple. Szulanwongdui was a Tibetan peasant, not a regular government civil servant. This wasn't a question Chen could decide on his own, and he was leaving immediately. He'd have to turn the problem over to the station's agronomist Lei Wen-chu—Chen had complete faith in the young man's ability. He hailed the school children who were busily shifting Sacred Stones.

"Hey, kids! Who wants to find Uncle Wen-chu for me?"

"I'll go, I'll go!" cried a little girl.

"Ah, Chahsi. Good. Run and tell Uncle Wen-chu to come here a minute. Tell him I want to speak to him. Run!"

"Right." The child batted her long curly eyelashes with practised coquetry, then whirled and rushed off, a corner of her red Young Pioneer scarf streaming behind her like a flag.

Wen-chu was in a field by the river bend, selecting wheat seed. These ears of grain could compete in any agricultural exhibition, he thought with satisfaction.

Stockbreeder Ni Hui-tsung approached along the river bank. "Comrade Wen-chu!" she called. "Choosing model specimens?"

"How are you, Hui-tsung!" The young man walked over to shake her hand. "We've a long way to go before we can talk of model specimens. I'm just selecting seed. That's how it is in my kind of work—before the first year's crop is harvested, we start preparing for the second."

"Have you estimated this year's yield yet? How big will it be?" the girl asked eagerly.

"Not bad, generally speaking. We'll get from five to eight hundred cattles per *mou*. What's been exceptionally good is this dark strain," said

Wen-chu, shaking the stalks in his hand. "The Byktsokaya variety. Over a thousand catties per mou!"

She took them from him, feeling their weight. How heavy! She returned the stalks to Wen-chu.

"How are things in the pastures?" he inquired. "How are the young lambs coming on?"

"Fine! I thank you for asking, on their behalf!" Hui-tsung laughed. "Oh, I nearly forgot. I met the postman on the road. He asked me to deliver this letter."

Wen-chu became excited as soon as he saw the envelope. "You know who that's from? Professor Liu!" Ripping open the missive he stood close to Hui-tsung, plainly inviting her to read it with him. The first page, on which the writer explained the reason for his slowness in replying, Wen-chu skimmed through rapidly. His main interest lay in the material which began on page two:

... It's bad news that the little tea plant has died. But I'm sure you are not discouraged. The important thing is to discover why it died. It had already sprouted. Why did it dry up so quickly? Remember, research is a painstaking job. No point can be overlooked.

I have examined your draft thesis "Seven-Year Crop Rotation." Although you have gone into great detail, because I have so little knowledge of the Tibetan highland I'm afraid I cannot make much useful comment. Let me have some more time on it. In general, I agree with you.

That brief remark made Wen-chu very happy. He had been quite worried when he mailed the draft to his beloved professor. Wen-chu had been longing for approval but fearful of a curt rejection, like an author sending his first manuscript to a publishing house. "In general, I agree with you." Good! At least he hadn't made any major errors. Wen-chu and Hui-tsung both heaved a sigh of relief. They read on:

Each time you write you say you hope I will come to Tibet. I would like nothing better! It may be that I will have my chance. A scientific investigation team is being formed that will soon be sent out. I have asked to be included.

You have been in Tibet some time now; perhaps you have grown used to it. But all of us — teachers and students alike — are longing to go. To me, the Tibetan highland is a giant being roused from his slumbers. Once awakened, he is going to advance through several centuries of progress, with huge strides.

As to your personal matter, it is not easy for me to give you any advice. But from what you tell me. . . .

At this point Wen-chu hastily folded the letter. Hui-tsung, who had been standing beside him, reading, thought to herself — What am I doing,

looking at other people's mail? She said goodbye and walked away. She had gone a considerable distance when Wen-chu suddenly called:

"Hui-tsung! Comrade Hui-tsung. Wait a minute!"

The girl halted and turned around. Wen-chu caught up with her.

"Did you want to speak to me about something?" she asked.

"No . . . I just wanted to say . . . why don't we go back together? I have to go back too — No, what I really mean is you haven't finished reading it!" Wen-chu stammered, tentatively offering her the letter.

The girl looked at him doubtfully.

"Go ahead, read it," Wen-chu said firmly. "I'm asking you to finish it!" Hesitantly, Hui-tsung accepted the letter, and continued reading:

. . . But from what you tell me — although I have no idea how the young lady in charge of your station's stock-breeding feels about you — I get the impression that you are too timid. What are you afraid of? A direct approach is always best. It may be difficult, but you must have confidence in yourself. You must believe that you can win her. . . .

Hui-tsung kept her head down. Would she ever finish reading? She turned her back on Wen-chu.

Silently he stepped in front of her. Raising her face with both hands, he suddenly kissed her on the mouth.

At first she didn't seem to know what had happened. When Wen-chu released her, she fell back a pace like a person coming out of a trance. Then she blushed a rosy red.

"What are you doing? What did you do that for!" Apparently very angry, she hurried away.

Wen-chu stood motionless. He had the feeling he was being watched, and he hastily looked around. Although no one could have seen anything through the tall wheat, he somehow felt that he had been discovered, and his heart pounded. Why? He didn't know himself. Perhaps because the courage he had spent a whole year accumulating had been dissipated at one blow! Anyhow, he certainly had made a mess of things! What must she be thinking of him? A boor! An idiot! How could he ever face her again? It seemed absolutely hopeless.

Mechanically he went back to seed-picking. But he soon discovered he was filling his basket with small grains as well as large, regardless of quality. Slapping his forehead helplessly, he walked to the river and tried to soothe his fevered brain with its cool waters. . . .

A stone plunked into the water and Wen-chu raised his head. Standing behind him was the little Tibetan girl, Chahsi.

"What are you doing, Uncle Wen-chu?" she asked.

"I . . . washing my hair, can't you see?" he retorted, shivering, icy river water running down his neck into his shirt.

Chahsi giggled. "I thought you were putting your head in to look for something. Let's go, Uncle Wen-chu. The station chief wants to see you."

"The station chief? Where is he?" Wen-chu wiped his head with the edge of his coat.

"At the Sacred Stone Pile. He says you should hurry."

Wen-chu took the little girl's hand and they walked together along a path through the field of wheat. A flight of raucously honking wild-geese passed overhead. They flew very low and in ragged formation, circling, looking for a place to land.

Chahsi jumped for joy. Wen-chu too was thrilled at the sight of the big birds. Shading his eyes against the sun, he followed their flight, almost spilling his basket of picked seeds.

"What's the matter with them, Uncle Wen-chu?" Chahsi plucked at his sleeve. "Why don't they come down? Are they afraid because there are too many people?"

"No, these birds aren't afraid of people," he said excitedly. "They don't recognize this place any more. They left here last autumn. But now the plateau and the river bend are completely different. The wild-geese aren't sure. They don't dare land. . . ."

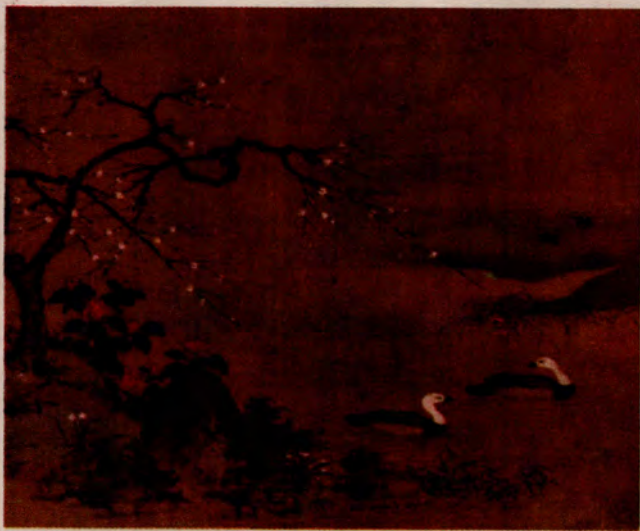
"Really?" the little girl marvelled. So wild-geese could think, just like humans!

"Yes, that's the trouble. Call them, Chahsi. Invite them down!" He lifted the child and sat her on his shoulder.

And the little girl raised her face to the heavens and shouted, "Come down, wild-geese, please come down!"

Translated by Sidney Shapiro





Ducks on the Pond Anonymous (Sung dynasty)



Butterflies and Crab-apple Blossoms
Anonymous (Sung dynasty)

POEMS

by Kuo Mo-jo

Kuo Mo-jo is one of modern China's most important poets. He was born in 1892 in a beautiful village at the foot of Mount Omei in Szechuan, and as a child read classical Chinese poetry. He began to write in about 1919, and was one of the founders of the Creation Society, a well-known progressive literary group in the twenties. Kuo Mo-jo is not only a poet but a story-writer and dramatist; his researches have made an outstanding contribution to our knowledge of ancient Chinese history and the Chinese language; he has also been active in the international peace movement.

His collections of poems include The Goddesses, Starry Sky, The Vase, The Forerunner, Recovery, Battle Cries, The Cicada, Ode to New China and More Poems. The Goddesses, considered by Chinese literary critics to have "inaugurated a new period in poetry," is representative of his early work. The two poems from this collection published in this issue, the "Rebirth of the Goddesses" and "The Nirvana of the Feng and Huang," were written at the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920. This was just after the October Revolution and the May the Fourth cultural movement in China, and Kuo Mo-jo was much influenced and moved by these two great events. These poems reflect his passionate opposition as a revolutionary democrat to feudalism. The theme of the "Rebirth of the Goddesses" comes from ancient Chinese mythology, as the author explains in a note at the end of the poem. In this work he condemns the tyranny of past rulers, satirizes the warlords of the period after the 1911 Revolution and voices the sufferings of the people under their rule. "The Nirvana of the Feng and Huang" symbolizes the rebirth of China after the May the Fourth Movement.

Rebirth of the Goddesses

Alles Vergängliche
ist nur ein Gleichnis;
das Unzulängliche,
hier wird's Ereignis;
das Unbeschreibliche,
hier ist's getan;
das Ewig-Weibliche
zieht uns hinan.

Goethe: *Faust*

A fissure in the Puchou Mountain: its walls rise abruptly. On either side tower up crags, formidable as the Yangtse Gorges, shaped by nature into the semblance of the gateway to a city. Beyond the crags a vast expanse of sea stretches away to merge with the sky. In front of the crags the level ground is carpeted with luxuriant emerald grass strewn with fallen fruit. Innumerable niches pierce the walls of the sentinel crags and in each niche stands the statue of a nude goddess bearing in her hands some form of stringed or wind instrument which she seems to be playing.

Strange trees grow profusely on the mountain sides. Their leaves are like those of the date palm, the flowers are golden in colour, with calyces like agate. The flowers are large as magnolias; the ripe fruits are shaped like peaches but somewhat larger. Over the summit of the mountain hang massy white clouds, hardly distinguishable against the sky.

The time is of the remote past, a day during the struggles for kingship of Kung-kung and Chuan-hsu. It is dark.

When the curtain rises, all is silent and the silence persists for some moments when distant sounds of clamour make themselves heard.

The goddesses lay aside their instruments and slowly step down from their niches. Slowly they look round them.

FIRST GODDESS

Since when the five-hued rocks were smelted
to fill the cracks in the heavens
darkness has been half driven away
beyond the bounds of the celestial sphere.
Within this fair world
strains of silent music have married in harmony.
How many moons have waxed and waned,
their light reflected on this wafted life-music?

SECOND GODDESS

But why can we not bring into accord
the measures we play today?

I fear that in this universe
a catastrophe is likely to come upon us again.
Hark! This harsh clamour
ever louder, ever nearer:
is it from the waves in the sea, from wind in space,
or can it be the counterpoint of evil cries?

THIRD GODDESS

Were they not the barbarous hordes
that passed by the foot of this very Puchou Mountain?
They go, they said, to fight for some paltry hegemony;
this turbulence has become intolerable.
Sister goddesses, what are we to do?
Our celestial canopy, built of five-coloured stone,
may well be shattered in fragments.
The weary sun merely sleeps in space,
no longer shedding its burning waves of light.

FIRST GODDESS

I will go forth and create new light,
no longer will I remain a mere goddess in a niche.

SECOND GODDESS

I will go forth and create new warmth
to compound with your newly created light.

THIRD GODDESS

Sister goddesses, new wine may not be contained in old skins.
I will go forth and create a new sun
to contain your new light and new heat.

CHORUS OF GODDESSES

We will create a new sun,
no longer will we remain mere statues in niches.

The goddesses dissolve into the sea beyond the mountain gateway. Behind the mountain rises the clash of embattled emperors.

CHUAN-HSU

I received Heaven's mandate;
Heaven appointed me to rule the world!
Kung-kung, do not let yourselves be caught up by the Spirit of
Death.
Let me establish my rightful place as leader.

KUNG-KUNG

I know nothing about this rant of heaven and earth!
I follow my nature in my desire to be emperor.
If there is to be talk of the Spirit of Death, then I'll deal out death
for you.
Chuan-hsu, you had better look out for your own skin!

CHUAN-HSU

The ancients had a saying: there cannot be two suns in the sky,
nor two rulers among the people.
Why do you press your rivalry to me?

KUNG-KUNG

The ancients had a saying: there cannot be two rulers among the
people, nor two suns in the sky.
Why are you bent on opposing me?

CHUAN-HSU

Why, you . . . you mountain echo!

KUNG-KUNG

I must satisfy my impulse to become ruler.

CHUAN-HSU

But what necessity urges you to become ruler?

KUNG-KUNG

Ask the sun — why must it shine?

CHUAN-HSU

Then let you try your strength with me.

KUNG-KUNG

And let you try your strength with me.

Shouts of "War! War! War!" from the massed soldiery. Clamour of fighting, clashing of weapons, sounds of blood spurting, thuds of falling bodies, thunder of trampling feet.

OLD PEASANT

Bearing a ploughshare he makes his way across the battlefield.
My heart's blood is quite dried up.
Battle has been joined again over my fields of corn.
When will the Yellow River run clear,
when will man's life come to an end?

SHEPHERD BOY

Guiding his flocks across the battlefield.

Ah! I should not have reared those fighting dogs,
usually they fought over crusts of bread,
but when that was finished they ate heads of sheep.
I must take my sheep and flee.

A horde of wild men enter. They are armed. They pass across the battlefield from the opposite direction.

Let us make merry while the time favours it.
Let us go and join the battle beyond the mountain.
The hair bends whither the wind blows:
whoever wins we stand to gain.

*Beyond the mountain is heard: "Long live Chuan-hsu! Long live the emperor!"
Trampling of feet, cries of pursuit: "Traitors, you shall not escape. Heaven is about to strike you down!"*

KUNG-KUNG

*Bounds forth from beyond the mountain at the head of his followers.
His hair is shorn, his body tattooed, his loins garbed in plantain leaves.
There are wounds on his body; his bronze sword and stone weapons are dripping with fresh blood.*

Oh shame! Oh, horror! I am utterly defeated.
Would I had the old villain's skull
to carve into a winecup!

Licks blood from his weapons and scowls with immense ferocity.

Here is the northern pillar of Heaven, the mountain of Puchou;
my lifespan has been cleft as is this mountain.
Comrades-in-arms, though I may not live to be king,
I cannot make my peace with that old scoundrel.
You have depended on me up to now:
now I have need of your lives.

The followers pick up the fallen fruit and eat of it.

The god of hunger is calling out from our stomachs!
They say the magic fruit of Puchou gives unlimited strength to
the eater:

there is still a moment before the universe shivers asunder.
Go on, get a bellyful of it!

The sound of pursuit becomes more and more insistent.

The war-cries of the foe are like the fury of the breakers:
they but hasten this helpless vessel to the bottom.

My followers! Lend me your skulls!
Crack this northern pillar of Heaven!
Crack it!

The troops rush head foremost against the mountain wall. Thunder reverberates and lightning plays all round. Then, a great thunderclap, the mountain splits apart and the vault of heaven crashes down. A black cloud billows up. Kung-kung's followers fall dead at the foot of the mountain.

CHUAN-HSU

Naked, his hair dishevelled, in build like a huge ape. He leads his men, armed like himself, from the battlefield.

Rebels, where do you think you will flee to?
The gods strike swiftly! Great heavens, what is this?
Rocks and stones fly through the air, the earth shudders, the
mountain is bursting asunder.

Aaaaah. . . ! All is chaos, chaos! What can be happening?

The thunder and lightning become more and more fierce. A flash of lightning reveals the bodies of Kung-kung, Chuan-hsu and their followers lying scattered about. After a while the thunderclaps become less violent and gradually die away. The whole stage is in darkness. Silence of five minutes.

Sound of swimmers approaching from afar.

WOMEN'S VOICES IN THE DARKNESS

- The thunderclaps have ceased.
- The lightning has died away.
- The battle of light and dark is over.
- What of the weary sun?
- It is driven out of the sky.
- Has the fabric of heaven been torn asunder after all?
- Have the forces of dark, once driven away, now crept back?
- What can be done with the rent fabric of heaven?
- Shall we smelt more coloured stone to repair it?
- Such coloured dross can serve no purpose now:
however far it is set in decay, we should not patch it up again.
Let our newly created sun issue forth,
then will it shine through all the inner world and the outer.
The limits of the celestial sphere serve no purpose now.
- But the new sun will surely become weary?
- We must be for ever creating new light and heat for it.
- Ugh! Everywhere underfoot are the remains of men's bodies.
- What shall we do with them?

- Bear them to the niches and mould them into gods.
- Yes and set them playing silent music as we once did.
- The new sun, my sister, why has it not yet risen?
- It burns too fiercely, we fear it will explode,
we have it still plunged in the sea.
- Ah! We now feel new warmth.
- Our hearts are like crimson carp
leaping in a crystal bowl.
- We desire to embrace all things.
- Let us sing a song of welcome to the newly-created sun.

In unison

Sun, although you are still far away,
sun, although you are still far away,
now the morning bell can be heard pealing in the sea:
ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong!

Ten thousand golden arrows shoot at the Wolf of Heaven;
the Wolf of Heaven grieves in the dark.
Now the funeral knell can be heard in the sea:
ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong!

We wish to quaff a stoup of wine.
Drink to the everlasting life of our new sun.
Now the drinking bells sound in the sea:
ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong!

The stage suddenly lights up. Only a white curtain is to be seen. The stage-manager appears, bows to the audience.

STAGE-MANAGER (bows to the audience)

Ladies and gentlemen, you have become tired of living in the foetid gloom of this dark world. You surely thirst for light. Your poet having dramatized so far, writes no more. He has, in fact, fled beyond the sea to create new light and heat. Ladies and gentlemen, do you await the appearance of a new sun? You are bid to create it for yourselves. We will meet again under the new sun.

Notes

*Material for the play has been taken from the following sources:
Lieh Tzu (ancient Taoist philosophical work): "...Heaven and earth are also material things, and things are subject to deficiencies. Hence in ancient times the*

goddess Nu-kua forged five-coloured rocks to fill in the cracks, and broke off the turtle's feet and set them up as the four pillars of the sky. Thereafter, when Kung-kung struggled with Chuan-hsu for kingship, in his fury he threw himself against Puchou Mountain. He snapped this pillar of heaven and upset the balance of the four-cornered earth. As a result the sky tilted down at the north-west corner, so that the sun, the moon and the stars now move in that direction. The earth being inclined in the south-east, all watercourses drain away thither."

The Han dynasty dictionary Shuo Wen: "Nu-kua was an ancient goddess, who shaped the ten thousand things... She first invented the pipes and flute."

Shan Hai Ching (ancient book of folk-lore and legends): "To the north, the Puchou Mountain faces Chupi Mountain, and Yuehchung Mountain is not far away; to the east it faces the salt marsh of Yu, which is where the Yellow River disappears underground after leaving its turbid, seething source. Here there are delicious fruits which are like peaches; the leaves are like those of the jujube tree and the flowers are yellow with a red calyx. These fruits can refresh one when one is fatigued."

The Nirvana of the Feng and Huang

In Arabia in ancient times there lived a magical bird, the Phoenix. When it had reached the age of 500 years, it made a pyre of fragrant wood and committed itself to the flames. Then from the dead ashes it returned to life never to die again with a fresh and extraordinary beauty.

Now, this bird may well be the Feng-Huang bird of China. The Feng is the male, the Huang the female. In the Yen Kung Tü (Elucidation of the Illustrations of Confucius) we read: "The Feng-Huang is the essence of fire; it is born on Mount Tanhsueh." According to the Kuang Ya dictionary: "As to the Feng-Huang... the cry of the male bird is jig-jig, that of the female bird is jug-jug."

Prelude

The eve of the new year is at hand and in the sky
the Feng-Huang pair dart here and about.
Mournful strains are heard as they fly away,
bearing fragrant twigs in their bills they return,
fly back to the Tanhsueh Mountain.

To the right is the withered plane tree,
to the left the parched spring;
before the mountain the limitless expanse of the sea,
behind it the vast dismal plains,
over the mountain the frozen sky traversed by icy winds.

The sky is now dark with evening,
the fragrant wood is heaped high.
The Feng is weary with flying,
the Huang is weary with flying;
their hour of death approaches.

The Feng pecks the twigs:
points of flame fly out.
The Huang fans the sparks:
wreaths of fragrant smoke rise up.

The Feng pecks on
and the Huang fans the flame.
The fragrant smoke overspreads the peak,
the glow of the fire suffuses the peak.

The dusk has now deepened,
the fragrant wood is burning.
The Feng is weary with pecking,
the Huang is weary with fanning:
their hour of death is at hand.

Alas for the Feng and Huang!
The Feng dances, dances high and low,
the Huang sings, sings in tragic vein.
The Feng dances,
the Huang sings her song.
The commonalty of birds flock thither,
fly in from the skies to witness the death-rite.

Song of the Feng

Jig-jig, jig-jig, jig-jig,
jig-jig, jig-jig, jig-jig,
vast is the universe, cruel as iron.

Vast is the universe, sombre as lacquer.
Vast is the universe, rank as blood.

Universe, O universe!

Why do you exist?

Whence do you come?

Where are you cradled?

Are you an empty sphere limited in reach,
or a continuum of unlimited size?

If you are an empty sphere limited in reach
whence comes the space that contains you?

What else has existence outside yourself?

If you are infinite and all-embracing
whence comes the space that you hold in yourself?

And why does life exist within you?

Are you a life-endowed flux,

or are you a lifeless mechanism?

I raise my brow and ask of heaven,
but heaven is reserved and aloof, has no knowledge of these things.

I bend my brow and ask the earth,
but the earth is dead, it has no breath.

I look out and ask the sea,
but the sea is raising its voice in grieving.

To exist in the mire and gloom of this world
would cause even a diamond sword to rust.

Universe, O universe,

let me rail at you with all my powers:

you blood-besmirched slaughter-house,
prison surfeited with misery,
graveyard clamorous with ghostly hordes,
hell astir with capering demons,
why should you exist at all?

We fly westwards:

the west, alike, is a slaughter-house.

We fly eastwards:

the east, alike, is a prison.

We fly southwards:

the south, alike, is a grave.

We fly northwards:

the north, alike, is a hell.

Living in such a world
we can but learn from the lament of the sea.

Song of the Huang

Jug-jug, jug-jug, jug-jug,

jug-jug, jug-jug, jug-jug,

five hundred years of tears have streamed like a cataract,

five hundred years of tears have dripped like wax from candle.

Unceasing flow of tears,

filth that cannot be washed away,

flame of passion that cannot be extinguished,

shame that cannot be cleansed.

This shadowy life of ours

towards what haven is it drifting?

Ah, this dreamy, shadowy life of ours

is like a lonely boat on an ocean:

to the right are trackless waters,

to the left are trackless waters.

No beacon shines ahead,

no shore is seen behind.

The sail is torn,

the mast broken,

the oars have floated away,

the rudder has rotted away.

The weary boatman merely sits and moans,

the angry surge rolls over in the sea.

Ah, this shadowy, drifting life of ours

is like a drugged sleep on such a dark night as this.

Before us is sleep,

behind us is sleep.

We come like a gust of wind,

we go like a whisp of smoke.

Coming like wind,

going like smoke,

sleep behind,

sleep before.

In the midst of this sleep
we are but a fleeting breath of smoke.

Ah!

What sense is there in it?

What sense is there in it?

Folly . . . folly . . . folly:

there remains only grief, vexation, desolation, decay,
a back-cloth for our living corpses,
a thread running through the lives of our living corpses.

Ah!

Where is now the freshness of our youth?

Where is now the sweetness of our youth?

Where is now the splendour of our youth?

Where is now the pleasure of our youth?

Gone! Gone! Gone!

All is gone!

All must go!

We are gone,

you too must go.

Grief . . . vexation . . . desolation . . . decay.

Ah!

The fire flares dazzling bright

the fragrant smoke hangs heavily in the air.

My time has now come,

my hour of death has come,

all within us,

all outside us,

all in all.

Farewell! Farewell!

Choral Song of the Birds

EAGLE

Haha! Feng-Huang! Feng-Huang!

In vain have you been the most magical of birds.

Are you dead? Are you dead?

Henceforth must I assert my sway over the aerial world.

PEACOCK

Haha! Feng-Huang! Feng-Huang!

In vain have you been the most magical of birds.

Are you dead? Are you dead?

Henceforth let you behold the royal sheen of my plumage.

OWL

Haha! Feng-Huang! Feng-Huang!

In vain have you been the most magical of birds.

Are you dead? Are you dead?

Whence comes this sweet fragrance of mouseflesh?

PIGEON

Haha! Feng-Huang! Feng-Huang!

In vain have you been the most magical of birds.

Are you dead? Are you dead?

Henceforth you may see the contentment of our docile tribe.

PARROT

Haha! Feng-Huang! Feng-Huang!

In vain have you been the most magical of birds.

Are you dead? Are you dead?

Henceforth listen to the eloquent discourses of our orators.

STORK

Haha! Feng-Huang! Feng-Huang!

In vain have you been the most magical of birds.

Are you dead? Are you dead?

Henceforth see the strutting to and fro of our high-stepping race.

Rebirth Song of the Feng and Huang

SONG OF THE MALE BIRDS

The tide of dawn has risen,

the tide of dawn has risen,

the light that died is born anew.

The tide of spring has risen,

the tide of spring has risen,

the cosmos that died is born anew.

The tide of life has risen,

the tide of life has risen,

the Feng and Huang that died are born anew.

FENG AND HUANG SING TOGETHER

We are born again,
we are born again.
The one that is all is born again,
the all that is one is born again.
We are he, they are me,
you are in me and I in you:
I am therefore you,
you are therefore me.
The fire is the Huang,
the Feng is the fire.
Soar then, soar!
Sing for joy! Sing for joy!

We are made anew, we are purified.
We are resplendent, we are steeped in fragrance.
The one that is all is steeped in fragrance,
the all that is one is steeped in fragrance.
Fragrance steeped are you, fragrance steeped am I,
fragrance steeped is he, fragrance steeped is fire.
Fire are you,
fire am I,
fire is he,
fire is fire.
Soar then! Soar!
Sing for joy, sing for joy!

We are pledged, we are deeply in love,
we are devoted, we are truly matched.
The one that is all is truly matched,
the all that is one is truly matched.
Truly matched are you, truly matched am I,
truly matched is he, truly matched is fire.
Fire are you,
fire am I,
fire is he,
fire is fire.
Soar then, soar!
Sing for joy, sing for joy!

We are vigorous, we are free,
we are fearless, we are immortal.
The one that is all is immortal,
the all that is one is immortal.
Immortal are you, immortal am I,
immortal is he, immortal is fire.
Fire am I,
fire are you,
fire is he,
fire is fire.
Soar then, soar!
Sing for joy, sing for joy!

We sing for joy, we soar,
we soar, we sing for joy!
The one that is all sings for joy,
the all that is one sings for joy.
Is it you who sing for joy, or is it I?
Is it he who sings for joy, or is it fire?
It is joy itself that sings for joy!
It is joy itself that sings for joy!
Only joyfully singing,
only joyfully singing!
Singing!
Singing!
Singing!

Translated by E. S.

The Peacock Maiden

The folk tale printed below is a new version of the Tai legend Chaushutun and Namarona. The Tai people, who have a rich folk literature, are one of our national minorities living in the province of Yunnan. During the last few years many of their stories, handed down by word of mouth, have been recorded and translated into Chinese, to be rewritten and further popularized by Han poets and writers. The Peacock Maiden is one of the stories most enjoyed by readers throughout the country.

FOR a thousand miles the Lantsang River flows, rolling to the south, bringing down a hundred thousand grains of glittering gold over the years and leaving a thousand and ten stories along its banks, among which is. . . .

I

IN Monbanja, a land of perennial green, there once lived a king named Bahkeladir. His granaries overflowed with the fruits of good harvests and his palace was beyond compare for splendour and richness, but he had no children. Both he and his Queen Machena longed for a son, for an heir to succeed to the throne and complete their happiness.

And then, one morning in early spring, their wish was fulfilled. The people rushed excitedly about, talking of a strange happening. A man-child crawled out from the foot of a huge white elephant and then disappeared without a trace. Right at this moment, the queen gave birth to a healthy son which the king named Chaushutun, after a prince famous for his bravery, hoping that his son, too, would grow into a strong and brave man.

With each passing day Chaushutun grew taller and stronger. He diligently studied the arts of peace and war, becoming well-versed in the



The Peacock Maiden and Chaushutun Plight Their Troth by Chang Kuang-yu

arts and proficient with all weapons. His intelligence was astonishing and his strength excelled all other men. One day he peered into a well and by the dim light beheld a strange object in it. The wise old men said that the great King Bahmo had left a wonderful treasure there which men for many generations had tried in vain to obtain. Chaushutun ordered the well be drained and when this was done he descended into the well to examine it more closely. The object was a magic bow. So powerful was it that he who owned it could defeat an entire enemy army. No one but Chaushutun had the strength to bend the huge bow; he could draw it taut till it was as round as the full moon, and every arrow from it hit the target clean and sure. One day as an evil bird of prodigious size was arrogantly wheeling overhead in the clouds, a black fish clasped in its beak, an arrow from Chaushutun's bow pierced it. The fish fell from its beak into a river, and the bird, mortally wounded, plunged down into the forests below.

Sixteen times the breezes of autumn fanned the paddy-fields into a swaying, burning gold. Chaushutun was now a brave, handsome lad, with deep clear eyes that sparkled with life. His face was more lovely than the legendary Dewawo's and his voice was like the chiming of bells, soft and musical to the ear. When the maidens saw him their mouths and eyes opened wide in admiration and they longed to toss the embroidered pouch of courtship at him, offer him the slit bamboo stool reserved for their dear ones, and give him love nuts. His parents grew increasingly concerned about his marriage, and time and again urged him to marry a girl of noble birth. The treacherous minister, Mahashena, eager to increase his influence over the throne, offered his daughter. But it was of no use. Of the many beautiful but empty-headed daughters of nobles not one could win Chaushutun's heart. His one wish was to find himself a girl as capable as she was beautiful, who could be his faithful companion for life.

One day, with his magic bow and sword, and mounted on his wonder horse, Chaushutun rode away, over vast fields, over range after range of mountains and through thick forests, to search for a girl after his heart. On the way he fell in with an old hunter named Gohagen and the two became firm friends. Together they hunted the wild boar and the flame-speckled deer, and shared the same fire. As they ate their fill of savoury venison they talked of many interesting things. One of the stories Gohagen told the prince was this:

Not many years ago, Bahna, the God of Waters, with a magic weapon captured the son of Bahun, king of all fish-eating birds. In revenge the bird king caught the God of Waters while he was visiting the ocean's surface in the guise of a black fish. And just as the bird king was exulting high in the skies an arrow suddenly struck him, making him release the

black fish, which fell down into a river, right into the net old Gohagen had spread. The black fish pleaded to be set free and promised to come to Gohagen's aid whenever he needed help. The kind-hearted Gohagen set the fish free.

"I admired the bowman whose arrow brought down that fish! I have always hoped that some day I will meet him," concluded Gohagen.

"That unknown bowman probably wants to meet you even more," Chaushutun added with a smile. So they talked through the night, like old, intimate friends. Chaushutun looked up and sighed. "Ah, bright star!" he said. "Herald of dawn! So high, yet so easily seen. Now why is a beautiful and talented maid born among men so difficult to find?"

"Love never disappoints pure hearts. The steadfast and true will bring the deep-seated spring water to the surface," Gohagen chuckled knowingly. Chaushutun nodded. He would remember that saying. "And not far from here," the old hunter went on, "is Lake Langsna with its jade-green waters as clear as a polished mirror. And every seven days, seven peacock maidens extraordinarily fair to see bathe there. They are as fair as resplendent flowers, and the youngest outshines them all. When you see her, you will see the beauty of the legendary Nandiowala and you will know what wisdom and cleverness really mean. Come, let us go and see. . . ."

Chaushutun rose eagerly. They mounted their swift horses and soon were at the lake. They hid themselves on the lake's edge and waited.

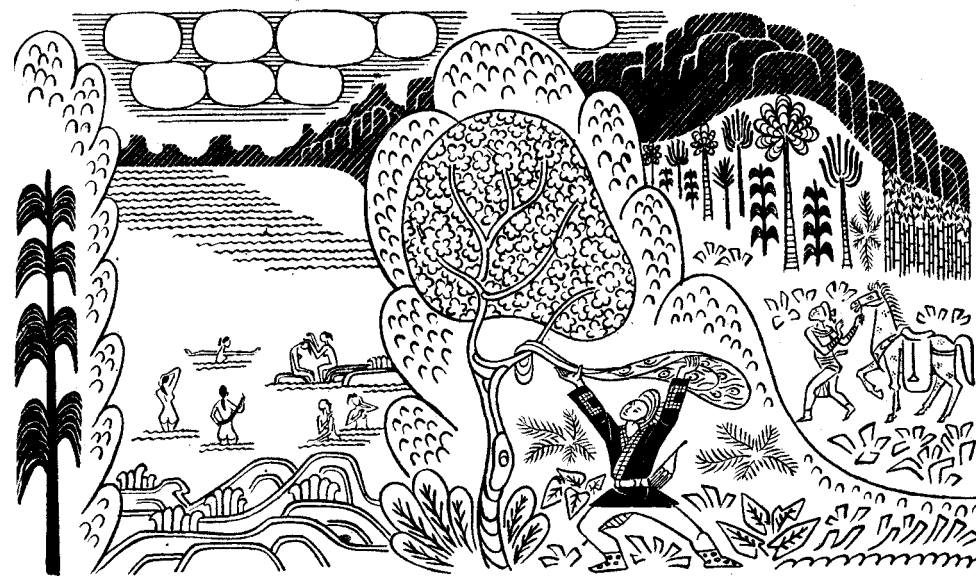
II

THE weather at noon was warm and mild, and the limpid waters of the lake mirrored the many-coloured clouds which sailed gently across the sky, fanned by a soft fragrant breeze. Suddenly, from out of the skies, seven colourful peacocks flew down and alighted on the shore. Quickly the peacock cloaks were shed, and seven graceful maidens appeared, who, laughing merrily, plunged into the lake. Chaushutun and Gohagen gazed, fascinated. After a while the peacock maidens rose from the water and, donning their peacock cloaks, began to dance. Chaushutun was enchanted by the youngest, the seventh sister, Namarona. Oh, how she danced! But all too soon the dancers turned back into peacocks, rose high into the air, and flew away towards the west, and became seven tiny specks on the horizon, with Chaushutun gazing longingly at them.

"Don't be so sad!" said Gohagen. "They'll come back again in another seven days."

"Seven days! And then only a few moments! How can I stop them leaving?"

"Let us go and ask the hermit, Palasi. He might know."



They went and found Palasi in his forest home. Smilingly he looked Chaushutun over. He shook his head at first, but finally gave a nod, and summoning an otter told Chaushutun to follow it. The otter led him to the side of Lake Langsna, where it plunged in. The waters immediately divided into two, leaving a wide, dry path. Along this came Bahna, the God of Waters himself, who greeted Chaushutun as his saviour, and led them into his magnificent palace. Only then did Gohagen realize that the bowman who had shot down the evil bird Bahun was no other than his companion. After revealing all the secrets of a magic hook he had, the God of Waters lent it to Chaushutun and escorted them back to the shore. The two friends resumed their hiding place and waited.

The longed-for day arrived. The sun hung in mid-heaven and Chaushutun and Gohagen saw on the horizon a flash as of seven glittering diamonds, which came straight towards them. As they drew nearer, the dazzling orbs of light became seven peacocks, and after alighting, they again became seven beautiful maidens who dived into the lake. Chaushutun's eyes had carefully sought out and marked the youngest maiden. He had watched where she hung her peacock cloak and then, while the maidens splashed and frolicked in the lake, he quietly took out his magic hook, brought down the maiden's garment and gently drew it to his hiding place.

The maidens finished their bathing. What was their panic when they discovered that seventh sister's garment was not to be found! Namarona began to cry, and her sisters comforted her saying, "We will carry you home between us." Chaushutun was frightened when he heard this, and

called out, "No! Don't go!" He was going to say "Here is your garment!" but Gohagen clapped his hand over his mouth. The peacock maidens were startled when they heard a man's voice and took to their wings, leaving Namarona behind. She quickly darted into some thick bushes and hid herself.

After a long while, when everything remained silent and motionless, she came out cautiously and began to look for her peacock garment.

"Tee-hee-hee! Tee-hee-hee!" something chattered high in the trees. It was only an impertinent squirrel.

"O squirrel, have you seen my garment?"

"Tee-hee-hee! Tee-hee-hee!" The squirrel only laughed.

"Oh, don't laugh! Can't you see I am looking frantically for my peacock cloak? I'm sure you know where it is! Won't you tell me?"

The squirrel, whiskers twitching, waved his bushy tail and pointed to the spot where Chaushutun was hiding, and then vanished into the leafy branches.

"Who could be there?" she asked herself. She looked up. There was a falcon wheeling overhead. Could it be a bird who took my cloak? Swish! Chaushutun let fly an arrow and the falcon hurtled down, with an arrow through its heart. It dropped to the ground beside Namarona. She picked it up and looked about her, astonished. Still she could see no one.

"O maiden," a voice called softly, "did the arrow fly true?"

Namarona turned and saw Chaushutun, but it was too late to run and hide. It seemed a long, long while before she could find her voice. "Yes, right through the heart," she answered, in her soft, musical voice.

The two of them gazed at one another, speechless with enchantment. Then Namarona spoke again, her face red with a rosy blush.

"May I ask if my elder brother has seen my peacock cloak?"

"O why, O maiden, are you not at home, but here in this wilderness, looking for a peacock cloak?"

"My six sisters and I came to swim in Lake Langsna . . . I hung my cloak on yonder flowering bough, but it has vanished."

"I can see no houses near or far. Can you be the fairy Nandiowala from heaven, beautiful maid?"

"King Chaudekasali of Mongwudoongpan is my father. I am Namarona, his seventh daughter. You, elder brother, must surely be the handsome Bahmo or Bahna, the God of Waters. The mortal world cannot breed so handsome a youth."

"No. I am Chaushutun, son of Bahkeladir, king of Monbanja. Though a thousand miles away, I sensed the fragrance of the flowers blossoming here, and came. Do not tell me the fresh flower before me belongs to another?"

"My elder brother is so eloquent; he is a love-bird reciting his moving lines before me! There is no divine lotus here with a thousand petals,

nor a flower so sweet that its perfume can spread even a hundred miles. The flower here showed little promise as a bud, and the poor blossom can only droop in shame. No one has ever come to water it, or caress it. Why should anyone stoop to pluck it?"

"A precious stone needs the cunning hand of a craftsman. O maiden, why are you not wearing the ring of some loved one?"

"What, I, a mere pebble in the wilderness! Who would deceive himself into thinking it a jewel! Or who would want to cast a precious ring away in the wilderness!"

As they were speaking, Namarona's six sisters appeared, anxiously looking for their little lost sister. They saw her and were about to swoop down and snatch her away when Gohagen shot an arrow into the air and flourished the magic hook at them, at which they took fright and fled.

"Fear not, lovely maid," Chaushutun comforted her, for she too was frightened. "He who protects me is my friend Gohagen, a most kind-hearted man." And then he added, shyly, "My store of food is but half eaten; my bed but half occupied. The fiery comet flies lonely across heaven — ah, why has it no companion?"

"Alas, the sun only rises when the moon must set; people of different worlds cannot live together. Were it otherwise, my humble, poor self would gladly be a handmaid and wash dishes and feed swine for a lonely man."

"Ah, strong wine needs no fortifying! Wound not my heart further!" Chaushutun thought he could see a gleam of hope and went on more boldly. "I have journeyed thousands of miles across land and water to come here, and waited seven long nights and days to see you. I beg you to accompany me back to my home, to live with me."

"Water flows out from a jar easily but to scoop it back is hard," she answered. In truth, she had already lost her heart to this handsome youth, but she was not to be won too easily. "To go with you to your home would be enchanting, but what of your parents, the king and queen? What of your court and your people? They may not be pleased. And then how will I lift my head to eat my food? My eyes will never be dry."

"It cannot be that they will not be pleased! My parents love me well and will equally love what is mine. Your beauty equals that of Nandiowala and will shine throughout the land. All my people will be proud and happy to see you as the prince's consort."

"But my parents! They will miss me and will be sad."

"Let my home be yours," said Chaushutun, taking a golden ring off his finger eagerly. "Oh, lovely maid! Accept this and gladden my heart!" He slipped it on her unresisting finger, and she gave him a jewel from her breast, saying, "In this you can always see your loved one."

No sooner had the two plighted their troth than two lotus blooms flowering on a single stem rose to the surface of the lake. The lovers

thanked the hunter Gohagen and left Chaushutun's wonder horse in his care as a parting gift, and asked him to return the magic hook to its owner.

"And is it not time you returned my peacock cloak?" asked Namarona, her eyes full of laughter.

He pulled her cloak out of the bushes and gave it back to her. She put it on and, holding Chaushutun's hand tightly, spread out her dazzling wings. They rose into the air and in a flash went to his home in Monbanja.

III

THE romantic way by which their young prince found his love set everyone buzzing with excitement. All agreed it was enchanting to have such a consort, as lovely as a fairy, for their prince. All, that is, save that treacherous minister, Mahashena. He was furious because his daughter was rejected, and was determined to have his revenge. He openly opposed the marriage and tried to convince the king that Namarona was a witch; meanwhile he secretly sent messengers to the king of the neighbouring country, Mongshugang-Nakema, extolling the virtues and beauty of Namarona, and exhorting him to send his army to abduct her for himself, promising to do all he could to help such an invading army.

At first the king Bahkeladir was reluctant to accept an unknown maiden as his son's bride but he finally gave his consent when he saw how greatly his son loved Namarona. The queen and Namarona, however, liked each other from their first meeting and were soon fast friends. So, since nearly every noble approved, an auspicious day was chosen and preparations were started to celebrate the marriage.

Now the king of the neighbouring country, Mongshugang-Nakema, was a wicked tyrant, and a sensual and greedy bully. When he received the traitor Mahashena's glowing report of Namarona he immediately assembled his army and invaded Monbanja.

It was on the very night of the wedding that the dispatch from the frontier came, informing the king that the country had been invaded. Everything was thrown into confusion. Chaushutun consulted his wise Namarona and decided that he would beg the king to let him lead the army against the invaders.

The king agreed, and Chaushutun and the army departed. Soon after he had gone, the traitor minister brought a false report about the fighting, asserting that the prince's army was being driven back and that defeat seemed certain. King Bahkeladir was numbed with despair. Like a vanquished quail, he was deaf and blind to everything.

At night he had a terrible dream, so terrible that he could not forget it. He woke up shuddering and summoned all his lords and asked them to interpret this hideous nightmare. When he described it, the head priest,

who was in league with the faithless minister, immediately interpreted it as the work of a witch who would betray the city.

"A witch! Where?" asked the king helplessly.

"Within the palace walls. But your humble servant dare not say more."

"In a time like this you must speak out and fear nothing," the king ordered.

Three times the head priest begged the king's pardon, as if he were reluctant to speak for fear of offending the king. Finally he spoke.

"It is no other than Namarona," he said. "It is the prince's consort who has brought disaster upon us. If we do not rid ourselves of her, I fear for the consequences."

The king was greatly alarmed and did not know what to do. Mahashena was pleased to see the king's consternation and seized the opportunity to pour more poison in his ears about Namarona.

"Within seven days is the Day of Sacrifice. Let Namarona be seized and stripped of all her possessions and be executed on that day!" he proclaimed on behalf of the witless king.

The queen broke the dreadful news to Namarona and hid the peacock cloak, hoping to find some way for her to escape. Poor Namarona pleaded with the king, but he was adamant.

"Die bravely for our country and my son's sake!" was his reply.

Namarona was heart-broken. She wept and wept, longing for Chaushutun to come back and save her from this awful fate.

Chaushutun had driven the enemy back, and was even now leading his army triumphantly home, but he was still far away when the Day of Sacrifice came.

Namarona was taken to the execution grounds, her rich robes in tatters. She had already a plan for escape, but, at the thought of having to leave Chaushutun, she wept profusely. As she was led past the king and queen, she turned and begged them to listen to her last plea.

"Hear me, O King and Queen," she cried. "Let me once more put on my peacock cloak and dance for you before we part for ever!"

King Bahkeladir's heart softened and he granted her this last wish. The queen brought her the peacock cloak, the guards loosened her bonds, and Namarona put it on.

Slowly she began her dance. She was lovely to watch, the colours on the cloak flashing as she swayed. Even the stony-hearted executioner stood entranced as though his soul was cleansed and purified by the young maid's dance, and the crowds forgot they were there to watch an execution and only knew they were watching a lovely dancer. Slowly Namarona transformed herself into a peacock and rose into the air. The faithless minister whispered to the king to order the executioner to seize her, but it was already too late. She was out of reach, and soon out of sight.



He stamped his foot and sighed, "See! She *was* a witch. She flew away!"

He had barely finished speaking when a warrior galloped up, and ran to the king. He had brought the news of the victory. The king was still in a daze and asked again and again what news he brought.

"The prince, your son, leading Your Majesty's army, has routed the enemy. Our banners fly victorious!" the soldier repeated.

The king looked at the treacherous

minister, who bowed his head. Everything was now clear to him. The next minute the whole populace rose and with joyous shouts welcomed their victorious army returning, with Chaushutun at their head. The court musician sang a song of welcome:

*Sweet is the juice of the coconut!
Strong the shell that guards it!
We people of Monbanja live happily,
With Chaushutun the Hero as our protector.*

"The honour belongs to the beautiful Namarona," said Chaushutun smilingly. "It was her strategy that defeated the enemy. Come, let us ask her to accept the honour."

The king turned pale. How could he have been so foolish, and done such wrong to an innocent person! How more than foolish to mistake the bad for the good!

The head priest and the minister, fearful of Chaushutun's vengeance, hunched their shoulders and stole away as best they could, while the

people and the soldiers bowed their heads and wept as they thought of Namarona, their princess who was as lovely as the fairy Nandiowala.

Prince Chaushutun was startled at the hush which fell after he had spoken.

"What is this?" he cried, alarmed. "What is this? What has happened?"

The king and queen, their hearts heavy with grief, forced themselves to tell the truth. The blow fell like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, or the hiss of water on red embers. Chaushutun staggered and dropped to the ground.

Only half-conscious, he murmured her name repeatedly. He took out the jewel she had given him at their betrothal, and looked into it. Yes, as she said, he could see her in it, with the hermit Palasi, her cheeks wet with tears. It was like a physical pain in his heart and he fell back again in a swoon.

When he came to he was in a cold anger. First, though, he was determined to find her again. Heedless of all pleas, he mounted his fiery steed and galloped to Lake Langsna, stopping neither day nor night. On and on, he spurred his horse, searching for his beloved Namarona.

IV

NAMARONA, so cruelly wronged, had left her bridal home with a heavy heart. As she winged her way home to Mongwudoongpan she thought of her loving parents and her sisters, whom she had not seen for some time. Her faith in Chaushutun's love for her was unshaken, and she knew he would not rest till he found her again. But this made her

heart more heavy, for the way to her was fraught with danger. She flew over Lake Langsna and, meeting the hermit Palasi, she took off her armlet and spoke to him.

"Please, give this to Chaushutun," she said, for she was sure he will seek for her there. "Tell him that if he wears it his days will pass as though I were still by his side.



But he must not try to follow me! It is too dangerous. Tell him he must not look for me!" And she turned and flew off, weeping as if her heart would break.

Chaushutun pressed on over fertile fields, through thick forests and over many tall ranges. His faithful mount was exhausted, and died. But Chaushutun hurried on by foot, gulping a hasty drink when he passed a stream and getting what game he could. It was only when he was dropping with fatigue that he paused briefly. Day after weary day he laboured till he came to Lake Langsna. Thinking back to the happy meeting with Namarona, he wept bitterly. So bitterly did he cry that the hermit Palasi took compassion on him, and going up to Chaushutun gave him Namarona's armlet. At the sight of the armlet he wept all the more grievously and became all the more determined to find her.

"From here to Namarona's home is a long and difficult road, over impassable rivers and vast stretches of shifting sands. There are unpredictable perils, man-crushing mountains, and giant man-eating birds awaiting you. And should you by chance reach Mongwudoongpan, her father the king would still doubt your worth, as your father doubted hers."

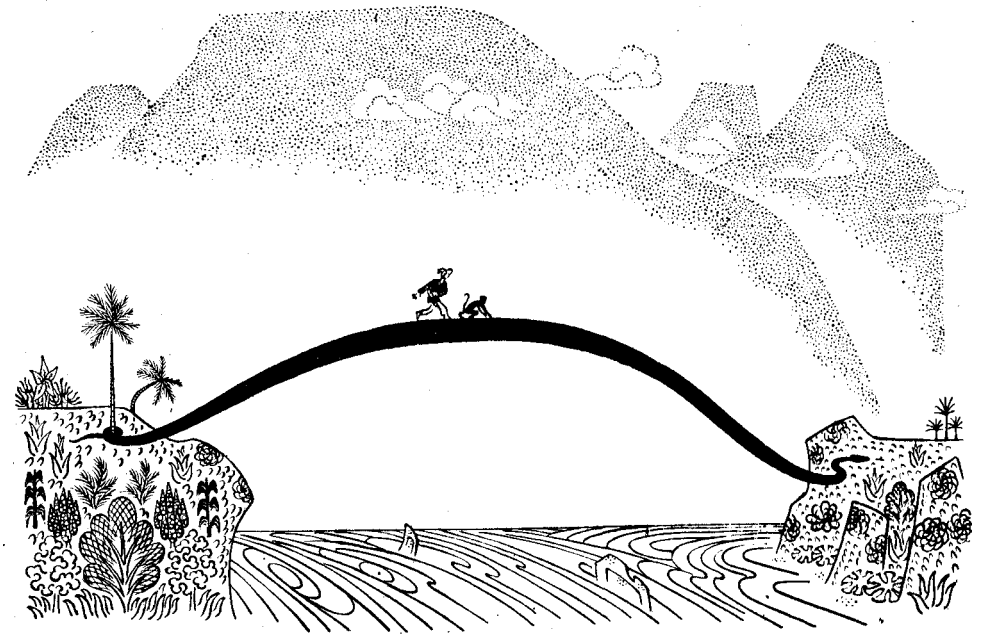
"I must go on!" Chaushutun vowed. "If I do not find her again I do not want to return. Without her I cannot live!"

Palasi was deeply moved to see such love, and such determination. He decided he would help, and called up a monkey to guide Chaushutun to Namarona's home.

The monkey led the way, on their trying and seemingly endless journey, till one day they reached the Namiengkalikagan, the river which runs white-hot, enough to melt metal. Chaushutun tested the seething waters with his sword. No sooner did the blade touch the water than the tip dissolved. Up river and down he searched, but no ford or bridge could he find. There was no way over unless he could fly. He stood on the bank, gazing across the river with impatient eyes. Suddenly a huge black python rose out of the water, its head on one bank and its tail on the other, like a long, narrow bridge. The nimble-witted monkey quickly ran over the python to the other side, closely followed by Chaushutun. When they were across the python disappeared again.

On and on Chaushutun and the monkey pushed westward till they reached the cloud-piercing peaks, the Three Fighting Sentinels. These were three mountains which crashed against one another continuously. Chaushutun fitted an arrow to his magic bow and aimed at a crack. Swish flew the arrow, breaking a temporary passage through the shifting mountains. Monkey and man sped through this opening. Even as they reached the other side the mountains crashed together again.

And after a long, long way they reached a vast open space swept by sandstorms and flying stones. All day they had to battle with the whirling



stones till at last they reached a huge tree which blotted out the sun. Tired and exhausted, they climbed up into its branches and rested, unaware that this was the home of the giant man-eating birds. A sudden blast of wind woke Chaushutun out of his exhausted stupor. It was the bird and his mate returning to their nest. The male bird could forecast events to come in the east and the female in the west.

"Your prediction was not very accurate, was it?" the female said derisively to her mate. "I thought you said that Chaushutun would be here today! There's no sign of him that I can see."

"But according to my knowledge, he has crossed the Namiengkalikagan and passed through the Three Fighting Sentinels safely. He should be here today. I am still hopeful of having my dainty morsel," the male said petulantly. Then he strained his great head. "Gawk," he croaked, "I can smell a living human!"

"Gawk! I too," cried the female. "Come! Let us go down and see."

The two giant birds flopped to the ground, sniffing now east, now west, craning their ugly necks in every direction. Chaushutun, alarmed, clutched his sword, prepared to do battle with them. The birds discovered the monkey and devoured him. They found nothing else and flapped back to their aerie.

"Oho! A monkey! That's your man from the east, is it?" said the female. "Anyway, I'm going to sleep now. Tomorrow the king of Mongwudoongpan is going to hold a ceremony to welcome and bless his seventh princess who has just returned from Monbanja. Seven huge elephants,



a hundred head of buffalo and a hundred fat pigs are going to be butchered. Let us go there, and have our fill of bone and blood."

Soon the great birds were asleep and Chaushutun relaxed with a sigh of relief. "Tomorrow they're going to fly to my dear one's home, are they!" he thought. "If only I could steal a ride on one of them! What care I for danger if I can see her again." The thought of her made him brave. He gripped his good sword firmly and quietly climbed into the nest. He hacked off a huge feather, as big and round as a

man and stealthily crept into its hollow stump. "Now the bird will take me to Mongwudoongpan!" he thought triumphantly.

V

NEXT morning the huge birds took wing, soaring swiftly through the skies, with Chaushutun safely hidden, and soon reaching the kingdom of Mongwudoongpan. The bird landed, and preened its feathers, shaking Chaushutun out. He quickly made his way towards the palace. As he drew near he saw an elderly woman resting in the shade of a pavilion.

He was about to ask for news of Namarona when he saw a troop of beautiful maidens dressed in bright robes on their way to fetch water. So he said, "May I ask you, honoured matron, why so many maids fetch water together?"

"Young man," replied the old lady, "don't you know that the seventh princess has come back from Monbanja and the king has ordered a great feast to pray for a blessing on her? These girls are now fetching water for the princess."

"Oh," said Chaushutun. He asked nothing more, but watched the maids fill their pails and depart one after the other till only one was left beside the well.

It was Namarona's personal maid, a clever young girl. She had filled her pails when she saw the handsome stranger staring intently at her. She thought him handsome and, pretending she was unable to lift the pails, called to him for help, hoping thus to enter into conversation with him. Chaushutun gladly helped her and as he bent over the pails he quickly slipped the armlet Namarona had given him into one of them.

"Just as the flower which stands by the clear waters is always beautiful," he said, "so I dare presume the mistress whom you serve is most lovely. Will you present my blessings to her? May her tears be washed away and may her smile appear again!"

The maid blushed. It seemed an unusual compliment to send. She looked more closely at this strange youth and replied: "From where does my elder brother come? He speaks so eloquently, it could be the speech of a golden cockatoo from some foreign skies!"

"Yes," Chaushutun answered. "It is from foreign skies that I have come. But eloquence I have none. The only fluency which comes to my tongue is to echo your mistress' name. Take her my message, I beg you, take it swiftly."

The girl still wanted to know what lay behind his mysterious words, but she knew her princess was waiting, and had to go.



Never for one moment did Namarona forget Chaushutun. In front of her were clean green grass and fresh bright flowers, but she only wanted to see her loved one. She saw the bees busily visiting the flowers and she felt all the more lonely and sad. When the morning mists lifted and the dew dried, her sorrow still lay heavy on her heart. She only longed to be with him again, to live together happily. On this day when her father was holding the great ceremony to bless her, she fervently hoped that the clear water showered on her would wash away all her misfortunes and bring the day of her happy reunion with Chaushutun nearer.

Her maid returned and poured the water over her. Something struck her arm. She stifled a cry as she saw what lay on the ground.

"What startles the princess?" asked her maid.

"Is it a dream? What do I see! There on the ground lies my armlet. How did it get there?"

"Your eyes do not deceive you. Indeed, it is the princess' armlet that lies there."

"I can see a fire balloon floating, but I cannot see the person who lit the fire! I can see an embroidered love pouch in front of me, but, alas, where is he who dropped it!"

"Princess, why do you talk of fire balloons and love pouches while I bathe you?"

"Girl, you must tell me where this armlet came from."

"Is it not possible I scooped it up with the water?"

"No! No! I beg you, tell me, who gave it to you?"

The serving maid was puzzled. What strange business was this? She told Namarona everything: how she went to fetch water and met a young man, and how he spoke strangely to her. Namarona sprang to her feet and ran, barefooted, to the king and queen, her eyes bright and shining.

"My husband is here!" she cried breathlessly.

Chaushutun had wandered on after the maid servant left, and then he was apprehended and brought before the king. The king looked doubtfully at Chaushutun. Was this youth worthy of his daughter's love? He could not believe that Chaushutun had reached his kingdom merely by courage and love and without a magic peacock cloak. And so quickly too!

Chaushutun begged the king to pardon him for the wrongs that his daughter had suffered, and swore that he loved her with all his heart. The king could almost believe him, but he was determined to test him. He proposed two conditions which Chaushutun must fulfil. If he failed, he was to leave without seeing the princess.

As the first test, Chaushutun had to destroy with his bow a gigantic boulder hindering the smooth flow of the river and causing frequent floods

which destroyed many thousands of farms. No one had ever been able to do anything to alleviate this curse.

Chaushutun, before ten thousand pairs of watchful eyes, fitted an arrow to his magic bow and drew it taut with all his might. Swish flew the arrow and immediately there was a tremendous rumble like thunder. The huge boulder crumbled and was swept swiftly away by the current, amid a roar of cheers from the crowd.

The king was satisfied with the first test. The second condition was this:

The seven princesses had to enter a darkened room and each show a finger through a hole in the wall. If Chaushutun could identify Namarona's finger, then the king would be satisfied that he loved her.

The night was black as pitch and Chaushutun outside the darkened room had great difficulty in finding any fingers at all. Unexpectedly, however, a firefly hovered in the air and then gently alighted on one particular finger. Without a moment's hesitation Chaushutun seized the finger, feeling it could be no other than Namarona's.

"He has succeeded! That is her finger!" the king exclaimed, all doubt gone. "Come! We will celebrate their reunion!"

A few days later, Chaushutun and Namarona prepared to go. They bade everyone of Mongwudoongpan farewell and left for Monbanja on a flying horse and a flying elephant given to them by the king.

King Bahkeladir and Queen Machena were still mourning their sorrows when their tears turned to joy. Elaborate ceremonies and feasts were held to celebrate the young couple's return. The traitor minister, fearing to meet his just reward, had left with his rejected daughter for the neighbouring country of Mongshugang-Nakema.

Chaushutun and Namarona lived long and happily together. Namarona's peacock dance, now a symbol of peace and happiness, became famous throughout the land of the Tais and is danced to this very day.

Translated by Alex Young

Illustrations by Chang Kuang-yu

Sketches of Life Today

From My Notebook

TU PENG-CHENG

I. THE CONSTRUCTION CHIEF

Under the moonlight, the mountain gully appeared as bright as by day. A thin coat of frost covered the ground and dry leaves fluttered in the wind.

A jeep was parked by the highway at the foot of the hill and its driver, Old Chao, hands thrust deep into his pockets lounged against one of the doors. His eyes, shaded by the brim of his worker's cap, were fixed moodily on the construction site opposite.

In the work-shed nearby, some hundred people were in a meeting; they were the men responsible for the construction site. They debated hotly, calculated and worried about manpower, materials, plans, production and a host of other problems all of which hinged on the question of "The Cold." The phrase "precautions against freezing" slipped through the windows and preyed with icy chill on the driver's mind. Chao was not worried by the trouble it was starting the jeep in cold weather, but like those in the meeting he knew the conditions of every work-team on the railway construction site in this area, and realized what it would mean for the workers in the open air if the temperature dropped suddenly.

He glanced at his watch. It was already two, but still the man presiding over the meeting — the man everyone called the chief — continued in his booming authoritative voice.

Five minutes later, Chao heard the scraping of chairs, loud yawns and coughing. The meeting had come to an end. People began to stream out of the shed, tired people, exhausted by the exacting work on the construction site. Many of them were sallow and lean; their voices were hoarse and their eyes red from want of sleep. As each came out he involuntarily looked up at the sky. A few stamped hopefully on the frosty ground as if wishing that the frost was only an illusion created by the moonlight.

The chief was among the last to come out. He was a thick-set man with trouser legs rolled up to the knee and shod in straw sandals. In one hand he gripped a straw helmet, the kind worn by the workers for protection. He seemed no different from the young navvies who thronged the place normally and also smelt faintly of cement, earth and paraffin. But he was the chief, the highest in command on the whole construction site and responsible for the work of hundreds of units with their hundreds of thousands of workers and staff. A number of people surrounded him at the moment; they were appealing, complaining or even threatening him with exaggerated difficulties. Waving a thick square hand over his head, he chuckled heartily as he moved away. "No, no, I'm completely broke. You won't get anything out of me now," he said. Turning to one man, he continued, "What reason have you to complain? Why, you have every single item you need in your stores. I don't care if you curse me and three generations of my ancestors, but I've got to transfer ten tons of your blasting charges to another unit tomorrow."

He finally got away. "What a beautiful moon," he said cheerfully when he neared the jeep, and stepping up beat a light tattoo on the hood. "No good," thought Chao, the driver. "He's probably not easy in his mind."

Behind the chief's back, Chao took a deep breath and opened his mouth, but he clamped it shut without saying anything. Why waste his breath? He could of course say, "It's getting late, we'd better stop here." But he knew the chief would counter such a remark in a joking tone with, "Nothing doing. The fate of people of our generation is never to get enough sleep."

Chao simply handed the chief his jacket without a word. Returning his hands to his pockets again, he leaned expectantly against the jeep with a light shrug.

The chief got the hint behind Chao's silence. "We can do two hundred kilometres in four hours," he said. "I'll be able to get back to town in time to deal with an important matter. How's that? Or have you a new proposition?"

Chao slipped into his seat and took hold of the steering wheel. "Isn't it the same story every day?" he said looking straight ahead. "Why bother to discuss it?"

"Good answer," said the chief with a grin and a shrug. He took his seat by the driver. With a hoot, they were off.

Here and there the road was cluttered with piles of gravel, bags of cement, and steel rails and girders unloaded from the trucks which were still parked by the roadside ready to pick up more materials. Chao steered the jeep round these obstacles carefully and in between glanced sidewise at the chief. Noticing that the latter held his forehead in one hand and rocked gently with the car, he knew this was not yet the time for conversation. The chief was still in the meeting mentally, his head

full of his responsibilities and the problems he had collected that day on the work-sites. Various impressions were still fresh in his mind and he needed time to think. Usually, after they had covered about twenty or thirty kilometres, he would come out of his reverie and ask for Chao's companionship.

True enough, they had not been driving forty minutes when the chief, as if relieved of a heavy load, stretched lazily and hit one palm with the other fist. He started to hum a tune as he gazed admiringly at the river flowing gently by the highway. "My stomach, I think, is trying to stage a revolt," he muttered. He didn't need anything really tasty. He would be quite satisfied with a few of the sweet potatoes that are a specialty there.

Without a word, Chao freed a hand from the wheel and produced a flask of hot water, three sweet potatoes, two pancakes and two ounces of cooked beef. These he handed to the chief calmly.

The hungry man gave him a grateful look and tucked in with genuine relish. As the car sped on its bumpy way, some of the water spilled on to his knees.

In normal cases they would now begin a lively conversation. The chief would talk about the business that had kept him on the go all the day and half the night and about the things that were uppermost in his mind. His voice would ring with excitement one moment, and exasperation the next; at times he would sound almost worried. The driver would also comment on his own experiences that day; he would talk about events and details that were perhaps humdrum but very practical, often revealing important views and ideas which anyone in a leading position was unlikely to come across. . . . But today, things did not take their usual course. The chief finished his meal and remained silent for a long time.

Finally, he stretched his head out of the window to look at the evening sky. "Damn the weather!" he burst out. "It's not time yet for a cold spell, yet here this frost comes suddenly. If the temperature drops to freezing tomorrow, we'll be up against it! At least twenty bridge teams are still mixing cement."

This time the words made no impression on the driver. His mind was occupied with a more important matter. As he steered, he looked left across the river at various work-sites. There, by the long queue of lights, the second engineering team was laying the road-bed. Further down where the myriad lights made a patch of brightness like that of a little town was Number 51 work-site. He stepped on the accelerator and the jeep whizzed along, its wheels barely touching the ground. Now the chief was surprised. He was quite used to Chao, who like all good drivers knew when to speed and when to slow down. He always kept the traffic regulations, no matter who his passengers were, and paid no attention if the chief told him to go faster than he felt they should.

"Must speed," Chao told himself firmly. He knew his own mind. Number 51 was a key point on the construction site. The people over there had been screaming their heads off about shortage of cement. "It's finished!" the head of the engineering team there had yelled at the chief a few days back. "If you don't give us two hundred tons of cement by twelve o'clock on the twenty-ninth I'll have to hang myself." He was likely to try to waylay the chief and nag at him for his cement. He was a cunning fellow and knew the chief's routine. But Chao had his own information from the supply room of the engineering department at the head office. He knew for certain that Number 51 had enough cement to be going on with. He knew too that by twelve of the twenty-ninth, that was the day after, that boisterous team leader would still be cracking jokes and never a thought of hanging himself. It was Chao's task to see that the chief waste not a second on the way. Then the busy man would gain enough time to rest for two hours after they got to town. Otherwise, with one interruption here and another there, they'd arrive only as the office opened, when the supply chief, the engineer with his roll of blueprints, the investigation teams from the various departments and hundreds of letters, wires and directives would engulf the chief until he could hardly breathe. And when he eventually extricated himself from all this after a long tussle he'd only shout, "Old Chao, let's go to the work-sites!"

They must hurry now through this area. But as ill luck would have it, they happened on the hour for blasting. Gongs, whistles and shouts interrupted them every few kilometres or so. A worker with a red flag would halt the jeep and Chao would see the sign, "Danger! No Thoroughfare!" The chief always hopped out every time they were stopped and with hands behind his back would watch everything that was going on. There would be flashes of blue light and then a rumbling roar that shook the ground. . . . The chief was always exhilarated by this and paced back and forth eagerly, his eyes darting across the river as if he wanted to wade over and feel the earth's pulse which was throbbing wherever this railway was being built.

Chao, however, lost no time in starting the jeep as soon as the sentry lifted his red flag. "Chief, let's go," he urged.

"Quick work!" The chief would be talking cheerfully. "At this rate, if the weather holds and the temperature doesn't drop for another ten days. . . ." Chao would have to call again, "Chief, we must be on our way!"

The chief remembered himself with a start and meekly hurried back to the jeep. They dashed past a few more work-sites and Chao, after another glance at the chief, thought he was dozing. He breathed a sigh of relief and gradually reduced their speed. The jeep ran down the highway,

along the river and then up the hillside, now rising halfway up to the summit, now gliding past sleepy villages.

Suddenly the chief rapped on the wind-screen. "Have we passed Number 54? Stop!"

Old Chao accelerated, pretending not to have heard. The chief spun round and looked at him coldly. "Stop the car," he ordered in a low but commanding voice.

That was enough for Chao. He took his foot off the accelerator and slowly stepped on the brake, letting the jeep coast another couple of hundred metres. He had his reasons: he must observe the proper driving rules no matter what happened.

"Turn back," said the chief with a jerk of his head. "We must get back to Number 54."

"What for?" asked Chao casually, resting his chin on the steering wheel.

"Don't you know? I promised Number 54 site two hundred tons of steel reinforcement before four o'clock yesterday afternoon. They may have stopped work for want of material. . . ."

Instead of turning back, Chao started up again and drove straight ahead. "I've taken care of that for you," he said. "I told your secretary in the afternoon and he's already called the supply chief who was to give Number 54 the material. He said he'd arrange the details later."

The chief heard this news in silence but again hit one palm with a fist. Chao understood the gesture; the chief was pleased.

The jeep rolled on into a narrow passage between two hills. Steering with a firm hand Chao kept his eyes on the road. Rime whitened the young trees and dried grass by the roadside, but the white track before them was patterned by an endless black trail, the imprint of countless lorry tyres. Now and then a fox jumped out from the ditch and stood curiously in the middle of the road, its tail hanging and its head lifted to stare at the bright headlights. As the jeep drew nearer, it would scuttle away into the gently swaying rushes. Sometimes a startled hare, roused by the glare and clatter, would scurry out of the forest and hop across the highway.

Turning his head slightly, Old Chao discovered that the chief had finally dozed off. He could no longer remember how many times he had seen the chief sleep like this in their exciting and busy days together. Life burdens men like him with heavy tasks, and as the jeep jolted along he had closed his eyes to recover his strength so as to be ready for further strides on the road of progress. Old Chao did his best to keep the jeep from bumping; he wanted desperately to let the chief sleep in peace. But as there were several supply depots round this area, thousands of vehicles, ranging from lorries and tractors down to horse carts, had left their mark on the highway. Now, in the glare of the headlights, it stretched before

them like an undulating stream. In spite of Old Chao's efforts, the jeep lurched and jolted, and with every jerk the chief stirred slightly or twitched his shoulders.

At last they turned again and the area dotted with work-sites, where the roar of machines and general hubbub continued day and night, was left far behind. Before them was a quiet valley. Chao craned his neck to survey the lie of the land and with a fleeting glance at his sleeping chief slowed down. Biting his lip and with bated breath, he gently brought the jeep to a halt. He was well aware that he would get a good dressing down for stopping when the tired but busy man woke up. But who cared? The most important thing was to give that brain, which was working day and night, a proper rest.

A dog barked in a distant village on the slope opposite them. A flock of frightened birds suddenly fluttered away from a tree by the roadside; perhaps a weasel had stolen into their nests. Chao's eyelids began to droop. How he'd like to have a good nap on those flat rocks over there! But he knew that the man in his jeep was no ordinary person. What if something untoward were to happen? . . . Softly patrolling the neighbourhood of the jeep, he glanced left and right sharply, and strained his ears for strange noises. There weren't many lorries on the road at this time of night; one or two would pass by every quarter of an hour or so. Chao's heart jumped into his mouth whenever he heard them approaching. He worried lest some thoughtless young fellow blow his horn at the sight of the jeep parked there by the road. To his delight, they merely whirled past: not one of them tooted its horn. Occasionally a horse cart loaded with timber or steel creaked by. Chao noticed the early risers in these carts lazily dozing under a warm quilt.

He gave his eyes a vigorous rub. The chief slept soundly, his head against the iron frame of the door. His right arm hung outside the window, half-bare where the sleeve of his jacket had been pushed up. Tomorrow that arm would be sore from the chill and the awkward position, Chao mused as he paced to and fro,



and he was sorely tempted to cover it. However, he was reluctant to disturb the sleeper. How strong and muscular that forearm was! If you placed your ear against it you could probably hear the warm blood pulsing through the veins. There were three scars in a row, quite clear under the moonlight. As a matter of fact, the chief's mud-bespattered jacket covered a good many scars . . . relics of a time long past. But just now the most important thing to Chao was that the chief was sleeping soundly and peacefully. Not even the pallid moonlight could rob that face of its colour and vitality. It was rough and square and one read in it determination, courage and strength. Suddenly the nostrils flared, the brows twitched and two long harsh breaths were expelled. It seemed as if the tired joints of the sleeper were creaking, so relaxed was he. This open, jolly man who all day long inspired others with strength and courage allowed himself to be overcome by fatigue only in his dreams. Only in the quiet hours of slumber did it become evident that he had expended his last ounce of energy while on his feet.

In the silence, Chao's wrist watch ticked the minutes away and his foot tapped lightly as the seconds passed. Time was whirling past on fleeting steps — hurrying everything and everyone on earth, hurrying the construction chief every second and every hour. "So you think you can make the chief turn in circles, do you?" Chao mused. "You think you bring life and turn people's hair grey. But Old Chao has snatched time out of your hands for a quiet sleep for the chief. . . ."

Suddenly a lorry approached, its horn tooting merrily as if the wretched driver was set on completing his two hundred thousand kilometres' safe driving before sunrise, and was impatient to get back and receive his award.

Chao's face flushed dark with rage; he could have fired a few shots into the air, so angry was he.

The chief woke and straightened up. Glancing at his watch, he cried, "Hey!"

Chao was startled. "Ah, exactly one hour and forty minutes," he remarked airily and irrelevantly.

"What rubbish are you talking? Are you bewitched or what? Where are we? Ah, this is Laoniutan. It's already half past five and we won't get to town before eight. You wretched creature, who asked you to stop here?"

"Engine trouble," Chao said glibly, though with some trepidation.

The chief shot a glance at the hood which was in its proper place. "Nonsense! If it's engine trouble what are you doing here with folded hands? Expect someone to carry you home on his back?"

"I just finished the repairs," said Chao with his usual calm. "I took a few minutes to rest. Aren't you always telling me that a man's health is his greatest assets in revolutionary work?"

"If you start that subject you'll never finish. Don't you know that more than a dozen people will be waiting for me in the office at seven thirty? Damn you!"

"We'll go as fast as possible within the proper limits," said Chao, confidently pulling on his gloves. With a firm hand on the wheel, he started the jeep and they shot down the road.

Trees and hills receded on both sides. The dark night gradually departed and dawn broke through the mountains. A new, exciting and busy day began for these men endowed with boundless energy.

II. MY YOUNG FRIEND

One morning last autumn I stood by the highway hoping to get a lift to Lungko, south of Mount Tsinling, where I had to attend a conference. But all the cars which passed were fully loaded: there seemed to be no possible chance of a lift. I looked anxiously at my watch and realized that if I wanted to get there on time I must hurry — I had nearly 30 kilometres to cover. Finally, in desperation, I went back to the engineering section, a unit of the Paochi-Chengtou Railway Construction Administration, to ask the Party secretary there for a car. I felt I must get to the conference on time.

The Party secretary was most co-operative. "That's all right — we'll get you there!" he said. "The sedan's out but one of the lorries can take you down." He stroked his chin as he calculated the distance and then said, "If you're pressed for time, get Wang Chun to drive you. You don't know him? Ah, that's your loss. He's quite a character here; fine chap in every way but a little bit too light-hearted."

I followed the Party secretary to the transport corps' park. We stopped by a lorry under which someone was hammering and knocking away, with only his legs visible.

"That you, Young Wang? Take a comrade to Lungko, will you?"

Wang Chun scrambled out from under the lorry, turned a crisp somersault before our eyes like a professional acrobat and landed lightly on his feet. Only then did he see that there was a stranger there, and hurriedly assume a serious look. He was not tall, and his heavy work-

ing clothes, his khaki trousers, the kind worn by the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea, and his maroon leather jacket and boots did not add to his height. A greasy worker's cap sat jauntily over one eye and a white towel was wrapped tightly round his thick neck. He gave the impression of being made of muscle only, taut muscle. He pulled off his dirty old gloves, thrust them into one pocket, and said "Hop in" with a jerk of his head. He had rather a hoarse voice.

As he started the car I had a chance to look him over. There were a few small scars behind his right ear and on his forehead, which might be relics of boyhood scraps, or from a wound received in Korea. His mouth looked determined, but the downy growth on his face betrayed the fact that he was still only a lad.

As soon as he left the car park we gathered speed and flew as if on wings up the winding mountain track. Young Wang steered the car with a firm hand, his head erect, his lips compressed and his big round eyes looking straight ahead. He reminded me of an athlete in a hundred-metre sprint. The lorry raced uphill and then down. The steep cliff-like cuttings rose beside us, now on the right, now on the left, but we never slowed down: the twists and turns made me quite dizzy. This young man with his surplus energy seemed determined to send me down a ten-thousand-foot precipice, it seemed! To do him justice, though, he was really an extremely good driver and we flew along quite smoothly. I almost felt as though I were riding in a speed-boat over rippling waves.

When we had reached the summit of Mount Tsinling I looked back. The sight fairly took my breath away. The road we had come up looked no wider than a metre or so, lying up the hillsides like a strip of ribbon. I was again impressed by Young Wang's driving when I remembered how fast we had moved, and what a height we had reached, seemingly so effortlessly. We had started in the foot-hills, where my light jacket was quite enough, but already, when we were only halfway up the hill it had begun to get chilly. Then we went through the clouds which girdled the mountain, and now, on the top, the snow was falling. It blew hard on the windshield, and when it was wiped off the glare from the snow all round made you blink.

Wang Chun halted and jumped down to have a look at the engine. He seemed to have springs on his feet, the way he hopped off and on, like an acrobat diving through fire-rings. He slammed the door briskly, settled down on his seat and poked his head out of the window. Then, with a loud starter's whistle, he shouted, "Forward at the speed of 40 kilometres per hour!" and we were off again.

We got to a little town where the peasants were out with cymbals and drums — I learned later that they were celebrating joining an agricul-

tural co-op. I wanted a drink of water, and asked Wang to stop for a few minutes, thinking he too would welcome the chance to stretch his legs. In fact, from what I had seen of him I expected him to be out in a flash, but no. He only gave a casual glance at the cheering crowd, pulled the towel off his neck

and wiped his hands, and then produced an exercise book and a textbook from under his seat. These he opened and began work. I looked at the subject. He was doing some algebra problems.

We must have been there about ten minutes when another lorry pulled up behind us. A young fellow got out from beside the driver. He, too, mopped his brows with a towel. He glared at us and said, "Hey, you over there! Who do you think you are, shouting and cursing the way you did when you wanted to overtake us back there."

I was so startled that I nearly spilled my bowl of water. That young man was certainly asking for trouble, I thought, provoking a tiger like our Young Wang! I expected him to rush out and join battle, but he didn't stir, and went on with his exercises without a word.

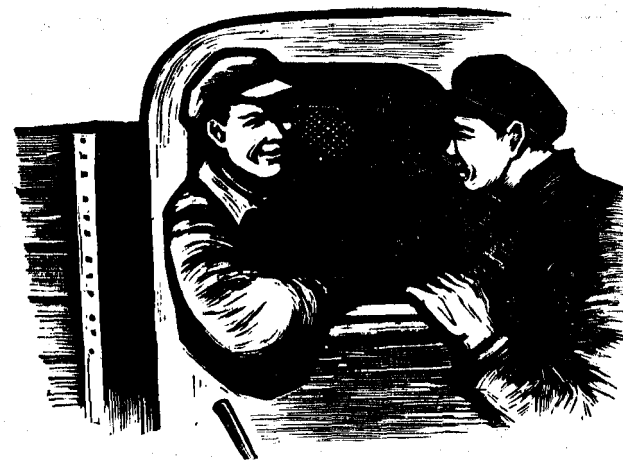
Just then, the driver got down from the newly arrived lorry. He was an old chap, and went slowly round his own vehicle, his hands behind his back, examining it carefully, and kicking each tyre. He glanced at the celebrating crowd nearby. I had recognized him by now — it was Chang, who had taken me to town for a meeting a few days ago.

"Hello, Comrade Chang! Nice to see you again," I said.

Chang gave me a brief nod and came up to our lorry. He stood by us without a word, and looked at Wang Chun. To my great surprise Wang Chun scrambled out of his seat at once, apparently drawn by the eagle gaze of those old eyes.

"Good day, Uncle Chang. I haven't seen you for some weeks," he said, standing respectfully before the older man. His face was red as fire, and he doodled nervously on the hood with one hand.

I didn't know at the time, but I found out afterwards what their relationship was. Wang Chun, I found, had lost his mother when he was still a baby and was brought up by his father, a machinist. His father died before Wang Chun was grown-up, worn out by thirty years' toil for



rapacious factory owners. He left nothing on his death, not even a thin mat to be buried in. Old Chang and Wang's father were old work-mates and friends, they had often shared a drop of wine, and drowned the sorrows of poverty together. Old Chang bought a mat and arranged for the burial of his friend, and Old Chang took upon himself the task of bringing up the only one left in this poor worker's family. Not long afterwards, Old Chang lost his factory job, and started long-distance lorry driving for private merchants. He used to take Wang Chun with him on the road. Old Chang would toss his bedding roll into the cabin and then put Wang Chun on the seat by his side saying, "Watch the luggage, boy." Wang would snuggle up against the bedding and doze off in the rocking, bumpy vehicle. This went on for two years, a rough life. They sometimes slept in the lorry, sometimes in little inns and sometimes out in the wild. Then the People's Liberation Army liberated Tientsin and Old Chang, with a group of other workers, went south to repair the railway during the people's war of liberation. Before he left, he arranged for Wang Chun to go into a machine shop as odd-job boy. His parting words were, "All his life, your father worked on machines, but he wasn't even able to buy himself a coffin for a decent burial. The workers have become the masters of the country now. Mind you do your best at work." In 1951, Old Chang joined a workers' volunteer brigade in the Korean war. He was back on lorry driving, and who should his assistant turn out to be? No other than Wang Chun, now eighteen. These two, far closer than ordinary master and apprentice, shared hardships and troubles and worked as one on the Korean transport line.

All this I found out afterwards. All I saw now was Old Chang prowling round Wang Chun's lorry with a highly critical eye and an inquiring hand. He gave it an expert going over, in fact. When he had finished he seemed fairly well satisfied with the maintenance work of his former apprentice. He knew the lorry well: It was the same lorry they had been on together in Korea, but now the shrapnel scratches were hardly noticeable.

Finally he looked pointedly at the "Good Driver" badge on the fender. "H'm," he said. "Safely driven for 100,000 kilometres, eh? I suppose you're a skilled driver now."

Young Wang swallowed; you'd think there was a sour plum in his mouth. "Come off it," he said awkwardly. "You should know whether or not I'm any good."

"People who bawl out the driver they want to overtake, the way you did, must reckon themselves top-rate drivers." Old Chang's tone was very dry.

Wang's cheek muscles twitched, and I could see the sweat break out on his forehead. "Well . . . I . . ." was all he could get out.

Old Chang looked over and through him. There was a pause. Then he spoke again. "I hear you've been given a citation." Young Wang's eyelids fluttered wildly. I had the feeling he would have given anything to escape from this interview.

I tried to say something to ease the situation, "He told me on the road that he had one citation for good work and one reprimand, and that he thought the two just balance out. I rather liked that way of putting it, myself."

All I got for this was a glare from Young Wang. Apparently he felt it was no help to get this wisecrack repeated at this juncture.

Old Chang ignored me as he had Wang. "There's plenty of good stuff in you," he said gruffly, stumping back to his own lorry. "Pity you don't let it out the best way." As he opened the door he threw another remark over his shoulder, "I ran into Young Fan the other day and he told me you've found yourself a girl."

Wang went scarlet again. "Aw, take no notice of him gabbing. Who d'you think would love a man with a head like mine?"

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On our way back, quite late, we found more than a foot of snow up on Mount Tsinling. We ploughed through it, throwing up a white wave on each side. Suddenly there was a loud knocking and we stopped with a jerk. What a rotten place to break down in! I followed Young Wang down and together we tried what a bit of pushing would do, but it was no use. Young Wang waved me aside, brushed a patch of road clear of snow and crawled under the chassis. After what seemed a long time he located the trouble and did something. He wriggled awkwardly out and said we should be all right now, but when it came to him getting back again into the cab, he couldn't do it. His trousers were frozen solid and he couldn't bend his legs. It took quite a bit of banging at them before he could get in and start up.

It was three a.m. when we got back and I thought that even Young Wang's surplus energy must be pretty well used up from such a gruelling day. Not a bit of it! He fussed around his precious lorry, draining the radiator, brushing the cabin and even wiping down windows. I paced up and down to keep my feet warm.

"Why don't you go home to bed?" asked Wang.

"I can't get over to my bunk at this hour," I said. "I'll stick round here a bit until it's light."

Young Wang took me to the drivers' hut. There was a communal bunk there, with three men rolled up asleep on it and a nice warm stove. Young Wang showed me where his bedding was and said I could sleep there and then went out. But I was too wet and cold to sleep. I tried to warm up by the stove, but then realized I had to go out. It was still

completely dark outside, except for a few twinkling lights on the surrounding hills where the work went on unceasingly. As I looked around I saw the light go on in a hut nearby. Young Wang was standing by a window, and I could hear his loud whisper, "Li I-yung! Little Li!"

"Who's that?" came a girl's voice. "What on earth does anybody want at this time of night?"

"It's me," said Young Wang, rather subdued. "I want Little Li."

"Is that so! And what do you want Li I-yung for, may I ask?"

"I've got something I want to discuss with her," said Wang hopefully.

"For goodness' sake! What a time to choose, waking everyone up too. Li I-yung's not here anyway, she's on the night shift. If you really want to see her you'll have to climb up the hill."

"I know that's you, Little Chao," said Wang, coaxingly. "You're not really cross with me, are you? It might have been someone coming to see you, you know. I bet you wouldn't mind that!"

"Oh, go away! You're breaking the rules of the hostel and I'll see that you catch it tomorrow," was the stern answer.

Young Wang turned back, and bumped into me. "Oh you!" he said, rather embarrassed. "Thought you'd be in bed by now." I wasn't going to be put off like that. "Well, I'm not," I said. "What's all this with you and Li I-yung, and who's the young lady behind the windows?"

"Don't talk so loud," he said hastily as we walked back to the drivers' hut. "Li I-yung is my girl. She works on an air compressor. That scissor tongue you heard is Chao. . . . She's on the switchboard. She's only a kid really, but can she talk! When I first got friendly with Li I-yung, she used to help me and carry messages to her, but since that wretched business last Wednesday, she's changed. Anyone would think she'd swallowed a fly the way she looks when she sees me!"

What had happened last Wednesday? Apparently Young Wang had returned from a trip at midnight with a lovely red Korean apple. He was set on giving it to Little Li at once, but he was a bit baffled to know how, feeling he couldn't very well wake her up at midnight. But it nearly burned a hole in his pocket, the way he wanted to give it to her. Of course it wasn't only the chance of giving her an apple that was in his mind. After all, he'd not seen her for three whole days! In the end he told himself that even if she wouldn't be keen on an apple, at least it was an excuse to see her and hold her hand for a minute, or at least hear her voice. So off he went to her window, and whispered her name. It was his bad luck that the job was at a most critical stage, and an emulation campaign was on. The air compressors had been running all out and Little Li was dead to the world as soon as she closed her eyes. If the sky fell she wouldn't have woken — it was waste of breath whispering. But Wang's hopeful nature wasn't easily daunted. He knew which was her bed and thought he'd just toss the apple on to it through the window. It never crossed

his mind that he wouldn't aim straight, much less that it would fall squarely on Little Chao's nose. She screamed and woke them all up. What a to-do! Five startled girls putting on the lights and yelling their heads off. Wang made off quick, and they didn't know what had happened. When the security comrades came the next day to investigate they found the apple and traced it back to Young Wang.

The story was too good to be kept to a small circle and it went round the whole site. Poor Wang came in for a lot of teasing.

I was amused about it myself, and wanted to know what the cause of this trouble was like. Was she like that chubby girl at the co-op sales-counter? Or perhaps like that garrulous young thing in the Youth League office? Maybe she looked like that student-engineer fresh from college.

Wang was more than willing to tell me all about her. Like so many of our youngsters today, Li I-yung had come to the construction site in search of the ideal job by which she could carry out her youthful dreams of serving the country. She had arrived from the south about a year ago, and straight away started giving the comrades in charge of personnel a real headache. They suggested she should train as an accountant but she claimed that she was in mortal fear of figures; they asked her to be a telephone operator, but she protested that there was no technique to be learned in that. What did she want to do then, they asked. That, she couldn't quite say except that it had to be a job where she could acquire technical knowledge. One of the men in charge of personnel, busy as he was, spent long hours reasoning with her, but she was quite determined. Finally he said, "All right, I'll send you to the engineering section and let the chief there find suitable work for you." That brought Li I-yung to this section.

But that still didn't mean she had the job she wanted. The chief's first suggestion was the switchboard! Li I-yung was very scornful and asked if that was the only job on the whole construction site. Technical knowledge was her demand; she made the further suggestion that she would like to work on the air compressors. That was asking too much, really wilful, so the local Youth League organization officer was asked to speak to her. That was no other than Wang Chun. As a matter of fact, they decided to send her to work on the air compressors in the end, but only after criticizing her for picking and choosing work in an individualist way. Wang Chun had to talk to her about it again and again, and somehow both of them began to feel there was something amiss unless they saw each other every day. But Wang, as a driver, had to be out all day and half the night, so it was not possible for them to be together too much. That only seemed to make their hearts grow fonder.

Wang gave me only an outline of this, of course, as he changed his wet clothes. "Do get to bed," he said, kicking his dirty clothes under the bed. "I can get my sleep during the day. I think I'll go up the hill now and have a word with her." He cocked his head and appeared to be

listening. "You know," he confided. "I can pick out her machine anywhere."

I felt a bit like trying to dissuade him. It seemed a daft thing to go up that rough hillside in the dark, and he must be pretty tired, but from what I knew of him I realized it would be waste of breath. I don't suppose he gave a thought to being cold or tired, with love burning so strongly in his breast!

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It was early morning when I got back to the hostel, thinking to get a bit of sleep. But before I could do this I heard there was to be a big blasting operation and hurried over to see it. It must have been three or so in the afternoon, while I was still on the site and the operation was over, when I heard that there had been a bad landslide and that several lorries had been buried on the road, with maybe over fifty people involved. Someone said Wang Chun was the driver of one of the lorries. The news hit me like a blow. Wang Chun, so full of life, buried under a mass of falling earth? It could not be!

I rushed over to the engineering section to find the Party secretary. If Wang Chun was really swallowed up by the mountain I must help the other comrades to dig him out, I felt.

The Party secretary was pacing back and forth in his office, greatly agitated. One of the clerks was on the telephone.

"Who is it? The bureau office? Yes, yes, this is the Party committee at the engineering section. No, we don't know the exact situation yet. . . ." As soon as he replaced the receiver the telephone rang again. This time it was a work-team calling to ask whether any of the lorries or people involved came from their team. No sooner had they rung off than someone else wanted to know how soon the road would be cleared as there was an important load to go up the mountain in two hours' time. The clerk finally put down the receiver. "This is dreadful," he exclaimed. "Thousands of square metres of earthwork have collapsed."

The Party secretary looked first at me and then at the clerk but he said not a word.

I looked on the map for the place where the landslide occurred. I had heard something about this particular area from the local people when I first came, I remembered. We were talking about landslides and someone said that during the Three Kingdoms period in the third century a battalion of Tsao Tsao's men had been swallowed up by the mountains. Evidently landslides had occurred round these parts from early days.

I decided I would go to the fall with the Party secretary, but we hadn't got out of the office when a young girl entered. She was in grease-stained overalls and her face was pale. She looked at the Party secretary with eyes that seemed to have lost their lustre and tried to speak, but words failed her and she stood miserably by the wall.

The gloom on the Party secretary's face suddenly lifted; he brightened visibly and seemed relaxed and cheerful. "Hello there, Little Li," he said, "I suppose you've come for news about Wang Chun. You'll have to keep calm. I've sent someone down to see what's happened. Like you, I don't believe anything can happen to him. You know how nippy he is on his feet! Remember the way he never got caught by bombs in Korea? He must have dodged them at least a dozen times."

This was Li I-yung, I realized, Wang Chun's beloved.

She wasn't comforted by the secretary's word but turned her face away and began to sob convulsively.

"Come now, little one," he said, gently. "Don't cry! There's no definite news yet—nothing's verified. We're going there now. D'you want to come with us?"

"No," said Li between sobs. "I . . . I can't."

I had no words to console the poor girl with and left the office with a heavy heart. I grabbed a bicycle and raced down the highway along the river bank, but I had not gone far before I ran into a solid block of waiting lorries, horse carts, pack mules, donkeys, barrows and countless people. The line seemed to be interminable.

When I got to the scene of the accident, dust was still swirling about, as though after a large-scale explosion. The nearby temporary huts had been badly shaken. It looked, in fact, as though there'd been an earthquake. I could see across the great fall now; where the road emerged again at the other side was also packed with people, vehicles and animals.

Work had already started on making a provisional road. Standing near, in earnest discussion, was a group of people. I recognized among them the director of the Engineering Bureau and his deputy, and the chief engineer.

I went over to them and saw at once, when the director turned in my direction, that the accident was not as bad as we had feared. Six lorries were involved, he told me, but all the passengers were saved. It must have been a close shave! But his last sentence worried me. "I only hope Wang Chun's injuries are not too serious. . . ."

Of course I wanted to know more, but I felt I couldn't ask any more questions. The director had more than enough worries as it was. I went in and found someone who could tell me what had happened.

This road across Mount Tsinling is a very important one. It is one of the main arteries in the building of the Paochi-Chengtuo railway. Any hold-up on it, or break-down, would cause a traffic block kilometres long at once. Yesterday's explosion, therefore, had been recognized as likely to cause trouble. It was a big blast, which cut a large outcrop in two. Masses of rocks and earth had fallen near and partly on to the road itself, and squads of workers were standing by to keep the road clear and the traffic moving. There was a lookout posted as well for landslides—tem-



lorries coming down the road, right underneath this threatening hill. He blew his whistle frantically, waved his warning flag, and did everything he could to attract the drivers' attention. But they were on the danger spot already. Their only escape now was to accelerate and get out of danger by going through it! This they tried, but even as they shot forward rocks began to rain down. One as large as a house landed right in front of the leading lorry — Wang Chun's lorry, as I learned later. He looked round to see if he could reverse and go back . . . too late, the fall was too near and too fast. He was an experienced hand at these falls, and knew he could escape by running. But to his horror he saw that the lorries behind him carried a mixed bag of passengers, who panicked.

Wang Chun ran towards them, waving frantically, "Run north," he shouted. "Up there! Run north."

Unfortunately most of the passengers were new to this area and had no idea what to do. Some of them were peasants from nearby villages who had come as temporary labourers on the site, and some were wives or mothers coming to see their families. They ran round helplessly, not knowing how to get to safety. Some dived under the lorries, and some

peramental behaviour was to be expected from Mount Tsinling. Then, some time before noon the lookout, as he stood vigilantly with a red flag in his hands and a whistle between his lips, saw some young trees on a hillside above the road were shaking. He thought it might be caused by breeze and tossed a handful of dust across. It settled quietly — no sign of wind. He looked at a distant hill-top: there the smoke rose straight up. No, there was no wind! "That's funny," he mused. "There's not a bit of wind but the trees are swaying. What is it, a landslide?" Just at that moment he saw six

even ran in the worst direction, straight towards the crumbling hill. One woman got out of the danger zone by chance, and then ran back to the crowd by the lorries. Wang Chun and the other drivers set out to save the bewildered passengers, fifty-two of them, running after them one by one and pointing out the safest place. Some had to be dragged out from underneath and pushed into running for their lives. Finally everyone was safe, or so they thought, and the drivers then made for safety themselves. Wang Chun was just turning to go when a little old woman suddenly came out from behind the third lorry, clasping a bundle and peering round with frightened eyes. She was paralysed with fear. Wang Chun danced in his anxiety. He turned back to rescue her, and the sentry yelled at him and waved. The landslide was well under way now. Stones and earth were coming down thicker than ever and a narrow black crack had opened ominously on the hillside above. A whole side of the mountain was going to fall at any moment. One of the other drivers turned back, but Wang Chun halted him. Despite the sentry's wild signals, and despite his own knowledge of the danger, Wang knew he must try and save her. "Keep away! No good two of us risking it," he shouted to the other driver, and dashed back to the road. He grabbed hold of her arm and rushed for safety. They nearly made it; there were only two yards or so to go when Wang Chun saw the whole mass moving on to them and felt the gush of air. There would not be time! With a final desperate effort, he shoved the old woman forward with all his strength. She fell over and crawled to safety, but Wang Chun fell. The mountain of earth crashed down in a tremendous burst right over him.

Thousands of workers from the nearby units without waiting for orders rushed over to help in the rescue work. They didn't hesitate but started working at once over the whole fall, even on the part where further slides might occur.

The lookout had marked where Wang Chun was buried — it was at the edge of the fall — and directed the workers to dig there at once. They got to him quite quickly. His nose and eyes were full of earth, and there was blood on his lips. A doctor hurried up, gave him first aid and rushed him off to the hospital in an ambulance, its siren screaming.

The doctor was inundated with anxious inquiries but he could not say more than that all he could see, from a quick examination, was that there were very few external signs of injury. Whether there was serious internal damage, and whether his life was in danger would have to be seen in hospital.

For three days the hospital wouldn't let anyone visit Wang Chun. On the fourth day I got permission to go. When I arrived the Party secretary of the engineering section was already there.

Wang Chun told us briefly what had happened, and what he had felt like. Then he turned to the Party secretary with a face full of woe. "I

hear you've given me a citation! Fat lot of good that is to anyone! My lorry's been crushed, the lorry I drove in Korea! It's part of me, I can't be without it."

While we were talking we heard a girl's voice. She sounded impatient. Almost immediately Little Li came in, all smartened up with a fresh ribbon in her hair. She stood still in the doorway for a minute. Her eyes shot on to Wang Chun's face, and her lips broke into a loving, mischievous smile. Then she saw me and the Party secretary and bit it back. "Wang Chun," she said, in mock seriousness. "I hear you're trying to get discharged from hospital as soon as you can! Have you had enough of living, stupid?"

Wang Chun chuckled and energetically waved his arms. "There's nothing the matter with me, really," he said. "I'll get up and show you if you like!"

"Hey, none of that," I said. "Don't go showing off, now."

Little Li looked round the room as casually as she could. It seemed as if she'd always been sure that nothing could happen to him. She tried to keep up this facade. "It would have been all right even if you'd lost your life," she said. "Between you, you drivers managed to save more than fifty lives!"

"Oho!" said the Party secretary. "So that's how she feels, is it, Wang Chun? D'you hear that? That came from the bottom of her heart."

Little Li couldn't keep back a giggle. She flashed a look sideways at Wang Chun to see how he was taking it. Then her face changed. "Do you know who was the old woman you saved?" she asked.

"What do you think!" said Wang scornfully. "D'you expect me to wait for an introduction at a time like that? Really, Little Li, you look quite intelligent, but it's obviously all surface. Pity that such a pretty head should have nothing behind it."

Little Li smiled at him. "It was my mother," she said. "She was coming to see me. Now she owes you her life."

Young Wang's hand came down on the bed with a bang. "Gosh! What a way to meet your future mother-in-law for the first time. Just my luck! All she knows of me is that I gave her such a shove."

Little Li blushed red as fire. "Mother-in-law!" she said indignantly. "You flatter yourself, don't you?" She stifled another giggle. "I agree you are too rough, though. You gave mum a terrible push! She fell down and scratched her hands and knees badly, but all you do is brag about it."

"I think we'd better go," said the Party secretary with a grin. "I somehow feel we're in the way here."

Illustrations by Wang Chi

The Country School-Teacher

CHANG YU-TEH

Early autumn. The night was quiet, the chirping of a few crickets only intensifying its stillness. Dewy fields of sorghum and maize filled the air with a fresh, moist fragrance.

Amidst the fields stood a primary school, serene and mysterious in the pale moonlight. One could almost hear its small dark windows gently breathing.

A train whistle shrieked, then roaring wheels shook the ground, breaking the silence of night. Gradually the shriek drifted away and the roaring wheels receded into the distance, leaving the night even stiller than before. The pale moonlight faded into darkness — the inky darkness just before dawn.

From the railway station south of the school, trudged two children. The girl was saying something to the boy. They walked along the road, then turned into a small path across a field in the direction of the school.

They went up to the school gate and pushed. It was locked. The boy was about to shout, but the girl stopped him. They walked round to the back of the school building, and softly approached a window. Stepping up on two bricks, they pressed their ears against the window-panes and listened.

Inside that little room two women teachers were in bed, each deep in thought, neither wanting to make the slightest stir lest she disturb her roommate's sleep.

Young Miss Wang had come only the previous day. Now in the dark her large round eyes were open, as if staring. She was thinking of the previous afternoon — an unusual afternoon in her life. It was then that she came to this school. The principal introduced her to the pupils. Right from that moment she was no longer a student herself, but a teacher. She had imagined that the children would give her a very warm welcome. But no! They were so concerned about their old teacher, Miss Li, who had taught them for five years and was now about to leave, that they were rather indifferent to Miss Wang. When Miss Li finished her last lesson

and announced that she was leaving the school the next day, the children nearly all wept.

Miss Wang remembered clearly: that chubby boy had gone up to Miss Li with a pile of arithmetic exercises and said, "I've done all these exercises during summer vacation. This term I guarantee I'll never get another failure in arithmetic. Don't go. . . ."

How that had moved her! For the first time Miss Wang was conscious of how hard and yet what a pleasure it was to be a teacher.

After attending Miss Li's class that afternoon and hearing her talk about her work until midnight that night, Miss Wang felt grateful to the older woman and respected her very much. She regretted having come so late; otherwise she might have been able to work with Miss Li longer. Tomorrow, she would begin teaching. Both the principal and Miss Li had urged her to prepare a few days longer. But what about the children? She couldn't make them sit idly in the classroom and wait for her to get ready. Ah, why had she come so late! . . .

Suddenly the bricks slipped from under the two children outside the window with a crash.

"Who's there?" called Miss Li, raising her head.

The two children hastily conferred in whispers.

"Who's outside the window?" Miss Li sat up in bed, putting on her dress.

"Is someone there?" Miss Wang asked in a low voice, also sitting up, rather alarmed.

The two children again whispered together, then the girl replied, "It's us, Miss Li."

"You don't really listen to me," Miss Li said, getting dressed at the same time. "I told you not to come too early. But here you are! Chang Fu-chen, who's that with you? How long have you been here?"

"It's Fan Fu-hsi. We've just arrived."

"Go to the front door. I'll open it for you."

Silently, Miss Wang also got dressed. The excitement she felt the previous day returned again. Miss Li lighted the lamp. She turned to Miss Wang:

"You didn't sleep well last night, I'm afraid. Children are like that. Once they've set their mind on something, they'll do it come what may."

"Quite true," Miss Wang replied.

Miss Li went out of the room. Before long she came back with two children. In the lamplight the first thing Miss Li noticed was the children's wet shoes.

"The dew's so heavy, why did you stand outside so long?" she scolded.

The two children looked at each other, smiling shyly. Chang Fu-chen took a note from her pocket.

"This is from Little Yun, Miss Li."

The older teacher unfolded the note before the lamp and invited Miss Wang to read it with her. It said:

Dear Miss Li,

When I heard that you are going to leave us, I wanted to cry. But then I remembered your telling us: "Girls should overcome the habit of crying." I closed my eyes tight, to hold my tears back, but they came out themselves. It wasn't really me crying.

After taking the medicine you bought me, I felt almost perfectly well. But my father will not let me out. So I cannot see you off tomorrow morning. Please write us when you get there, and come back to see us often.

Miss Li, there's something I've been wondering if I can ask you. Father told me that before mother died, she wanted to find a godmother for me. But she didn't, and then she died. Father suggested you be my godmother. I didn't dare ask you before. Can someone's teacher also be her godmother? Please tell me.

Little Yun

Miss Li gently put the note down on the table and gazed long at the lamp.

Miss Wang was quietly turning over the pages of an arithmetic exercise book. On the first page there was a "3," on the second page a "4," and on the third page, "5." Around the big red "5," the owner of the exercise book had drawn, neat and fine, four proud little red flowers in water colour.

Folding the note, Miss Li said pensively, "Poor little girl. She lost her mother when she was very young. Ah, I was forgetful. I was a bit busy yesterday, but I should have gone to see her."

"Yes," said Miss Wang, closing the exercise book. "I'm sorry I've come so late."

"Miss Li," Chang Fu-chen said shyly. "If a teacher can be a godmother, I want you to be my godmother too, will you?"

"Yes, dear," Miss Li stroked the little girl's hair, smiling. "Of course." Glancing at her replacement, she said, "Miss Wang is very young, she can be your elder sister!"

Chang Fu-chen and Fan Fu-hsi looked at Miss Wang rather timidly. The young teacher forced a smile. She knew she was still a stranger to the children.

"Miss Li, what time is it now?" Fan Fu-hsi asked, Miss Li looked at her wrist watch.

"Four fifty."

"Let's go," Chang Fu-chên said. "They're all waiting."
"Who?" Miss Li asked in astonishment.
"Our class-mates."
"Where?"
"At the railway station."
"Heavens!" Miss Li hurriedly took out a comb from the drawer.
"All of them?"
"All except Little Yun," Chang Fu-chên said. "We decided last night. Before you leave today we want you to speak to us again."
Miss Li, combing her hair, said to Miss Wang, "You see what they're like!"
Touched, Miss Wang looked at the two children. When she first set foot in this primary school, she had tried to appear mature, taking large strides and putting on a grave countenance. She never dreamed that she would be so moved emotionally.
Miss Li had finished combing her hair and was now washing her hands and face.
"I think it's better not to disturb the other teachers, Miss Wang. When they get up, please say goodbye to them for me. These children! You see what they're like!"
"Wait, I'm going too," Miss Wang said.
"Why should you?" Miss Li stopped her. "The station is quite far. Stay here and rest. You didn't sleep well last night. When I was at your age, I liked nothing better than to sleep."
"I don't feel a bit tired," smiled Miss Wang. It was true. In spite of the fact that she had walked five miles yesterday and had not slept well last night, she felt fine.
"You are tired," Miss Li said, smiling. "You don't feel it yet because you're too keyed up. Just before I came to teach at this school, I was so excited I could hardly eat for days. You must compose yourself. The tenses you are the worse you'll teach."
"You're right. I am kind of excited."
"Miss Wang, come wash your face," Chang Fu-chên had brought some water for her. She thanked the little girl and hurriedly washed. She must see Miss Li off. Even though she had known her only half a day, she was as sorry to part with her as the children. Only she was not so easily given to tears. All the educational theories she had studied for years seemed to be embodied in Miss Li's ordinary speech and day-to-day life. Miss Wang was particularly convinced of this after attending Miss Li's class yesterday afternoon.
The teachers and the two children quietly left the school. The eastern sky was just turning a fish-belly grey. Chang Fu-chên and Fan Fu-hsi ran on ahead, eager to announce Miss Li's arrival to their classmates.



The School in the Forest by Huang Yung-yu

Miss Li, handbag in hand, walked alongside Miss Wang and talked about her students.

“. . . He's a bit spoiled at home. There are five in his family: father, mother and two elder sisters. He's the youngest. They give him whatever he wants. We couldn't be very strict with him at first, or he'd feel 'unjustly treated' and dislike coming to school. Children are children after all. With Liu Wen-yuan, the boy I questioned at class yesterday, it's just the opposite. His father's a carpenter and is constantly away from home. His stepmother doesn't like him. We have to make him feel happy at school. If you have time, it would be very good to visit him at home. Then there's Wang Feng-yun, the girl sitting at the second desk. She often suffers from headache. What a shame, a little girl like that, to have headaches at her age! Be careful not to let her work too hard. . . . I also hear that Li Pao-kuo worked as a fisherman during the summer vacation. I haven't asked him about it yet. . . .”

Wooo! . . .

“Is it the train?”

“That's the freight,” said Miss Li. “The passenger train will be coming in next.”

It was daybreak now. Bells were ringing on the farms. As they neared the railway station, Miss Wang was surprised to see no students there.

She noticed two children standing near the rails. They turned and started running, crossing the rails and passing several small buildings. The children were all waiting at the west side of the ticket office, standing in neat rows, all very quiet. Other people at the station wondered what was going on, and gathered round them.

The youngsters began to applaud as Miss Li excitedly walked towards them. Miss Wang followed, also very stirred.

“Attention!” shouted Fan Fu-hsi. The children stood straight and erect, their eyes on Miss Li. Miss Wang, biting her lips, went to stand behind them.

“Boys and girls,” Miss Li stood before them and said, “thank you for coming to see me off. You make me feel both happy and sad. Now I can't add anything to what I said yesterday. I hope you'll listen to Miss Wang. Study well and be good. . . .”

The children turned to look at Miss Wang. She blushed and felt a little dizzy. She didn't hear clearly what Miss Li was saying. Something about “. . . a normal school graduate . . . Miss Wang . . . new educational methods. . . .” She had recovered somewhat by the time Miss Li invited her to speak to the children. But she declined because she couldn't think of anything to say.

Clustering around Miss Li, each student presented her with a gift. Drawings, flowers, red dates, eggs, sweet melons, water melons, big pumpkins. . . . Miss Li didn't know what to do with them all.

"The water melon may be a nuisance to carry, but you can put the dates in your pocket," suggested one of the children. Another said, "I'll cut the melon open. You can eat it now."

Miss Wang looked at the gifts and was moved again. She wanted to give some memento to Miss Li too. But what?

A tall strong young man with a red band on his arm came out from the station office. "Here's your ticket, Miss Li."

Miss Wang knew that he had been Miss Li's pupil ten years before. Now he was the deputy station-master. He had helped take Miss Li's baggage to the station yesterday.

"Miss Li!" suddenly a middle-aged man came running up. "I was afraid you'd gone already. Did you receive Little Yun's letter? Why didn't you tell us earlier that you were going? Here," the man held out a small knit purse. "Little Yun made it herself. She's recovering, thanks to the medicine you bought her. She wanted to come, but I was afraid the wind. . . ."

By that time, the principal too came up on a bike.

"They're complaining about you back at the school," he said, as soon as his feet touched the ground. "Everyone got up early, to see you off. But when they went to your room, you were already gone."

"It's their fault," said Miss Li, pointing at the children fondly. "They came for me at four a.m."

"The staff asked me to make a request of you," the principal continued, smiling. "Pass on to us any new methods you learn in the provincial capital." Turning to Miss Wang, the principal asked, "Didn't you sleep well last night? At twelve, I saw the light still burning in your room."

It was now broad daylight. Red clouds floated long and distended in the east.

"Ah, the train is due," Miss Li looked at her wrist watch. "Boys and girls, I accept all your gifts with all my heart. As I have nothing to give you in return, let me present them back to you."

"Even if you wanted to take them with you, you won't be able to carry so much," the principal remarked with a smile.

Miss Wang and the principal accompanied Miss Li through the platform gate.

The children knew what to do. They rushed to stand outside the wall of evergreens fencing off the platform from the station yard.

"Please don't forget us," they called. "Write to us, Miss Li!"

Miss Li didn't see Miss Wang. "Remember! Pay attention to Miss Wang," she told the children.

The train arrived.

As Miss Li boarded the train, the children's voices suddenly changed: "Miss Li . . . Miss Li. . . ."

The teacher waved to them. Miss Wang suddenly felt like crying.

The train moved. Miss Li was going away.

The children ran alongside the train, shouting. . . .

Miss Wang ran with them. But after a few steps her legs felt weak, and she stopped. She gazed at the train, at the children. . . .

"That's how kids are," the principal sighed. "Every time a teacher leaves, they cry. Miss Li was here a long time. She taught this class from the first form to the fifth. Naturally they're very attached to her. . . . How are things going with you? Did Miss Li talk to you much last night? She has a rich fund of experience in education. It's just for this reason that she's being sent to the provincial education department to do research on primary school problems. . . . Well, you'd better wait for the children and go back with them. Get to know them—it's important."

The principal rode off on his bike. Miss Wang stood looking at the children.

They were still standing at the far end of the station, staring at the receding train. They looked so concerned.

She recalled what her mother had once said: "Country children are very crude." How unjust! She recalled also that, at the time of her graduation from the normal school, she had asked for a job in the city. Today she felt ashamed.

She was now a teacher. It frightened her a little. Fifty children, fifty hearts, were entrusted to her. Could she teach well? What if she disappoint them? They were so pure, so innocent, so brimming with emotion. . . .

Again she looked at the children. They were still standing there, watching the blue smoke in the far distance. She didn't know why, but suddenly, a strange thought possessed her. Maybe it was because of Miss Li, or the children, or because she was touched, and rather scared. She couldn't tell which. Maybe it was a combination of all these. Anyhow, at this very moment, before she had even started class, she was thinking of her leave-taking. What would it be like when it was her turn to go? The thought made her all weak inside.

A child waved to the other students and said something to them. They all turned and looked at Miss Wang. Then, the child waved again, and the others rubbed their eyes and came towards her. She walked to meet them.

When she came up to them, the little girl, Chang Fu-chen, spoke to her.

"Let's go home, Miss Wang."

The young teacher gave a glance that took in all the children. "All right," she said softly.

The red sun was shedding its splendid light. Dew-drops on the maize sparkled gloriously in the sunshine.

Miss Wang walked among the children. She looked at the ruddy faces around her. It seemed to her that the children were not walking beside her, but that she was carrying them on her shoulders. She walked slowly and steadily, not a bit like a girl who had just turned twenty.

Indeed, she was no longer just an ordinary girl but a woman, marching down life's road, shouldering the job of educating the younger generation. . . .



NOTES ON LITERATURE AND ART

INDIAN LITERATURE IN CHINA

CHI HSIEN-LIN

China and India have been friendly neighbours for two thousand years, and during all these centuries there has been a considerable cultural interflow between the two countries, especially in the field of literature.

In very early times Indian myths and fables were introduced into China by word of mouth, not in any written form. Traces of Indian folk-lore can be found in China as far back as the fourth century B.C. in the work of our first great poet, Chu Yuan. In his long poem *Riddles (Tien Wen)*, we read: "What is the power of the moon with a hare in its belly?" "Hare" is the translation of the original, *ku-tu*, although in recent years some scholars have claimed that *ku-tu* actually meant toad. Since the Han dynasty the traditional interpretation has been "hare" or "rabbit." Evidently the legend of a rabbit in the moon has existed in China for many centuries.

Actually this idea originated in India. When the *Rig-Veda* was written, more than one thousand years before Christ, the ancient Indians believed that a rabbit lived in the moon. We find evidence of this in Sanskrit, for many words connected with "moon" have the root *sasa* (rabbit). Thus *sasadhara* and *sasabhrt* mean literally "with the rabbit," while

sasalaksana and *sasalaksana* and *sasalaksman* mean "with the image of the rabbit."

Indian mythology has many stories which connect the rabbit with the moon, such as the three hundred and sixteenth tale in the Pali *Jataka*. The Chinese monk Yuan Tsang in the Tang dynasty also saw a stupa in the kingdom of Benares which commemorated the rabbit king who sacrificed himself for the worship of King Sakra.

Books written during the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.) in China also contain stories from India. The tale about the fox who profited by the tiger's might to awe the other beasts in the *Records of the Warring States** is one example.

During the Three Kingdoms period (220-280), when there was direct communication between China and India and Buddhism had already reached China, many Indian tales appeared in our literature. It will suffice to quote one example. The life of Tsao Chung, Prince of Teng, in the *History of the Three Kingdoms*, contains the following anecdote:

*See *Ancient Chinese Fables*, p. 38, Foreign Languages Press.

... At five he had the wisdom of a grown man. Sun Chuan had presented them with a huge elephant, and the emperor, his father, wanted to know what it weighed. He consulted his councillors, but no one could solve the problem until the prince suggested: "Put the elephant in a large boat and mark the water-line. Then put other goods whose weight you know in the boat until the same water-line is reached. That way we can find out the elephant's weight." The emperor was delighted, and they did as the prince had suggested.

This story of how Tsao Chung weighed the elephant is a favourite with Chinese children, but though we find it in old historical records, it actually comes from ancient India. It can be found in Book I of the *Samyuktaratnapitaka-Sutra* translated in the Northern Wei dynasty (424-534) and probably already reached China on the lips of travellers during the Late Han dynasty (25-220).

Between the third and the sixth centuries Indian legends and fables had an even greater influence on Chinese literature. During this period a new kind of writing appeared in China, namely anecdotes and short tales of the supernatural. Anyone acquainted with Indian literature can see that while some of these are traditional Chinese legends, there are many of Indian origin too. This was pointed out by Lu Hsun in his *Outline History of Chinese Fiction*.

These tales of supernatural wonders and ghosts contain certain elements quite new to China. Most striking, perhaps, are the accounts of hell and the ideas of retribution and transmi-

gration. It would be wrong, of course, to say that Chinese mythology before the advent of Buddhism had no conception of a nether region, but it was a vague one. The ancient Indians were the first to portray hell in concrete and vivid terms. The chief figure in the Chinese hell, King Yama, comes from Indian mythology.

Many ghost stories and fairy tales were written during this period. Examples are Hsun's *Records of Ghosts and Spirits*, Liu Yi-ching's *Records of Light and Dark* and Wang Yen's *Occurrences in the Dark*.^{*} This last named deals largely with divine retribution: devout Buddhists receive their reward, while disbelievers are punished. Some of these tales appear thoroughly Chinese, others seem half Indian and half Chinese, and yet others have retained a strong Indian flavour.

Here is one example of an Indian story transplanted to China in *Evidences of Marvels (Hsuan Yen Chi)*:

... A parrot went to a mountain where the birds and beasts showed it every mark of regard. But though the place was good, it felt constrained to move away before long. A few months later a great fire broke out on that mountain. The parrot saw it from the distance, dipped its feathers in a pool and flew there to sprinkle water. "Your intentions are good, but what do you hope to achieve?" asked the god. "Though I know I cannot save them, I used to stay in this mountain," replied the parrot. "The birds and beasts there treated

^{*}See *Chinese Literature*, No. 4, 1957, p. 89.

me like a brother, and I cannot bear to see them suffer." Then the god was touched, and put out the fire for the parrot.

One cannot say from the contents that this is not a Chinese story. However, the same story can be found in Book XIII of the *Samyuktaratnapitaka-Sutra* and in Book XXII of the *Samyuktavadana-Sutra*. A comparison of the different versions makes it clear that the Chinese rendering was copied from the *Samyuktavadana-Sutra*, though it is more concise. Indian stories came to China by many different ways: the legend about the rabbit in the moon was transmitted orally, the story about the parrot through writing.

During the Tang dynasty (618-907) the Indian influence helped to give rise to two new forms of literature — prose romances (*chuan chi*) and chantefables (*pien wen*).

Earlier accounts of the supernatural had all been very short ones, each dealing only with one single incident. In the Tang dynasty, however, we find works like Wang Tu's *The Ancient Mirror*, which has one main story and many subsidiary ones. This method of story-telling was new in China, but common in ancient India. The great epic *Mahabharata* is constructed in this manner. Its main theme is the fight between King Duryodhana and King Yuddhisthira, but this is linked with many independent tales. Similarly the Pali *Jataka*, which has the former life of Buddha as its main subject, links this with several hundred folk legends to form one whole. The well-known *Pancatantra* has as its central plot the story of the princes and their teacher; but each separate book introduces another main story,

interspersed with numerous folk tales. There are many such examples. It therefore appears very likely that the prose romances of the Tang dynasty owed their form to the Indian influence.

The same is true of the chantefables, in which prose and verse intermingle. Sometimes the narrative is in prose and the dialogue in verse; sometimes verse is used for emotional outbursts or descriptions, or to repeat and emphasize prose passages. This form is not of Chinese but of Indian origin. The *Mahavastu* and the *Lalitavistara* are among the many works written in this style. The *Pancatantra* is also in verse and prose.

China had access to this form through translations of Buddhist scriptures and through the ancient languages of Central Asia. Several versions of the tale of the carpenter and painter exist in Chinese translations of sutras, all of them in prose; but in ancient Tocharian the same story is in verse and prose. As ancient Tocharian served as a bridge between China and India, it may also have been instrumental in introducing this genre to China.

While the influence on literary forms was considerable, that on the content was even greater. Although in the main the Tang prose romances carried forward the earlier Chinese traditions, the Indian influence is everywhere apparent. In addition to stories about hell and retribution, we find many other new ideas from India, the most outstanding, perhaps, being the stories about the dragon king and his daughter.

Of course there were legends about dragons in ancient China, but the concept of a dragon was not clearly

defined. According to the well-known classical scholar, Wen Yi-to, the original Chinese dragon was a totem which may or may not be similar to a snake. But after Buddhism came to China, the "dragon" in Chinese translations of Buddhist works referred to the Sanskrit *naga* (snake). In other words, the dragon was transformed. In Buddhist scriptures as well as Tang prose romances, the dragon king is in fact the Sanskrit *nagaraja*.

Stories about the dragon king and his daughter were rather popular during the Tang dynasty. Liu Tsung-yuan wrote about a dragon that descended to the earth, and Shen Ya-chih wrote about the dragon king's daughter; but the most well-known tale is *The Dragon King's Daughter** by Li Chao-wei. All these stories, so Chinese in atmosphere, originated in India.

The Indian influence on chatefables was even stronger. Many chatefables deal with well-known Chinese figures like Wu Tzu-hsu, Meng Chiang Nu, Li Ling or Wang Chao-chun. But even more are based on Buddhist legends, and tell how Buddha attained sainthood and vanquished the devil, or relate some part of the scriptures. One Buddhist chatefable which had a great influence on later literature and folklore was that about Buddha's disciple Maudgalyayana, who, rescued his mother from hell. This saint has been popular in China for centuries, and even has a Chinese name. Many tales or dramas are based on his story.

The influence of Indian culture on Tang literature is also seen in the

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 2, 1954, p. 189.

stories about dreams like Li Kung-tso's *Governor of the Southern Tributary State** and Shen Chi-chi's *Tale of the Pillow*, or in tales about human spirits which leave the body or marriages between ghosts and mortals.

Many stories were taken over in their entirety from Indian literature, like the two hundred and eighty-seventh tale in the *Records of the Tai Ping Era (Tai Ping Kuang Chi)* compiled in the Sung dynasty. This tells how a youth got a magic axe from an old man. Anything he made with this axe could fly or walk. He made a single-pillared pavilion for a wealthy man, and climbed up at night to seduce the rich man's daughter. When her father found out, the young man escaped with the girl by making a pair of wooden storks which carried them up to heaven. The eighth tale in Book I of the *Pancatantra* is very likely the origin of this story.

After the Sung dynasty (960-1279) there were fewer cultural contacts between China and India, especially in the field of religion, though a good deal of trading was done between the two countries. Indian literature continued to exert its influence, though in a more indirect fashion.

The dramas of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), which were a new form of Chinese literature, were often based on Tang prose romances, as Ma Chih-yuan's drama based on the tale of a dream, Cheng Teh-hui's drama of the girl whose spirit left her, and *Liu Yi and the Dragon King's Daughter* by Shang Chung-hsien. In this respect, Indian literature helped to shape the Yuan drama.

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 2, 1954, p. 208.

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) the Chinese novel began to flourish. That great classic *The Pilgrimage to the West (Hsi Yu Chi)* owes much to Indian folk-lore. The chief character in this novel, the monkey Sun Wukung, undoubtedly had his roots in Chinese legend, but he shows traces of Indian influence too. He reminds us in many ways of the monkey king Hanuman in the Indian epic *Ramayana*, and his fights with angels and monsters, while unknown in ancient China, resemble many stories in Indian lore.

Sometimes whole Indian stories were taken over, as with this parable told by Liu Yuan-ching:

A man had a cat which he valued so highly that he named it Tiger. A friend said, "The tiger may be powerful, but it is not so wonderful as the dragon. Why not change its name to Dragon?" Somebody else said, "The dragon is more wonderful than the tiger, but when it goes up to heaven it has to float on clouds; so clouds must be superior to the dragon. You should change the name to Cloud." Another said, "Clouds may cover the sky, but the wind can blow them away; so the cloud is no match for the wind. Better change the name to Wind." Yet another said, "When a great wind gets up and blows against a wall, it cannot pass through and is powerless. Why not name your cat Wall?" Someone else said, "Though a wall is firm, a rat can make holes through it till the wall crumbles, and the wall is powerless against the rat. Why

not call it Rat?" Then his neighbour on the east laughed and exclaimed: "But a cat can catch rats. A cat is a cat — why should it lose its own identity?"

This story can be found in different parts of the world, but it is generally agreed that it originated in India; for it appears in the Sanskrit collection of tales called *Kathasaritsagara* and in the *Pancatantra*. It has travelled from India to virtually all parts of the world, including China and Japan.

The encroachment of Western colonialism on Asia gradually relegated China and India to a colonial or semi-colonial status, and retarded their cultural and economic development. For the time being there was a virtual end to the cultural interchange which had lasted for two thousand years.

Early in the twentieth century, when a movement for national liberation flared up in both countries, China and India resumed their traditional friendship on the basis of a mutual respect for the other's aspirations.

The eminent Buddhist monk and poet, Su Man-shu (Mandju), informed one of his friends in April 1909 that he had translated the poems of the Indian poetess Taru Dutt. In the same year he announced that he was going to translate Kalidasa's long poem *Meghaduta*, in collaboration with an Indian Sanskrit scholar. It is not known whether he completed this translation or not.

In 1924 the visit to China of the great Indian patriot and poet, Tagore, caused a considerable stir. Chinese newspapers and magazines carried articles on the poet's life, philosophy and works. *Story Monthly*, a leading literary journal at that time, had two special Tagore numbers (Volume XIV,

Nos. 9 and 10), while Volume XV, Number 4 was entitled *Welcome to Mr. Rabindranath Tagore!* Much of his work was translated into Chinese, including his volumes of poems *The Gardener, The Stray Birds* and *The Crescent Moon*, and his dramas *The Post Office, The Sacrifice, Chitra* and *The Cycle of Spring*. His influence on the Chinese literature of that time was phenomenal. Thus in *Story Monthly* Volume XIV, Number 9, the poet Hsu Chih-mo wrote: "At least eighty per cent of our new poets, not counting a few disciples of Tagore who imitate his style, are under his direct or indirect influence. It is amazing that a foreign poet should make such a widespread appeal."

Those familiar with the writing of that period will admit that this was no exaggeration. The most popular form of poetry in those days was the short philosophical lyric, modelled on Tagore's poems in *The Gardener, The Stray Birds* and *The Crescent Moon*.

Tagore remained to the end a staunch friend of China. Before the Second World War, at the opening of the Chinese college in Santiniketan, he expressed the utmost confidence in the future of the Chinese and Indian peoples: "Just as birds in the early morning before day breaks start singing to announce the sunrise, my heart is singing to herald the dawn of a great day—a great future is approaching. We must be prepared to welcome this new century."

Today the poet's dream has been realized.

Lu Hsun, the leading figure of our cultural renaissance and our greatest modern writer, had the highest respect for Indian literature. He made a careful survey of the literary value of the translated Buddhist scriptures.

In his *Outline History of Chinese Fiction*, he repeatedly points out the influence of Indian literature on Chinese literature. He noted that the *Life of Emperor Wu* contained elements of Indian Buddhism. He observed that Wu Chun's story about the scholar by the roadside and the goose cage,* though apparently a Chinese story, had appeared in Hsun's *Records of Ghosts and Spirits* with a foreign priest in the place of the Chinese scholar. Lu Hsun quoted this as an example of the way in which certain Indian tales assumed a Chinese dress. He also edited and reprinted the *Hundred Fables* of Sanghasena which had been translated into Chinese in the fifth century. Though considered a Buddhist scripture, these fables were actually folklore used by the Buddhists to illustrate their creed, and Lu Hsun appreciated their literary value. In the preface to this edition he wrote: "I have heard that ancient India was rich in fables, and that these were like a great forest or deep spring from which other countries drew refreshment and inspiration. This is fully apparent in the Chinese translations of the Buddhist scriptures."

From this we can see Lu Hsun's high estimation of Indian fables.

The poet Wen Yi-to, a well-known progressive and authority on Chinese classical literature, also made a careful study of Indian literature, and pointed out its influence on China. He also translated the poems of Sarojini Naidu, Indian patriot and poetess.

Hsu Ti-shan, a Sanskrit scholar and writer of short stories, loved Indian

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 4, 1957, p. 115.

literature. Many of his tales are based on Indian fables, and have a strong Indian flavour. He translated such myths as *The Descent of the Sun* and *A Digit of the Moon*. He also made a study of the Indian influence on Chinese literature, especially in the field of drama. His history of Indian literature, though not a large volume, is the first comprehensive history of its sort in Chinese and a useful reference book, for it starts with Vedic literature and goes on to modern times, mentioning all the chief writers and their works as well as the main schools.

One of our contemporary writers, Shen Tsung-wen, sometimes used Indian fables, most of them taken from translated Buddhist scriptures, as subjects for his stories. The sixteenth story in the first book of *Pancatantra* is a case in point. Two swans make friends with a tortoise. When a drought comes, they tell it to hang on to a stick with its mouth while they carry it to safety. But as they are carrying the tortoise over some water, it forgets its promise to keep quiet and starts to speak. And so it falls to its death. This ancient Indian fable, introduced to China through Buddhism, was made the subject of a story by Shen Tsung-wen, who added some local colour. All the stories but the first in his collection *Vignettes under the Moonlight* were inspired by Buddhist stories. And in his preface he wrote: "Though these moral tales are short, in a small space they pack some very moving episodes."

These are simply a few examples of the many ways in which Indian literature has influenced Chinese writers. Yet even from these few instances it is clear that the Indian

influence on our literature has been continuous down to the present day. We may compare it to a mighty river, passing sometimes through mountains, sometimes through dense forests; flowing now in broad daylight, now through subterranean channels; one moment turbulent, the next softly murmurous. So it has flowed on and on.

In 1947 India gained her independence, and in 1949 China was liberated. The fetters of colonialism which hampered us for so many years have been broken, and the obstacles so long in the way of cultural exchange have been removed. Our centuries-old friendship has gained a fresh lease of life on this new basis.

During the last eight years the governments and peoples of China and India have taken many steps to further their cultural interchange, the scope and significance of which are now on an unprecedented scale. Our writers have visited each other, given reports on cultural activities, exchanged opinions on literature, and published books and articles about their experiences and impressions. Many Indian poets have sung with incomparable fervour about China and the friendship between our peoples; nor have Chinese poets been backward in this respect. All this has done much to promote friendship and understanding.

But it is in the field of translation that most progress can be seen. During the last eight years Indian translators have introduced many new Chinese works to their countrymen, and we, for our part, have translated many Indian books. These translations are warmly welcomed by readers in both countries.

Chinese translations of Indian literature cover a very wide field. A selection from the *Mahabharata* has been directly translated from the Sanskrit. *Sakuntala*, the masterpiece of India's greatest poet Kalidasa, had been translated eight or nine times before liberation, but never from the Sanskrit. Now a new translation has been made from the original, and the drama has been produced on the Chinese stage — a noteworthy and unprecedented venture. Kalidasa's long lyrical poem, *Meghaduta*, has also been translated into Chinese. Other Indian classics translated into Chinese include Sudraka's *Mrcchakatika* and King Silāditya's *Nagananda*, both of which were translated from Sanskrit.

Some of Tagore's works have been translated again and other translations re-edited, like the *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon*, *My Childhood*, *The Sunken Boat*. The modern realist writer, Premchand, was little known in China before, but now a collection of his stories has been published, many of them translated from the Hindi. Other translations of modern Indian writers include: Sarat Chandra Chatterji's *The Unmarried Daughter*, short stories by Krishan Chandar and Khwaza Ahmad Abbas, Harin Chattopadhyaya's *I Sing of Man*, Bhabani

Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers*, Baren Basu's *Rangrut*, Manik Bannerji's *Boatmen of the Padma*, Balwant Gargi's *The First Ripple*, Mulik Raj Anand's *Coolie* and stories for children.

At present Chinese scholars are engaged in translating the two great Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, the *Pancatantra*, and the works of Tagore. But this is only a beginning. Our people's interest in Indian literature is daily increasing, while those who have visited India or had the opportunity in China to enjoy Indian literature, art, dancing or music, are filled with admiration. And Indian films like *Two Bighas of Land* and *The Vagabond* are extremely popular in China.

Our two peoples have been learning from each other's literature for more than two thousand years. If we compare this time-hallowed tradition to an ancient tree, we may say that innumerable blossoms have sprung from it; but this tree is by no means withered. Since China's liberation it has gained a new lease of life and grown young again. So we may look forward to more and more splendid blossoms from this tree. We face the future with this confidence.

CHENG YEN-CHIU—A GREAT EXPONENT OF PEKING OPERA

WEN SHIH-CHING

On March 9, Cheng Yen-chiu passed away. Mei Lan-fang, Hsun Huei-sheng, Shang Hsiao-yun and Cheng Yen-chiu were known as the "Big Four of Peking Opera," for they were the best exponents of women's roles. His death is a great loss to the stage.

Cheng Yen-chiu was born into a poor family in 1904. At the age of six, according to the custom of the time, he became a pupil of Jung Tieh-hsien, under whom he studied *kunchu* and Peking opera. At eleven he began to perform on the stage; at thirteen he left his teacher and started to make his own way, continuing to learn from such famous artists as Mei Lan-fang, Chen Teh-lin and Wang Yao-ching until he had mastered the essentials of his art.

Cheng Yen-chiu faithfully carried forward the best traditions of Peking opera, without imitating earlier actors mechanically or abiding rigidly by all the old rules. A comparison he once made between acting and calligraphy sheds light on his creative approach to the theatre.

The Chinese theatre is incomparably rich. It is up to us to study our heritage and on this basis create an art of our own. It is like learning calligraphy: you start by tracing each stroke, go on to copy from masters, and end by writing freely. Those who succeed become great calligraphers, but some never amount to much. The great calligraphers succeed because they

did not stop short at imitation but created new styles of their own. Others do less well because they are not creative. They can be copyists only, not calligraphers.

Peking opera is characterized by its emphasis on singing and stylized gestures. Cheng Yen-chiu was a superb singer. As a boy his voice was in no way remarkable, but he got up at dawn every day to exercise it in a quiet spot by the city wall, continuing these exercises all his life. In singing, he laid stress on clarity, beauty, evocativeness and emotion. By clarity he meant that the voice must carry well and the elocution must be so clear and accurate that each word could be heard distinctly. By beauty he meant an arresting and haunting quality; and this indeed he achieved, for his interpretations of different songs had great variety and subtlety. By evocativeness he meant that the artist should give the audience food for thought and his songs should leave a piquant flavour behind. By emotion he meant that the singer must convey his own passion to the audience, and he was a past master in this. He absorbed and adapted certain features of the music of local operas to create his own distinctive style, a style pre-eminently fitted to express the bitterness and frustration of oppressed women in feudal China. This is why his singing was popular all over the country, and this is the chief reason for his greatness.

In Peking opera, conventional gestures create a heightened illusion of reality; and these stylized dancing movements are inseparable from the singing. Cheng Yen-chiu's special contribution in this respect was his use of sleeve movements. The female roles in Peking opera wear garments with long, broad sleeves, from which hang white silk cuffs over a foot long; and these are turned to account to create graceful dancing movements. The average actor uses them merely to express certain simple actions or emotions: refusal, greeting, farewell, weeping, brushing off dust and so forth. To show helplessness or de-

Cheng Yen-chiu as the heroine in *Tears in the Wild Mountains*



spair, a woman may fling her cuffs up over her head. If she holds one sleeve between herself and another actor, she may be making an aside or eavesdropping. Cheng Yen-chiu went beyond these traditional gestures, however, to make his sleeve movements express more complex emotions. Thus his celebrated interpretation of the title role in *Liu Ying-chun* was admired among other things for the charming bashfulness he conveyed when Ying-chun lightly raised one sleeve to cover half her face. In *Meeting in the Mulberry Grove*, he played the part of Lo Fu whose husband at one point apologizes for having doubted her constancy. In most productions, the husband stands at his wife's left side and pats her shoulder; but before he can speak she makes a gesture of repulse with her sleeve, implying that she has no patience with him. Cheng Yen-chiu dealt with this situation more expressively by first lifting his right sleeve over his left shoulder to brush away the husband's hand, then half turning and sweeping that sleeve down towards the husband again. When the husband apologized a second time but his wife still refused to forgive him, instead of repeating the last movements Cheng Yen-chiu swept his left sleeve downwards and gently stamped his foot—a fine demonstration of anger. Sometimes in a single opera he used over two hundred different sleeve movements, and these gestures were not disjointed but merged and integrated with each other. By using these beautiful dancing movements to express complex thoughts and emotions, he created authentic heroines vibrant with life, who made an unforgettable impression on all who saw them.

Cheng Yen-chiu usually chose roles which showed the misery and determined resistance to tyranny of women in a feudal society. He brought out all that was fine and noble in these oppressed women, so that many of them were positive characters and these operas clearly reflected the spirit of the age. Thus through his art Cheng Yen-chiu gave vent to his anger against the old society and expressed his sympathy for the oppressed masses. *Tears in the Wild Mountains*, which he first performed in 1929, deals with the end of the Ming dynasty when a peasant fled into the mountains to escape taxation. The old man and his son were eaten by tigers while gathering herbs for medicine, the mother died of grief, the grandson was dragged off to do conscript labour, and only the daughter-in-law was left. Because officials kept coming to demand money, she lost her reason and fled to the mountain too; and when they followed her she killed herself. In this opera Cheng Yen-chiu attacked the cruel inhumanity of the old society and expressed the people's fervent longing for a settled life. Before she died the heroine sang:

*I had best die, so that I can pray
to Heaven*

*That our country may be blessed
evermore with peace.*

Another of his favourite roles was in *The Wife's Dream in Spring*, when he played the wife of a man who had fallen in battle, who dreamed that her husband had returned and had a vision of the horrors of war. The heroine sang:

*Rough fare is better than golden
seals of office;*

*May we be together and our love
endure for ever!*

This opera was a protest against the savagery of the Kuomintang rulers before the liberation who waged civil wars to win high position and wealth, regardless of the sufferings of the people.

Twenty years ago, when progressive views were dangerous, he produced operas like *The Gleaming Sword*, *The Girl Returns from the Huns*, *The Jade Mirror-stand*, *The Golden Lock* and *Ma Chao-yi*, which by their realism and their opposition to the feudal marriage system and other forms of injustice aided the democratic movement in China.

From these examples we can see that not only in dramatic technique did Cheng Yen-chiu introduce reforms, but that he expressed his progressive views in his interpretation of different roles. By these means he raised Peking opera to new heights.

Cheng Yen-chiu's brilliant achievements in the theatre were closely linked with his upstanding character and fine moral qualities. He never yielded to the forces of reaction. Soon after the Japanese occupied Peking, he was set upon one day by over a score of Japanese military police and Chinese gangsters. Cheng Yen-chiu resisted them and broke away; and from that day he refused to perform during the Japanese occupation. He supported himself on his small farm in the western suburbs of Peking, and helped the peasants nearby when they were in difficulties, taking a new name which meant "Braving the Frost." This illustrates his resolute character and his closeness to the people.

After suffering indignities and hardships at the hands of the foreign

imperialists and reactionary authorities, and deeply influenced by the Chinese people's struggle for liberation Cheng Yen-chiu gradually awakened politically. The great changes in China after the liberation and his own study of Marxism finally led him to give whole-hearted sup-

port to the revolution and to work more indefatigably than ever. In October 1957, he joined the Communist Party as a probationary member, and the day after his death the Party admitted him posthumously to full membership — a fitting tribute to this great and selfless artist.

CHINESE BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS

WANG CHING-HSIEN and HO YUNG

If we admit that in a general sense all drawings inspired by literature are illustrations, the scroll-paintings of the *Tale of the River Nymph* made in the fourth century are a notable example of this art. However, the art of illustration did not flourish and mature in China till much later, after the invention and perfection of wood-block printing.

Printing from wood-blocks began quite early in China, and had reached a high standard by the ninth century. The frontispiece of the *Diamond Sutra*, a Buddhist text printed in 868 and unearthed in Tunhuang is the earliest example of wood-block printing in the world. Its flowing yet forceful lines and the quality of the draughtsmanship show that here was imaginative work of a fairly skilled order. Frontispieces were the prototype of illustrations in general. They depicted the main theme of the book, and persisted as an art form for many centuries.

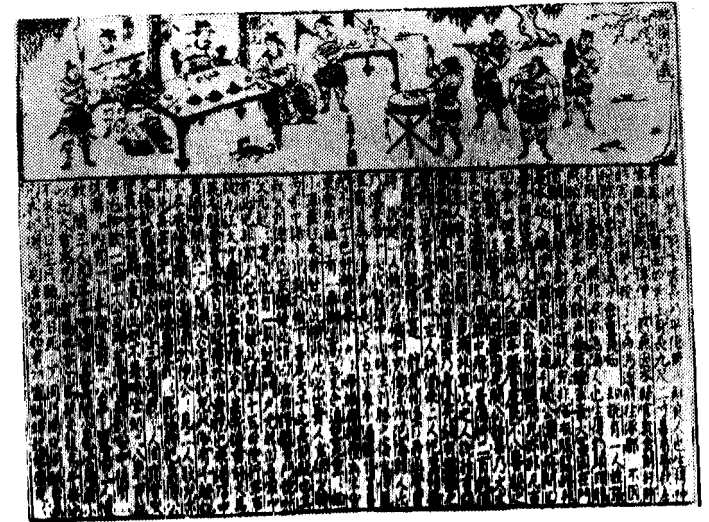
There was an expansion of China's feudal economy during the Sung dynasty (960-1279), and to meet the cultural needs of the rising urban

class much popular literature was published. As most of this was drama or fiction, it gave new impetus to the art of illustration, and many folk artists started making wood-engravings for printed books. The chief centres of printing at the time were Pienliang (modern Kaifeng), the Southern Sung capital, Hangchow, Chienan in Fukien, and Meishan in Szechuan. Religious books and works on such applied sciences as archaeology and architecture were also illustrated.

During the Southern Sung dynasty (1127-1279) books began to be printed with an illustration at the top of every page portraying different episodes in the text beneath. A typical example is the *Miracles of Saint Manjusri with Pictures* printed by the House of Chia at Chungan Bridge in Hangchow.

This type of illustration made more progress in the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) as we can see from the *Lavishly Illustrated Vernacular Stories* printed in Chienan, Fukien. Such a work has something in common with the later serial picture books. The artist

The Pledge of Brotherhood A page head illustration by an anonymous artist for a Yuan dynasty edition of the *Popular Romance of the Three Kingdoms*



made good use of a narrow space to illustrate different incidents in the story and bring out the relationship between the characters. There is a conciseness of statement about this work and a detailed yet dashing style of portraiture which testify to the artist's skill and show the special features of wood-engraving.

It was during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) that Chinese book illustrations reached maturity. Different styles and forms were evolved, more expressive and evocative than before. The main centres of the book trade at this time were Peking, Chienan, Nanking, and Hsinan in Anhwei. From the end of the fourteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century the Peking printers were supreme; but then the ascendancy passed to Nanking and Hsinan where many novels and dramas were published, practically all of them with illustrations.

These illustrations fall roughly into three categories, each with its distinctive method of expression. The first have illustrations at the top of the

page and the text below, following the tradition of the Sung and Yuan dynasties. Most of the books printed in Chienan and Peking at the beginning of the Ming dynasty are of this type. The engravers deal with the most important scenes in the story, throwing light on the characters and the plot by means of simple line drawings. The *Reprinted Peking Edition of the Popular Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, printed in Chienan, and the *Newly Printed Romance of the Western Chamber with Commentary and Wonderful Illustrations*, printed in Peking, are examples of this type.

The second are single or double-page illustrations, set together at the beginning of the book or scattered throughout it. During the Wan Li period (1573-1619) this sort of illustration was very popular, and many literary works published in Nanking, Soochow, Hangchow and Hsinan were of this description. The books printed in Nanking had clear and readily intelligible drawings of different char-

acters and episodes, as if they were scenes on a stage. The books printed in Hangchow started the practice of illustrating certain lines of poetry in the book in order to interpret the contents. Some of the illustrations in *The Tale of the Lute* are of this kind.

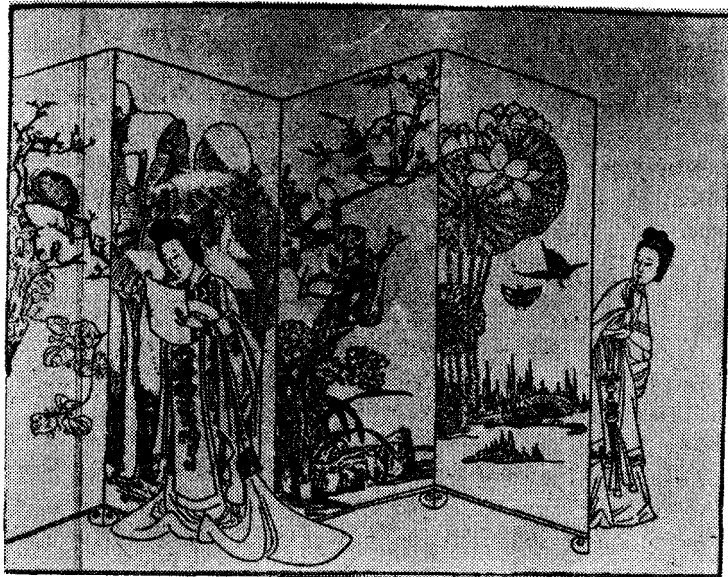
The third type are round illustrations, which became popular towards the end of the Ming dynasty. These pictures are smaller, but neat and meticulous.

The printing centres in the Ming dynasty had different styles of their own. Chienan followed the earlier tradition and produced relatively crude and simple works. Nanking, too, kept by and large to the old tradition, and used bold strokes and broad outlines with not many characters. Hsinan woodcuts were different again: delicate and with a fine attention to detail.

The highly decorative Ming illustrations aim at bringing out the content of the book. The human figures engraved at Nanking and Chienan are excellently proportioned and the com-

position of these woodcuts is aesthetically exciting. The later artists of Hsinan use flowing movements and balanced lines to induce a sense of satisfaction and harmony. Thus the illustrations for the *Romance of the Western Chamber Annotated* by Wang Feng-chou and *Li Cho-wu* show clear-cut figures against an ornate background, and this contrast creates a remarkably fine effect. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the engravers made great technical progress. Sometimes they added decorative borders to their illustrations, enhancing each picture and the beauty of the book as a whole.

There is considerable variety in modes of expression and selection of subject-matter in these Ming dynasty illustrations. The woodcuts by Huang Ying-tsu and others in the well-known novel *Chin Ping Mei* give a vivid picture in miniature of the life of that period. Now we see the interior of a house, now a street scene, a shop, or one corner of a room, all executed with a pleasing variety of style.



An illustration by the outstanding Ming dynasty wood-block artist, Chen Hung-shou, for the *Romance of the Western Chamber*

Further on we may be presented with a broad vista or panorama, while sometimes the artist breaks the conventions of time and space to show two scenes in different places together. The illustration of Ying-ying's farewell to her love in the *Romance of the Western Chamber Annotated and Fully Illustrated* makes use of the traditional horizontal scroll form and takes up six pages. It starts with Ying-ying and Chang, the scholar, taking leave of each other, and follows the text closely. The first page shows Ying-ying saying goodbye, heart-broken to lose her lover. The second builds up the idea of separation by presenting Chang's serving boy with the umbrella and luggage needed on the journey. The third adds to this atmosphere of parting with the carriers waiting impatiently in front. The fourth has another boy leading out Chang's horse, which makes the departure even more imminent. The fifth and sixth show woods in the evening mist with a swiftly flowing stream and a light breeze, exemplifying the scholar's state of mind as described in the book: "My tears flow with the flowing stream, my sad heart flies far away with the sullen clouds." This way of representing the lovers' parting holds the interest of the readers.

Chen Hung-shou, an outstanding wood-block artist of the Ming dynasty, made two sets of illustrations for the *Romance of the Western Chamber*. The volume edited by Chang Shen-chih has six of these, and they show the artist's unusual skill in composition and drawing. The fourth picture is of Ying-ying reading a love poem Chang, the scholar, has written to her. She has opened his letter eagerly and is poring over it. None of the furni-

ture in her room is depicted except one beautiful screen, before which Ying-ying is bending her head to read while her maid peeps out mischievously from behind it. The strongly contrasted personalities of the two girls are vividly expressed. Chen Hung-shou's work is most powerfully evocative. He ignores irrelevant detail to concentrate with consummate skill on his main theme, so that his characters stand out in strong relief and he achieves the appropriate atmosphere. In the fifth illustration, for instance, the scholar is asleep on a single pillow and mat in an otherwise bare room, and this brings home to us the unhappiness of the young man alone in the hostel on an autumn night, longing in his dreams for Ying-ying. Each picture in this series is treated differently, yet each is thoroughly expressive and significant.

A woodcut by Ku Yuan for Lu Hsun's story, *The New Year's Sacrifice*



The book illustrations at the beginning of the Ching dynasty (1644-1911) followed the Ming tradition, and there were famous artists like Pao Cheng-hsun who illustrated dramas. But because the Ching government banned many novels and dramas on the pretext of immorality and large numbers of books were confiscated and destroyed, the art of illustration suffered a setback. On the whole it did not come up to the Ming dynasty standard. By the end of the nineteenth century new printing techniques had been introduced to China, and such artists as Wu Yu-ju made lithographs. Still the art declined, falling short of the best traditions of the past.

The celebrated Lu Hsun in this century made a great contribution to the development of modern Chinese art. His revolutionary views on art were shown in his attitude towards book illustrations. "The chief aim of book illustrations is to make a book attractive and increase the readers' interest," he said. "However, as they should supplement the text too, they are also a form of propaganda." Lu Hsun always paid great attention to the cover and illustrations of his own magazines, and emphasized the importance of seeking out and developing China's traditional art forms. He introduced many famous engravers and book illustrators to China: the English artist Aubrey Beardsley, the Russian artist A. A. Agin, who illustrated Gogol's *Dead Souls*, and illustrators of such famous Soviet novels as Fedin's *City and Years*, Serafimovich's *Iron Stream* and Geratkov's *Cement*. By so doing he provided young Chinese artists with valuable material for study.

The establishment of the people's republic opened up vast new possibilities for Chinese art, including book illustration. A serious study is being made of our traditional woodcuts, and as the number of new publications increases each year so does that of illustrations. There are, for instance, no less than a hundred literary periodicals in China, nearly all of them illustrated by Chinese artists of the traditional school, oil-painters, wood-engravers or cartoonists. What is more, new artists are constantly appearing and have done outstanding work. There is great variety. Thus Lu Hsun's story *My Old Home* is illustrated by Szutu Chiao, a painter in oil and also in the traditional style, the folk tale *The Magic Brush** by Chang Kuang-yu, an expert on applied art, the children's story *Big Lin and Small Lin* by Hua Chun-wu, the cartoonist, modern fables and the folk poem *Ashma* by Huang Yung-yu, a woodcut artist, and the narrative poem *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang* by another woodcut artist, Chou Ling-chao.

Since liberation countless children's books have been written, and translations of many foreign books for children have been published. There are also many picture books and lavishly illustrated books for older children.

Book illustrations are an important part of our pictorial art, and much work remains to be done in this field—a more systematic study must be made of our traditional art, and the general standard of illustrations needs to be raised. But judging by the present healthy state of affairs, the future prospect is bright.

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 4, 1955.



Writers and Artists Forge Ahead

In China today there is tremendous activity in every field of endeavour, and our workers, peasants and soldiers in their eagerness to build socialism are displaying a spirit capable of moving mountains. Our writers and artists are also forging ahead and their main task at present is to reflect in literature and art our people's rapid advance and day-to-day heroism and so inspire them to even greater achievements.

On March 7, the secretariat of the Union of Chinese Writers called a meeting at which this question was discussed and an open letter to all writers in China was approved. The letter headed "Take a Big Leap Forward, Writers!" called on writers to do everything in their power to produce more and better works. It urged them to swing into action so effectively that the next five years would witness a rich harvest of socialist literature. It observed that the first step for most writers was to go deeper into life. This year from four to five hundred professional writers are going to farms and factories, army units, forests, fishing villages, pasture lands, the sites of irrigation works and regions inhabited by national minorities. Spare-time writers in all parts

of the country will also spend some time in the factories and villages. It is estimated that more than a thousand writers will be going to live with the people. The meeting expressed the hope that more short works would be written to reflect the great changes in society today more promptly and satisfy the demands of the reading public.

Writers, critics and translators in Peking and other major cities responded heartily to the call of the writers' union. Special meetings were convened to discuss the question of the "big leap forward." The novelists Mao Tun, Lao Sheh, Pa Chin, Chao Shu-li, Ping Hsin and Chang Tien-yi, the poet Tsang Ke-chia, and the playwrights Tien Han and Tsao Yu all drew up new plans for writing.

To help bring about a bumper harvest in socialist literature, translators and students of foreign literature decided to take a leaf out of the peasants' book and provide channels by which the beneficial "waters" of world literature could irrigate China's seedlings. Tsao Ching-hua, an expert on Soviet literature, will re-edit his former translations of such well-known Soviet novels as Wasilewska's *Rainbow*, Krimov's *The Tanker Der-*

bent and Fedin's *City and Years*; Li Chien-wu, a student of French literature, will complete his translation of Molière's comedies in 1959; Pien Chih-lin, the poet, plans to finish his book, *The Four Great Tragedies of Shakespeare*, next year, after which he will continue to translate Shakespeare's tragedies. Kao Chih, translator of Tolstoy's works, intends to finish the *Selected Works of Tolstoy* in five years. Many other translators have also drafted new plans of work.

Other workers in cultural fields are not lagging behind. Actors and

actresses plan to enlarge their repertory, give more performances in the cities and also spend at least one-fourth of their time in villages, factories, and with army units. Film workers and fine art workers have promised to produce more works reflecting the spirit of the time. Composers have altered their original plans, and will be writing much more music this year.

We have every reason to be confident that a new chapter is about to be written in the development of Chinese literature and art.

Maxim Gorky Commemorated

March 28 this year marked the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of Maxim Gorky, the founder of socialist realist literature. People from all circles in Peking gathered to commemorate the great writer and a similar gathering was held in Shanghai. At the commemoration in Peking, Ko Pao-chuan, deputy secretary-general of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association, gave a report entitled "Maxim Gorky — Great Friend of the Chinese People." In Shanghai, the literary critic Yeh Yi-chun spoke on "Gorky's Path in Literature and His Influence on Chinese Writing." Both reports pointed out the affection felt for Gorky in China. We have always regarded Gorky as our particular friend not only because his works, abounding in revolutionary fervour, have long educated our people and inspired us to take part in heroic revolutionary struggles but also because Gorky, from his childhood, showed a special concern and sympathy for the

Chinese people's struggle for national liberation. After the 1911 Revolution Gorky wrote to Dr. Sun Yat-sen, "We are brothers in spirit and comrades in our purpose." Gorky expressed even greater sympathy for the Chinese people's resistance to Japanese imperialism and the struggles of China's revolutionary writers.

On March 28, exhibitions opened in the Peking Library and Shanghai Library to display Gorky's works, Chinese translations of his books and many pictures of his life. In the evening another meeting in the Shanghai Cultural Palace to pay tribute to the great writer was attended by more than a thousand young workers who are interested in literature. To commemorate Gorky, the People's Literature Publishing House has printed a Chinese translation of his *Matvei Kojemiakin* and is also publishing his *Essays on Literature*, *Foma Gordeyev* and Fadeyev's memoir of Gorky.

A Recent Issue of the *Theatre*

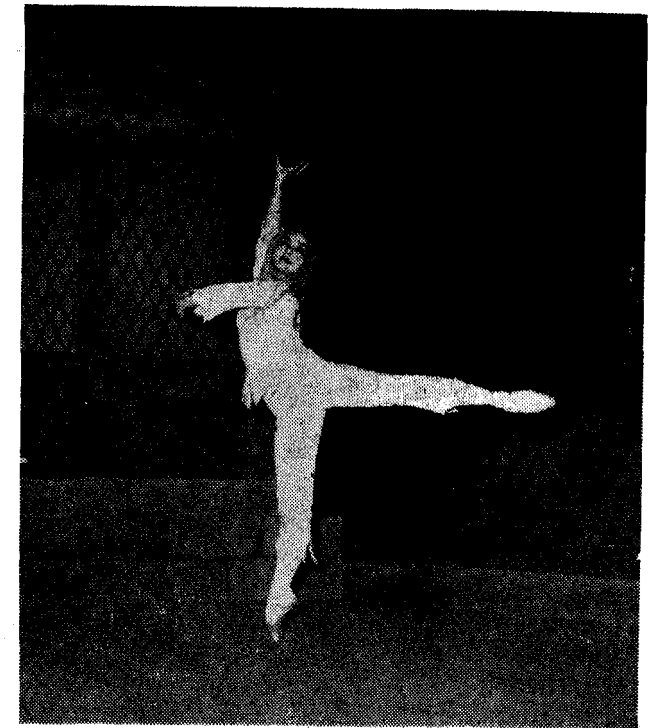
March and April this year were a busy season for the theatre world in Peking, as many exciting events happened to coincide during this time. The sixth number of *Theatre* gives us a picture of some of these activities.

This year is the seven hundredth anniversary of the dramatic career of the thirteenth-century dramatist Kuan Han-ching, one of the great men of letters whom the World Peace Council has chosen to commemorate. The *Theatre* has an article about his age, life and writing, which also analyses some of his best-known plays — *Snow in Midsummer*, *Riverside Pavilion*, *Rescued by a Coquette*, *The Cunning Maid*, *Prayer to the Moon* and *The Butterfly Dream* — to give its readers a better understanding of this brilliant Yuan dynasty dramatist.

The Mikiko Matsuyama Ballet Troupe which arrived in Peking on March 9 and gave performances for eleven days, brought new programmes to audiences in the capital. Their *The White-Haired Girl*, based on the well-known Chinese opera, was most enthusiastically received. This is the first time a ballet has been made of this opera, and it is undoubtedly a remarkable success. At the same time the National Peking Opera Theatre

and the Yenming Peking Opera Company both produced *The White-Haired Girl* in a bold attempt to use traditional art forms to present modern themes; and their productions also aroused great interest. On March 21, a gathering in honour of the Mikiko Matsuyama Ballet Troupe was held by Peking writers and artists. This occasion witnessed the meeting between the three actresses currently playing the White-Haired Girl, Wang Kun who took this part in the first production at Yen-an, and Wang Fuching of the Central Experimental Opera Theatre who interpreted this role last year in Peking. The *Theatre*

Mikiko Matsuyama in the title role of *The White-Haired Girl*





The Five "White-Haired Girls" (left to right) Chao Yen-hsia of the Yenming Peking Opera Company, Wang Kun, Mikiko Matsuyama, Tu Chin-fang of the National Peking Opera Theatre and Wang Fu-ching

published a picture of these five artists together, and a poem by Kuo Mo-jo on the meeting of these five White-Haired Girls. It also carried a review by the dramatist Tien Han, an article by Ho Ching-chih, one of the co-authors of the opera, and a poem by Sha Ou praising the Japanese ballet. In an inscription she wrote for *Theatre*, Mikiko Matsuyama said that while performing in China her troupe had felt completely at home, and she hoped they would be able to pay a second visit later.

The Tea-Shop, a new play by the well-known writer Lao Sheh, was also produced for the first time in Peking

in March. This three-act play covers fifty years, dealing with the end of the Ching dynasty, the period just after the 1911 Revolution and that following the Japanese surrender in 1945. This issue of *Theatre* publishes a review of the opening performance of this play, and Lao Sheh's own impressions of *The Tea-Shop* in rehearsal.

There is also an article on operatic gestures and movements by the late Peking opera artist, Cheng Yen-chiu.

The articles about these productions and the illustrations make this an outstanding number of the *Theatre*.

Paul Robeson's Sixtieth Birthday

April 9 this year was the sixtieth birthday of the great singer Paul Robeson, one of the leaders of the world peace movement. Though dark clouds hung over the United States on his birthday, it was joyfully celebrated in all parts of the world from

Moscow to Peking, from New Delhi to Rome, from London to New York. More than a thousand writers, artists and representatives of other circles gathered in Peking to pay their tribute to this great artist and wish him a long life. Kuo Mo-jo, Chair-

man of the Association of Chinese Writers and Artists, delivered the opening speech; Chao Feng of the standing committee of the Union of Chinese Musicians made a report entitled: "Peace Fighter, Incomparable Artist, Great American Citizen and Friend of China." Then followed speeches by two friends of Robeson: Chien Chun-jui, Vice-minister of the Ministry of Culture, and Liu Liang-mo, Vice-chairman of the All-China Youth Federation. Wu Hsueh, director of the Chinese Youth Art Theatre, recited a poem written by the poet Yuan Shui-pai for the occasion: *A Star Shines in the Western Sky*. A choir of the People's Liberation Army

sang the *Song of Peace* by Chou Weichih and Shih Lo-meng; and finally two films were shown: the documentary *Bridge Across the Atlantic* and the feature film *The Proud Valley* in which Robeson has the leading role.

Chao Feng and Chien Chun-jui pointed out that although Paul Robeson has never been to China, he has deep friendship for the Chinese people, can sing many Chinese songs and knows Chinese. He followed our War of Liberation with great concern and it was he who introduced to America the *March of the Volunteers* which was widely sung during the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression and after liberation was cho-



Paul Robeson a woodcut by Huang Yung-yu

sen to be the Chinese national anthem. This song, which he sings in Chinese, is included in his *Songs of Peace*. Paul Robeson also sings Chinese folk songs like the *Fengyang Flower Drum Ballad*, and has made recordings of a number of these.

Paul Robeson once said that if he had wings he would fly to far-away China, for he has so much to say to the Chinese people whose liberation has brought mankind immense strength and the conviction that truth will conquer lies. The Chinese people will always treasure this great friendship. And we are confident that the day Paul Robeson hoped for will certainly come.

ARTISTS IN THIS NUMBER

The two pictures *Ducks on the Pond* and *Butterflies and Crab-apple Blossoms* by anonymous artists of the Sung dynasty (960-1279) are representative of an important branch of Sung painting, "small art pieces" as they were called at the time, mostly used as decorations on fans, screens and window-panes. The Sung dynasty was a time of marked progress and much new creation in Chinese traditional painting — richer content, more clarity of theme, variation in arrangement, mature handling, harmony in colour and expressiveness in depicting people.

Chang Kuang-yu, whose illustrations for *The Peacock Maiden* appear in this number, comes from Wuhsi, Chekiang Province, and is fifty-seven this year. A cartoonist and an accomplished artist in the field of decora-

tive art, he is a professor in the Central Institute of Applied Arts. The illustration reproduced here is representative of his highly decorative style, rich in imagination, and highly skilled in the use of colour and the handling of figures and general composition. He has the rare ability of expressing life in simple line and planes.

Huang Yung-yu, a woodcut artist with a distinctive style all of his own, is now thirty-four and comes from the minority people Tuchia in Hunan Province. Often employing the utmost economy of line, he nevertheless manages to convey a remarkable insight into human moods under varying circumstances. *The School in the Forest* reproduced in this number is one of his recent works.

PICTURE-STORY BOOKS

RECONNAISSANCE ACROSS THE YANGTSE

This picture-story book describes how the Chinese People's Liberation Army prepared to cross the Yangtse River in the spring of 1949, in its southward drive to liberate the whole of China. On the eve of the crossing, a group of scouts were sent across the river. With the help of the guerrillas on the south bank, they were able to penetrate the strategic defences of the Kuomintang and to obtain important information which they reported to their command north of the river. Thus, they contributed greatly towards the victorious crossing of the Yangtse River by the People's Liberation Army.

THE LITTLE WHITE HEN

This is a picture-story book for children, about a lively, little Chinese girl who had two hens. The first one was stolen and eaten by Kuomintang soldiers. The second white hen fell into the hands of the People's Liberation Army; the story shows how the little girl came back and found her hen safe and sound.

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arts and proficient with all weapons. His intelligence was astonishing and his strength excelled all other men. One day he peered into a well and by the dim light beheld a strange object in it. The wise old men said that the great King Bahmo had left a wonderful treasure there which men for many generations had tried in vain to obtain. Chaushutun ordered the well be drained and when this was done he descended into the well to examine it more closely. The object was a magic bow. So powerful was it that he who owned it could defeat an entire enemy army. No one but Chaushutun had the strength to bend the huge bow; he could draw it taut till it was as round as the full moon, and every arrow from it hit the target clean and sure. One day as an evil bird of prodigious size was arrogantly wheeling overhead in the clouds, a black fish clasped in its beak, an arrow from Chaushutun's bow pierced it. The fish fell from its beak into a river, and the bird, mortally wounded, plunged down into the forests below.

Sixteen times the breezes of autumn fanned the paddy-fields into a swaying, burning gold. Chaushutun was now a brave, handsome lad, with deep clear eyes that sparkled with life. His face was more lovely than the legendary Dewawo's and his voice was like the chiming of bells, soft and musical to the ear. When the maidens saw him their mouths and eyes opened wide in admiration and they longed to toss the embroidered pouch of courtship at him, offer him the slit bamboo stool reserved for their dear ones, and give him love nuts. His parents grew increasingly concerned about his marriage, and time and again urged him to marry a girl of noble birth. The treacherous minister, Mahashena, eager to increase his influence over the throne, offered his daughter. But it was of no use. Of the many beautiful but empty-headed daughters of nobles not one could win Chaushutun's heart. His one wish was to find himself a girl as capable as she was beautiful, who could be his faithful companion for life.

One day, with his magic bow and sword, and mounted on his wonder horse, Chaushutun rode away, over vast fields, over range after range of mountains and through thick forests, to search for a girl after his heart. On the way he fell in with an old hunter named Gohagen and the two became firm friends. Together they hunted the wild boar and the flame-speckled deer, and shared the same fire. As they ate their fill of savoury venison they talked of many interesting things. One of the stories Gohagen told the prince was this:

Not many years ago, Bahna, the God of Waters, with a magic weapon captured the son of Bahun, king of all fish-eating birds. In revenge the bird king caught the God of Waters while he was visiting the ocean's surface in the guise of a black fish. And just as the bird king was exulting high in the skies an arrow suddenly struck him, making him release the