

CHINESE LITERATURE

Monthly



March

3

1959

Front Cover: *North of the Hill and South*
a woodcut by Chao Jui-chun

South of the hill in Red Plum Village he,
North of the hill in Peach Grove Valley she;
For him she sang her songs so sweet and
clear,
But the hill blocked them and he could not
hear;
For him she gathered flowers blooming nigh,
She crossed the hills and people wondered
why.
This year a big new co-op was begun,
North of the hill and south they work as
one;
Early and late they work and never part,
And could express the true love in their
heart!

— a song of the Chuang nationality

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LAO SHEH

The Little Story

Recently, the "little story" has developed to a large extent and has been warmly received by many readers in China. This is not hard to understand. The year 1958 witnessed a great leap forward: steel production increased by one hundred per cent, grain output more than doubled, and tremendous harvests have been reaped on every production front. Our people, with boundless drive and energy, are working enthusiastically to substitute prosperity for poverty and to change our country into a paradise on earth. It is true, everyone has been busy: but each knows in his heart why and for whom he is working so busily.

With the whole nation leaping forward at a flying pace, it is only natural that the little story should flourish. Concise and deft, it is able to grasp the latest developments and portray them promptly. All of our little stories depict people who are devoting themselves to production and construction, their determination and boldness in overcoming difficulties and their eagerness to realize at the earliest possible time the noble ideal of creating a land of happi-

Lao Sheh is a well-known novelist and playwright. He is also vice-chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers. One of his stories, *Crescent Moon* appeared in *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1957.

ness — in this case, including also people from past revolutionary struggles as those in *Seven Matches* and *Into the Mountains* in the following selection.

Brief and simple in plot, the little story succeeds in portraying the spirit and the true face of the ordinary people. The characters in the stories win the heart of their readers who, in turn, are encouraged and inspired to strive for progress. People like Mr. Dulles, who knows nothing about China and things Chinese, probably will claim that these stories are instruments of "forced labour"! They can claim anything they like. The Chinese people and their writers believe in themselves and pay no attention to the ravings of Mr. Dulles and his ilk.

The authors of these little stories are mostly new to the art of writing. Living amongst the people, and writing about things they find moving and interesting, they do not draw their material out of thin air but depict real people and true incidents. Their stories are something like reportage, and yet not quite. Although valuing truthfulness, the writers do not overlook artistic expression. Because they know the necessity of artistic handling, instead of elaborating on a story, they sometimes compress a complex plot into a very brief compass.

Who are the readers of the little stories in China? They are workers, peasants, soldiers, students and administrative personnel. Culturally, they are people who have developed new interests. They are glad to spend a couple of minutes a day reading one or two stories about outstanding persons in the great leap forward. This, again, is not something Mr. Dulles cares to know. He would like to see China remain in the time of Confucius when the people were illiterate and ignorant. But contrary to his wish, illiteracy has been greatly reduced in China and our workers, peasants and soldiers can now read literary works.

What's more, they not only read literature, but take part in writing it. In 1958, Chinese workers, peasants and soldiers wrote tens of thousands of poems and songs, some of very high quality. The poems are mostly written on outside walls to accompany large murals. China has re-

cently harvested rich crops in poems and paintings as well as in grain and steel. Under the circumstances, it is not difficult to see why the Chinese people are so interested in little stories.

This form of writing first appeared in China in ancient times. Today's new crop of stories may not compare in artistic technique with the old masterpieces yet, but if we bear in mind that this form began its renaissance and won its popularity during the great leap forward, we can readily see a brilliant future for it. It will soon become a literary vanguard, arousing the people's enthusiasm. Our new cultured workers, peasants and soldiers will themselves also write such stories.

I do not mean to say that the little story will replace the longer story or even the novel which I have no intention of disparaging. But we also urgently need short, concise writings portraying the new and colourful scenes in the drama of our people's leap forward. The little story is a lovely flower which is blooming luxuriantly in our garden of literature.

TU PENG-CHENG

Lingkuan Gorge

The snow, already more than half a foot deep, obliterated the line between earth and sky behind a hazy white curtain. I had been following the path of the future railway for forty kilometres. Although I could hear the roar of machinery further back in the hills, I had seen neither work sites nor workers.

Entering Lingkuan Gorge, my irritation increased. Even in clear weather, in this gorge the sun never shone. It didn't matter where you looked up along the twisting course—the most you could see of the sky was a patch no bigger than the palm of your hand. Now it was dusk, and the swirling snowflakes and the gale made every step a struggle.

Construction in the gorge was very busy. Everywhere people were at work. Generators, cement-mixers, air compressors shook the ground. Hundreds of light bulbs gleamed dim and yellow. Electric wires, criss-crossing like a giant spider web, were scarcely visible, but I could see the overhead cables and their pulley cars sliding back and forth loaded with materials.

Hungry, cold, I tripped and fell, scraping my hands. Enough! I'd find some place under a cliff, out of the wind, and rest a few hours. If I reached the materials depot tomorrow morning by ten o'clock, that still wouldn't be

too late. Stumbling around in the dark like this, I was liable to fall into some deep ravine, and that would be the end of this Materials Department chief. I'd have to be put on the "used up" list!

I noticed a path leading to a cave in the cliffside. A door curtain hanging in the entrance way showed that the cave was undoubtedly occupied by workers. Grasping branches along the steep path, I hauled myself up to the door and entered.

Strange! Seated on a small stool in the doorway was a little boy, seven or eight years old, elbows on his knees, supporting his face in his hands. His cheeks were red with cold. He had been peering at the opposite cliffside through a rent in the curtain. He glanced at me briefly as I came in, then went back to his observation.

The cave was large, but quite warm. It had a stove and eating utensils. On the wall above a bed was a coloured New-Year picture of "Chubby Children Pulling the Turnip." All the walls had been papered with old newspapers, now blackened by smoke from the stove.

"Why isn't anybody home?" I asked, shaking the snow from my coat and hat.

The little boy turned his head. His eyes flashed. "Aren't I anybody, uncle?" He rose and walked towards me, his hands behind his back, his chest extended, as if to say: Not only am I somebody, I'm a very grown-up somebody!

I cupped his round little face in my hands. "You're pretty sharp, young imp!"

He pushed my hands aside. Doubling up his fists, he cocked his head to one side and demanded: "Who are you calling imp! I have a name!" Pointing at the baby girl asleep on the bed, he informed me: "Her name is Pao-cheng, mine is Cheng-yu."



No doubt about it. These kids were like thousands of others I had met, born and raised on construction sites. The workers liked to name their children after the projects where they were born. Cheng-yu probably had first seen the light of day on the railway project between Chengtu and Chungking, also known as Yu. His baby sister Pao-cheng very likely had been born right here — the site of the future Paochi-Chengtuo Railway.

I sat by the stove, smoking and rubbing the drying mud from my hands.

Cheng-yu crawled on to my lap and looked into my eyes. "Is it going to snow tomorrow, uncle?"

I pressed his icy red little nose. "As soon as we get our telephone line connected up with Heaven, I'll ask for you. . . ."

Angrily, he leaped down and stood a metre away, scowling at me. "Quit your kidding! You've got a newspaper in your pocket. Why don't you look at the weather report?"

He resumed his seat in the doorway, clamped his elbows on his knees, rested his face in his hands, and peered out through the rent in the curtain. When I asked him where

the kettle was, he ignored me. I certainly was sorry I had offended my small host!

"Why do you want to know about the snow, Cheng-yu?" I asked him. "Is it because you can't go out and play when it's snowing?"

He didn't even bother to look at me. "Papa says if it's still snowing tomorrow, we'll have to quit work."

"What does your pa do?"

"He opens up mountains!" the child replied proudly.

"Where?"

Cheng-yu pointed with pursed lips at the work site opposite.



I looked. All I could see was a searchlight beam, shining through the drifting snowflakes straight up into the heavens. In its light I could vaguely discern a few dozen men, who seemed pasted to the side of the towering cliff, drilling holes for dynamite charges. The holes were like the steps of a ladder to the sky.

"How can you tell which one is your father at this distance?" I asked.

"I can't see him plainly, but pa says he can see me. He says all he has to do is turn around. I often sit here so he can see me."

Ah, so that was it!

The icy snow melted from my boots. My numbed legs, thawing out, ached painfully. I stamped to help the circulation.

Cheng-yu waved his hand warningly. I understood. He was afraid I'd wake his baby sister.

"You really take good care of sister," I commended.

"Mama says my job is to look after her. When mama comes home, I can knock off."

"So. You're on the job every day?" I hugged him to me. "What does mama do?"

He pointed to the road below the cave.

I could see a person standing by a telephone pole beside the road. Covered with snow, she looked like a white stone image. Apparently she was directing traffic. The road, not very wide, had been blasted through the rock. Ordinarily, carts, mules, donkeys, people . . . no doubt streamed in both directions along that road twenty-four hours a day. Someone had to keep the traffic in order.

Today, because of the big snow, there weren't many people or vehicles on the road. She could very well have spent the day at home. But there she stood, and there she would remain, three months, five months, or three years, five years, if need be. Perhaps, from time to time, she raised her head to gaze up at her child, or at her husband — that husband scaling the cliffs between the mountains and the sky. When he paused to wipe the sweat from his brow, could he see the determined figure of his

wife, or the tiny image of his little boy? Even though it was a snowy, windy night, even though the worker, his wife and children couldn't see one another clearly, I was sure they could feel a mutual loving encouragement and sense that each was looking forward to the moment of family reunion.

I glanced at Cheng-yu. The child had placed his hands in his sleeves and pulled his neck into his collar. He kept dozing off.

"You're liable to catch a chill. Better get into bed and go to sleep."

He looked at me dreamily for a moment, probably thinking that his parents had returned. When he realized who I was, he shook his head violently. "No. I won't!"

"Why not?"

He rubbed his eyes with his fists. "Papa and mama say a man should never leave his post."

I hugged him tightly and pressed my cheek against his. Then I rose, buttoned my coat, pulled my hat down firmly, left the cave, and walked down the path. Following the road that had been blasted through the rock, I pushed on. A job was waiting for me. I wanted to reach my destination without any further delay.

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Lin Wan-tsui*

MIEN YING

A Comedy of Shoes

All the young men and women in the village clamoured to take part in building the county hydro-electric power station, but only four were permitted to go. They were Liu-wang, Chen-ching, the girl Chiu-fen and myself. We three boys moved stones and lived at the work site. Chiu-fen, who drove a cart that brought bricks from the kiln in our village to the work site, lived at home. All four of us were elected first-class model workers. But some people said we were not qualified because we did not cooperate well though we worked hard.

They must have meant that quarrel we had with Chiu-fen. Well, this was the story.

Shoes get worn out easily when you push carts over rubble. Within a fortnight our three pairs of shoes all had holes. At the break we took them off and placed them neatly beside the road. When Chiu-fen came on her cart she laughed.

"So neatly arranged! Are they on exhibit?"

Liu-wang's shoes were the worst. Chiu-fen raised one up with the handle of her whip, saying, "These are awful. Why don't you throw them into the river and let the little fish sail in them as boats?"

Liu-wang tried to snatch his shoe. Chiu-fen raised her arm higher. He caught hold of the whip handle and shook it. The shoe dropped to the ground.



"Don't you know that I have no mother or anyone to make shoes for me?" he glared at her.

Chiu-fen laughed, her beautiful eyes sparkling.

"Please mend them for us," pleaded Liu-wang.

When she came again from our village with bricks she brought needles and thread to mend our shoes. We sat down around her happily. As soon as a shoe was mended the owner immediately put it on. Chen-ching and I had our shoes on already. Chiu-fen left the most worn-out shoes last.

"The soles wore through in two months," said Liu-wang, excitedly watching her work on them.

But Chiu-fen, after looking them over, put them down again. She collected her needles and thread and went away without a word.

"She refused to mend them!" Liu-wang jumped up, blood rushing to his face.

"Why won't she mend them for you, Brother Liu?" asked Chen-ching. He was always blunt.

Liu-wang didn't say a word. Nor did his furious expression change. He thought Chiu-fen despised him.

"My mother is making a pair of shoes for me. I'll give them to you when they're finished," I said to console him.

"I'll have a pair of shoes soon too. You may have them," said Chen-ching.

Liu-wang suddenly turned and walked to the pile of stones and began loading the cart. The stones banged noisily against the iron fitting of the cart. He worked silently, angrily.

"You're in a bad mood," I teased him, smiling.

"Not at all."

"Why don't you say anything?"

"Don't feel like it."

He quickened his pace till he was actually racing. He had pushed three cartloads of stones to my two. He wouldn't let me catch up. By the time I finished pushing my third load, he was on his fifth.

It had been easy enough to stir him up, but I couldn't calm him down.

Chen-ching and I still put our shoes on the left side of the road at the break. But since that day Liu-wang shifted his to the right. When Chiu-fen came by after unloading her cart on the third day and found his shoes lying there alone, she kicked them into the river.

"Let the little fish use them for sailboats!" she said. The two shoes floated on the water a while, then finally sank.

Liu-wang was furious, his eyes bulging. The storm is coming, I thought. His lips quivered, but he said not a word.

But Chen-ching could take no more. He went up and pulled hard at the reins of the mule which was grazing by the roadside.

I was also furious. I turned so that I wouldn't have to look at her. Suddenly she threw a bundle at me and said, "I have brought shoes for you and Chen-ching."

"You don't have to bring any damned shoes for us. We can work quite well in our bare feet," I said.

"Let her take them back. I won't wear any shoes from her," said Chen-ching.

Chiu-fen was stunned. Her face reddened. But she quickly regained her calm. A smile, which she tried hard to hide, tugged at the corners of her mouth.

Suddenly Chen-ching kicked our four old shoes into the river. He shouted straight into her face: "We won't wear the shoes you mended!"

She turned abruptly and drove away, striking the flanks of the mule with the handle of her whip. Before she had gone far, she burst into tears.

We were still enraged. Chen-ching pulled a long face. Liu-wang scowled and I began to untie the wrapper angrily. What I found inside surprised me. I quickly raised my head. I could still see the dust raised by Chiu-fen's cart. Holding the bundle, I ran after her.

"Catch her. Make her take them back. I'm not going to wear the shoes she brought," I heard Chen-ching shouting.

When Chiu-fen discovered that I was chasing after her, she cracked her whip and drove even faster. But she turned and looked at me sorrowfully. "I worked all night for two nights on those shoes and yet. . . ."

I couldn't catch her. I stopped, gazing at her racing cart. I was panting hard, but I felt much better.

I took the bundle back. The two stubborn boys were already pushing their carts in their bare feet. It was plain that they would not wear the shoes Chiu-fen brought even if their feet were torn by the stones.

"Why do you bring them back?" asked Chen-ching angrily. I opened the wrapper and produced three pairs of shoes.

"Why three pairs?" he was surprised.

I handed him the shoes.

"Each pair is quite different from the other," he observed.

I laughed. Liu-wang, listening to our talk, did not stir.

"Go to the river and wash your feet, Liu-wang," I called. He looked at me questioningly.

"See whether they fit you." I dragged him to the river. After he had washed his feet, I handed him a pair of big strong shoes.

"Oh, Chiu-fen has made them for him." Chen-ching understood the whole thing at last. "I wouldn't believe

she was kicking your shoes into the river just to hear the splash!"

"You should have seen how red her eyes were from crying. . . ." I put in.

Liu-wang stood up quickly. He looked into the distance. The cart was gone. "What shall I do?" he said, as if to himself.

"I have an idea." Chen-ching was not brusque this time. Putting his hands on our shoulders he said, "The next time she comes let's give her a hand with unloading, whether she wants it or not. And let Brother Liu play the leading role. I guarantee she'll laugh out loud."

"Good," I agreed, making a face at Liu-wang.

We all ran up when she came the following day. She ignored us at first. But when she saw that we all had our new shoes on, she said, "You're all wearing your new shoes? Let's compete and see who does the most."

I and Chen-ching had made up our minds to catch up with Liu-wang even if it killed us. But we never did. He finished 200 per cent of his quota. We did 180 per cent of ours. And Chiu-fen, who was really a wonderful girl, finished 250 per cent of her quota for transporting bricks.

So we were all elected first-class model workers. Some people even suggested that Liu-wang and Chiu-fen be rated still higher and be honoured as distinguished model workers!

*Translated by Yu Fan-chin
Illustration by Lin Wan-tsui*

YUAN CHIEN

Seven Matches

At dawn the rain stopped. The weather was peculiar in the marshy grasslands.*

A moment ago it had been a clear moonlit night. But suddenly a cold wind had risen, and heavy clouds, which seemed to spring up out of the ground, covered the sky. Then rain had come pouring down, mixed with hailstones as big as chestnuts.

Red Army soldier Lu Chin-yung poked his head out of the grove of trees and looked around. The grasslands were covered by a dense pall of rain and fog. The wild grass, beaten down by the storm, lay flat and glistening in the mud, neatly, as if it had been gone over by some giant comb. Even the path was hard to see. The sky was still overcast. From time to time, scattered hailstones fell, kicking up little geysers in the muddy green puddles.

Lu expelled an exasperated breath. The wound in the calf of his leg had become inflamed, and he had fallen behind. For two days now, travelling day and night, he had been trying to catch up. Originally he had thought

* Determined to resist Japanese imperialist aggression, the Communist-led Red Army, after breaking out of the encirclement by reactionary Kuomintang crack forces, moved north in an arduous 8,000-mile trek that became known as the Long March. At one point the March passed through vast uninhabited grasslands in the extreme west of China.

he could do it today, but that wretched storm had delayed him half the night.

Cursing the weather, he emerged from the grove and stretched mightily. A chill gust of wind made him shiver. It was then he realized that his clothing was soaking wet.

Wringing the edge of his tunic, he watched the water trickle down his trouser leg. If I had a nice fire to dry myself . . . he thought. But he knew that was an idle dream. The day before yesterday, when he was still marching with his company, they had been forced to eat their flour ration raw because they had no matches left, in fact most of their limited supplies were almost gone.

Still, he automatically groped in his trouser pocket. His hand came in contact with a sticky substance. Delighted, he turned the pocket inside out. The remains of some barley flour had been converted by the rain into a small glutinous mass. He scraped it carefully together till it formed a ball as big as a chicken egg. Avidly, he kneaded it with his fingers, pulling it into a long thin strip, compressing it back into a ball again.

How lucky I didn't discover this yesterday! he congratulated himself.

He had eaten nothing for more than twenty-four hours. Now, seeing this food, he felt a hunger that was almost unendurable. So that he wouldn't finish it all in one gulp, he again pulled the dough into a long strip. Just as he was about to take his first bite, he heard a voice call softly:

"Comrade! . . ."

The voice was so weak, so low, it seemed to float up from beneath the ground. After a surprised pause, he hobbled over in the direction from which the sound had come.

Limping across two ditches, Lu neared a small tree. The man who had hailed him was seated in a half lying position, propped against the fork of the tree. The lower half of his body was completely immersed in the mire. It was plain that he had been unable to move for some time. He was shockingly pale. Rain had plastered his hair against his forehead like a piece of black felt. Water ran from his head down his cheeks and dripped to the ground. His

deeply sunken eyes were shut tight. Only his Adam's apple and his dry split lips moved:

"Comrade . . . comrade . . ."

At the sound of Lu's footsteps, the man opened his eyes with an effort. He struggled to sit up, but did not succeed.

Lu's eyes smarted. In the two days since he had dropped out of the ranks this was the third fallen comrade he had met.

He must be starving! Lu thought. Taking a quick step forward, he supported the man around the shoulders, and brought the bit of barley flour to his lips.

"Eat, comrade, eat!"

The man stared at Lu with lacklustre eyes, then pushed his hand away. Again the man's lips trembled. The words were forced out between his teeth:

"No. It's no . . . use."

Lu's hand paused in mid-air. He didn't know what to do. He looked at that face, blue with icy wind and cold rain, and dripping wet. If we only had a fire, just a cup of hot water, maybe he could live, Lu thought miserably. Raising his head, Lu peered off into the hazy distance. Then he pulled the man by the wrist and said:

"Let's walk. I'll support you."

The man closed his eyes and shook his head. He seemed to be mustering his strength. After a long while, he opened his eyes. Pointing with his right hand to his left armpit, he said agitatedly: "Here . . . here!"

Perturbed, Lu put his hand inside the man's drenched shirt. His chest and garment were equally icy. Beneath his arm, Lu found a hard little packet wrapped in paper. Lu placed it in his hand.

With shaking fingers, the man undid the packet. It contained a Communist Party membership book. Inside the book was a little bundle of matches. Dry matches. The red tips of the matches were pressed against the vermilion seal on the Party card like a leaping flame.

"Comrade, here, look. . ." the man beckoned to Lu. He waited for Lu to come closer, then, with palsied fingers, he



carefully counted each match. His voice was weak: "One, two, three, four. . ."

It took him a long time to count the seven matches. When he had finished, he gazed at Lu questioningly, as if to ask: "Do you understand?"

"Yes! I understand!" Lu happily nodded his head. This won't be hard, he thought. He could picture a bright red fire. They were both sitting beside it. He was holding the comrade in his arms.

At that moment, he noticed that the man's face was softening. A cheerful gleam replaced the drab look in the man's eyes. Ceremoniously, carefully, as if proffering a brimming bowl of water with both hands, he presented Lu with his Party card and his little bundle of matches. He gripped them and Lu's hand together in a tight clasp. His eyes were fixed on Lu's face.

"Remember, these . . . these belong to all the comrades!" The man suddenly drew back his hands, took a deep breath and, with all his strength, raised his arm and pointed north. "Good . . . good comrade, give them . . . give them to . . ."

The words ended here. Lu felt the weight in his arms sink heavily! His eyes blurred. The distant trees, the nearby grass, the wet clothing, the tightly shut eyes . . . all were misty, hazy, like the grasslands. Only that arm, still raised high, was clear, pointing like a road sign, straight

as an arrow in the direction in which the Long March was heading. . . .

Lu finished the rest of the journey quickly. He caught up with the rear-guard before dark.

Then, in the limitless dark night, a flame was kindled. The fighters who had spent their last few days in wind and rain and mud gathered around the merry blaze, talking, laughing. Steam rose from their damp garments. Warm cooked wild herbs rustled in their eating bowls. . . .

Quietly, Lu walked up to the political instructor of the rear-guard company. Reflected firelight danced on his trembling hands as he delivered the Party card and the remaining six matches. In a strained voice, Lu counted:

"One, two, three, four. . . ."

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustration by Wo Cha*

There is nothing disgraceful in childishness; for childishness and maturity in writing are like childhood and manhood among human beings. A writer need not be ashamed of making a childish start, because unless he is trampled underfoot he will grow to maturity. What is incurable is decadence and corruption.

— Lu Hsun

KUAN HUA

The Scallion Vendor

"If you ask me, our courts are much more civilized now too! The accused man just sat there, diagonally across the table from the judges, answering questions like a guest, nice and easy as you please!"

"You mean those seven people sitting in a row all were judges?"

The two women were following a road through the wheat fields. A session of the township's People's Court had just concluded, and the spectators were on their way home. The two women, chatting, had fallen a bit behind.

One was about fifty, with touches of grey at the temples. But her dark sunburnt face was virtually free of wrinkles, and she walked with a vigorous youthful stride. She was supporting a long, black-stemmed pipe with both hands, its imitation kingfisher jade mouthpiece never left her lips.

The other was a middle-aged woman with an oval face and a pointed chin. Her hair was done up in a black glossy bun at the back of her head.

They discussed everything about the trial, from the courtroom to the accused, to the complainant, to the judges, to the spectators.

"Of course they were judges," the older woman replied. Her tone and facial expression were those of a woman well-versed in current affairs. "What I don't understand is how that scallion vendor from Fengke Village came up

in the world so fast." Because they were among the fields, her voice rang with particular clarity.

"What do you mean?" The middle-aged woman gazed at her questioningly.

"I saw him selling scallions in our Niukuo Village only yesterday." The older woman lowered her voice confidentially. "But today he was sitting there among the judges—third from the left!"

"Can it be possible?" queried the middle-aged woman. She had seen him at the trial, neatly dressed and freshly barbered. Although he frowned thoughtfully, there seemed to be a perpetual smile in the corners of his mouth. His thick hands had rested on the flowered cloth covering the table around which the trial was conducted. From time to time he leaned forward to ask pointed questions which made the accused's lying testimony look foolish.

"Of course, if the scallion vendor weren't from Fengke Village he wouldn't know nearly so much about the case," said the older woman. They had left the road and were following a winding path.

"Where is the accused from?"

"He's also a Fengke Village man." The older woman halted and patted the dust from her tunic. "Uncle of Yen Shuan, at the east end of the village. The old buzzard's over sixty, but he's still got ideas. Ought to be ashamed of himself!"

"Oh, I remember now, Yen Shuan's uncle. No wonder the scallion vendor knew every sneaky move he made as if he'd seen it with his own eyes!"

"Naturally. Both from the same village." The older woman was pleased that she had made her point clear. "But how in the world did that scallion vendor get to be a judge so quickly?"

"Are you sure it was him? Maybe you're mistaken?" The women were crossing a plank bridge over a small stream.

"There isn't anyone else in Fengke like him. Heavy eyebrows, big ears, a husky voice. Who else could he be?"

"I guess it was him, all right," the middle-aged woman admitted. She leaned over and whispered in the older

woman's ear, "You're always shooting your mouth off. I hope you didn't say anything to offend him the last time you bought his scallions."

"Huh! I tell even the county head what I think of his work, to say nothing of a mere township judge!"

Just at this moment, a voice hailed them from behind.

"Make way, sisters, please make way!"

They turned around. There coming towards them, his swaying baskets suspended from a shoulder pole, was the scallion vendor, walking rhythmically, a broad smile on his face.

"Any scallions today, sisters?" he called. "Our co-op's scallions are tender and fragrant!"

"What! You? . . ." The women hastily stepped to the side of the path. They stared in amazement at the crisp green scallions in his baskets.

"Haven't you become a judge?" the older woman asked.

Without pausing in his pace, the vendor turned his head and laughed back at them. "Oh, you mean today. We were just helping the court. Our village selected us to serve as people's assessors on this case. We helped the judge make a decision."

The women gazed after his retreating back, then exchanged a glance.

"Ah, a people's assessor. . . ."



*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustration by Wei Chi-mei*

KUAN HUA

At the Well

In our village, when the smoke rises from cooking stoves to mingle with the red-tinged clouds and birds scatter to their nests in the forest, there are always lots of people by the well. In the midst of the tinkling of water buckets, you hear cheerful gossip and loud jokes, interspersed by peals of laughter. Or you see people whispering to one another secrets long since known by all.

However, when spring comes and the men and women are busy in the fields, not so many people gather round the well at dusk. Particularly the young and able-bodied hardly appear any more. They are busy sowing or watering the wheat or digging wells and ditches and will not be home until the lamps are lit.

"Careful there, Big Brother, it's slippery on the rim of the well."

"Hello, Younger Brother, haven't seen you for two days."

From their energetic voices and the courteous way they addressed each other you'd think two young chaps were talking. In fact, Big Brother was 73 and Younger Brother no less than 69.

Younger Brother balanced his buckets on the rim. As he watched the older man lower one of the buckets hooked to his shoulder pole into the well, he asked in a loud clear voice, "I say, why don't you let your grandson come to fetch water?"

"Ha! As it is, he's busy enough with all the work he has in the co-op. He's not only needed at the smithy and at

the machines, but they even came to ask his advice about building an oven." Big Brother spoke of his grandson with pride. He swung his pole lightly and as the bucket reached the water, he tipped it with a sudden jerk of the pole so that it quickly filled with water. As he pulled the full bucket out he began to talk about his family.

"My son's gone to work digging the river-bed. Daughter-in-law and my grandson's wife have both gone to the fields. They won't be back until dark."

"Ho, ho, you seem to have become the old monk left alone to watch over the home fire." Younger Brother chuckled into his beard.

"What do you mean? I've got my share of work too. There's a whole flock of great grand-children to look after."

"I see." Younger Brother spoke with respect.

Big Brother wagged his white hair airily and hooked up the second bucket. "This is called socialist co-operation in the family." He bent over the well as if he was talking to the bucket in it, "We might be old, but we shouldn't be backward, you know."

"Right you are," Younger Brother sighed. "If it weren't for this toothache of mine, I'd have gone to the fields with the wife. Who wants to sit on the *kang* all day long doing nothing!"

Big Brother placed his second filled bucket on the rim of the well. Fixing his eyes on the younger man and lowering his voice, he said, "I hear both your sons who are drivers in Tangshan send you quite a bit of money. You and your wife ought to be able to take it easy and enjoy yourselves."

"As long as we are able to work we don't want to sit with folded hands." Younger Brother filled his first bucket and asked eagerly, "Have you heard the news?" He noticed that Big Brother was getting ready to hook up his buckets and leave, so he passed on the news without waiting for his friend to answer the question. "Our co-op brought back a great big ox from town."

"What?" Big Brother was indeed getting ready to go and had just bent his head to balance the carrying pole. Now he straightened up again to savour the news.

"Yes, a great big ox!" Thinking that his listener hadn't heard him, Younger Brother spoke so loudly this time that you could hear him at the other end of the lane. "It was decided at a discussion of the membership meeting that we must drive this ox away at all cost."

"Is the ox old and lean perhaps?" Big Brother stared at his friend's heavily wrinkled face behind a tangled mop of beard. "Is it an emaciated ox nobody wants?"

"Oh no, it's a fat ox all right and not old either, but we simply must drive it off." Younger Brother laughed.

"You're kidding," said Big Brother. He stretched out a hand to tug at his friend's beard.

With a nimbleness that belied his age, Younger Brother dodged. "If I'm telling a word of untruth," he protested, "call me this!" He turned one palm downwards and moved his fingers like the legs of a tortoise. Edging so close to his friend that their beards nearly got entangled, he whispered, "The meeting went on for half a night. Everyone said we must find a way, even if it meant working till dawn, to get rid of that ox. We're certainly not going to keep that thing in our village."

"Ho, ho, I see now. So it's an ox on paper which they send to backward work teams, eh?"

"So it is. There's a cowherd sitting on the ox too, with his head turned backwards. Do you know, it came in a glass frame. They've given us the title of backward co-op. We didn't finish watering our wheat on time, so we've become an ox-riding co-op."

A look of anger appeared on Big Brother's face. "What's this?" he looked about as he shouted. "Here I look after the kiddies for them all day long and do my best to feed them well, but what have they done? Went and turned our co-op into an ox-riding co-op. I'm going to settle this matter with them."

Shouldering his pole with a bucket of water at each end, he left the well. The pole quivered a little and drops of water spilled, leaving wet marks on the ground.

About a week later the two old friends met again at the well at twilight. Younger Brother had just pulled up

a bucket of water when he heard the metallic sound of a bucket hitting the well.

"Well, how's it going?" he asked with a smile when he saw it was Big Brother.

"Daughter-in-law has challenged my grandson's wife and they are in a friendly competition to see

who works better. I've joined in too. My pledge is to keep the kiddies from getting knocks and bruises." Big Brother was anxious to talk about himself and his family, he didn't bother to ask what Younger Brother meant.

"I mean has the ox been driven off?"

"What do you mean, ox? Why, the automobile has arrived. Of course the ox is gone. Go and have a look. It came from the township this afternoon in a big glass frame too. It looks so real that you'd expect it to ride out of the picture any minute. Ha, ha, our co-op's not going to ride on an old ox this time." Then the old man added with pride, "What's more, the daughter-in-law got a red badge of honour."

"She's over fifty, how can she compete with young people?"

"What if she is over fifty? She does as much as any able-bodied man. Haven't you seen the poems about her on the wall? Though my daughter-in-law's fifty-three, she's one of our village's model workers."



Younger Brother plunked his heavy water bucket down and sighed deeply. Turning round, he raised one hand to shade his eyes as he looked towards the newly painted white walls in the distance. He saw rows of characters, some drawn with pretty designs around the edges.

"Oh, are all those poems?" He beamed. "I suppose we can't call her so-and-so's ma any more. Now that she's a model worker, she should have a proper name of her own."

Big Brother gave his friend's sleeve a gentle tug. His voice was solemn as he said, "My son who has been digging on the river-bed sent home a citation. It's this big." He made a sign with his hands.

"You ought to frame it." Younger Brother sounded interested and a little envious.

"Framed it, of course. He says that on the day he got the citation, leading comrades spoke at the meeting telling them it's a great honour to win such a citation. They were told to bequeath it to their sons and grandsons so that the future generations will know it's no simple job to build socialism." Big Brother managed to keep his voice low and unexcited. He successfully hid his complacent smile in his snow-white beard.

"Our river team has done us proud. Now let's see how our crops turn out." Younger Brother raised his head to gaze at the wheat fields bathed in the sunset glow.

"Just wait, the aeroplane will be coming to us."

"Naturally," Younger Brother said with a lift in his voice, "the automobile really isn't half as fast as a plane."

Big Brother stretched himself to his full height. His eyes twinkled as he said, "At our age, brother, how will we get to see socialism if we don't ride in planes?"

The two old men left the well, their water buckets swinging. The clear water reflected the blue sky and the purple sunset.

*Translated by Tang Sheng
Illustration by Wei Chi-mei*

CHIN KENG

Into the Mountains

In the winter of 1947, I went with one of our working group to the Paichao Mountains. Our task was to organize the people as quickly as possible so that the region could serve as a rear-line base. At the front, our People's Liberation Army was engaged in a fierce battle with Kuo-mintang forces.

Our group leader came from these parts. He had fought here as a guerrilla during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. For the past few days he had been studying local conditions — how many hamlets there were in each gorge, in which hamlets there were old underground contacts, where the mountain caves were located, where the temples were. Relying on his memory, plus some help from the local peasants, he drew a detailed map of the region, sketching in the major gorges.

Now that we had some knowledge of the overall picture, each member of the group was given an individual mission.

I was assigned to work in the Millstone Gorge section. The group leader told me that this was the biggest of the mountain gorges. It was almost seven miles long. When our troops were in this region some time before, a comrade named Chang Lan had been wounded and had to be left behind when the Fifth Division fought its way out of an encirclement by superior enemy forces. Chang Lan was a native of Millstone Gorge, and a Communist. If we could

find him, we'd be able to obtain a really thorough understanding of conditions in the mountain region.

I packed a few things in a knapsack, checked my Mauser automatic, put in a fresh clip, cocked the pistol and snapped on the safety. Everything was in order. I set out.

It was snowing that morning. The distant mountains, black and ominous, were draped in mist. Thick layers of dark clouds concealed their upper heights.

Mountains fascinated me. I had been raised on the plains, but as a child I had heard many wonderful tales about the mountains, and I had always longed to see them. Now that I was actually about to enter the mountains, I felt very tense. I don't know whether it was from happiness or from fear. Of course, I was still only a youngster.

After walking for hours, a roaring sound came to my ears, the like of which I had only heard twice before. Once was while crossing the turbulent Yellow River. Once was when we ran into a column of enemy tanks.

Up ahead I found an opening in the side of the gorge between two mountains. A stream branched out from the gorge, crossed a cliff ledge, then dropped twenty or thirty feet, straight as an arrow into a deep pool.

The rushing stream had worn the ledge slick as glass, and a layer of green moss made it even more slippery. One mis-step would send a man skidding over the edge to the rocks below. To get into the mountains I either had to cross that ledge or make a detour over a lofty ridge. We have an old saw that says: "Rather go miles out of your way than take one foolhardy step." I chose the climb. It might be more tiring, but it was a lot safer.

I followed a winding path along the top of the ridge through groves carpeted with golden pine needles, soft and smooth underfoot. The place was densely wooded. There were tall stately pines, and many-branched cedars. The leaves of the chestnut trees were almost gone. Among the few yellow leaves that remained were one or two prickly burs that had not yet fallen. They looked like tiny hedgehogs baring their fangs. And that catalpa tree, its tall bare trunk hung with chips of white! I thought at

first it was a plum tree. There were also many other trees whose names I don't know to this day. How beautiful the mountains are! They are filled with no end of treasures!

But I was hardly in a frame of mind to enjoy the scenery. I felt quite uneasy on that lonely path through the deep mountain forest. Dozens of eyes seemed to be watching me from all sides! Hark! What was that roar? A panther. What a terrifying noise! Each time he roared my heart contracted. And then I saw him. A black-spotted panther, big as a calf, seated on a bluff opposite. He stared at me, opened his mouth and yawned. I fell back a pace and unlocked the safety on my Mauser. But I quickly snapped it on again. I remembered what people said: No wild animal will harm you, if only you leave him alone. If you fire, he will charge immediately and tear you to bits.

Sure enough, not long afterwards, the panther rose, lazily stretched himself, and strolled away.

From the map my group leader had drawn, I could see that I was still a good distance from my destination. I quickened my pace, wondering about the man I was seeking. Were his wounds healed? How had he fared this last year and a half? Had the enemy caught him? What should I do if I couldn't find him? . . .

A sudden loud bawl scared me into a cold sweat. It was very close. I saw this brownish thing hanging from the branch of a tree ahead, uttering weird cries. As I drew near, it leaped like an arrow from a bow, and went bounding away. It stopped some distance off and resumed its bawling. It was a mountain goat, with beautiful forked horns. These goats were always getting their horns caught on low branches and bleating in complaint.

I walked and walked till at last I came to a low ridge with a grove of *tung* trees. The slope was cut into small terraces, glistening with growing bean sprouts. I knew I was nearing a hamlet.

On a rock beneath one of the trees sat a young woman. She had a conical straw hat on her head and was wearing a tattered cotton-padded jacket with many patches. On her bare feet were straw sandals. She was holding a staff.

Not far from her, a water buffalo was nibbling at some dried grass.

"Can you tell me where the Chang family house is, sister-in-law?" I hailed her, walking forward after halting a moment.

"I don't understand!" She stared at me, wide-eyed, obviously startled by this strange man and his peculiar accent.

"I'm looking for the Chang — family — house!" I repeated carefully.

She seemed to get that all right. She pointed at the mountain slope opposite. "There!"

I looked. Across the gorge, in a grove of green bamboos, the corner of a house was visible. If she hadn't pointed it out, I'd never have seen it.

"How do I get there?" I asked.

With many words and gestures she indicated that I should make a wide circle around the mountain. "Thank you!" I said, setting off on the path she had suggested. She drove her water buffalo down the slope.

It was afternoon by the time I reached the Chang family house. Built of stone, it consisted of two rooms and was covered by a thatched roof. There seemed to be no other residence within miles.

I pushed open the door. "Anybody home?" No one answered. I entered slowly. The room was empty and bare except for a low table and two crude short-legged bamboo chairs. A cauldron suspended from a tripod and cooking over a fire showed that the occupant had left the room very recently.

A chill ran up my spine. This place looked like one of those hermitages one read about in old stories. It was as if I had been wafted by magic to another world. After the warm companionship of our army life, how could Comrade Chang Lan stand a year and a half of this bleak lonely existence?

A cold gust of air made me shiver. The room had a back door, which the wind had just blown open. I went out through the rear doorway.

On the slope behind the house was a dense grove of bamboos. Some were as thick as a rice bowl and tens of feet high. Even the thinnest were at least a chicken egg in diameter. They sighed mournfully in the mountain breeze.

I was like a man setting sail on an uncharted sea. Although the temperature was cool, I was bathed in sweat. Every hair on my body seemed to be standing on end.

Calling, I plunged into the bamboo grove. There was no answer. I was puzzled, and worried. But my job was to find Comrade Chang Lan. Hesitantly, I advanced deeper into the grove along a narrow path.

Suddenly two powerful arms grasped me from behind and a rough voice cried: "The road to heaven is wide, but you insist on taking the path to hell! Sister, bring that rope!"

I struggled to free myself, but the arms that gripped me around the waist seemed made of iron.

"Let me go!" I cried. "You're making a mistake! I'm one of our own people!"

"Our own people! Don't put on any act with me! I've seen enough of your gang's dirty tricks!"

The young woman I had met earlier emerged from among the trees, the staff in her right hand, a rope in her left. "That's the fellow," she said. "He's the one who asked me for directions."

"Fine. Tie him up, we'll ask him a few questions! I've had enough trouble from his gang this past year!"

I realized why he was so angry.

"You don't understand," I said. "Fourth Brother sent me!"

"Fourth Brother?" He loosened his grip a bit, then immediately tightened it again. "Who are you looking for?"

"Chang Lan."

Slowly those powerful arms relaxed. He turned me around to face him and grasped my shoulders with trembling hands. Only the men in our PLA unit knew him by that name. "Has Chao Jui come back?"

"Yes! He's our group leader!"



This man who had been so tough just a moment before suddenly became as soft as a girl. Tears came to his eyes and he threw his arms around my neck. "You've come back at last! . . ." he said in a shaking voice. His tears dripped on to my shirt and wetted a big patch.

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustration by Sha Keng-ssu*

YANG YUN-SHEN

Two Young Women

Our co-op chairman, forty-three-year-old Yang Chin-teh, was a big man with a red face. He did his job with such drive and persistence that he won everyone's admiration. All the co-op members thought highly of him and agreed he was a good chairman. But he had one fault. He tended to see things from the limited point of view of the co-op. The people laughed about it and called it departmentalism.

One day, as Yang was returning from taking a group of people to work in the hills, he ran into a hurricane. The force of the storm swept him downhill for several yards and he scratched his legs badly. In the evening, though everyone urged him to rest a bit, he went on working. He was completely wrapped up in the problem of iron smelting. All the co-ops were busy with iron smelting and every chairman had this on his mind. That was why when Li Shuan-shuan, the co-op member in charge of iron smelting, entered the office the chairman grabbed him by the sleeve.

"Shuan-shuan, we simply must not fail again. We must produce iron at all cost, tonight." When he mentioned iron, Yang sounded as worried as if a flood was threatening the whole co-op. The reason was simple. About ten days ago, the chairman of Hunglou, a neighbourhood co-op, challenged Yang Chin-teh at a township meeting with

great fanfare. They pledged to produce iron within five days. The Hunglou Co-op lived up to its word—it got iron on the fifth day. But, our co-op failed five times and still had no assurance of success. Shuan-shuan was very worried. He quietly filled his lamp and left the office.

Yang didn't even have time to go home for supper. His wife, carrying the baby in her arms, brought his food to the office. While he sipped a bowl of hot bean soup, his wife sat on the *kang* and told him that Sixth Uncle had looked in several times to see if Yang would go over to their house for a cup of wine to celebrate the recent wedding of his son, Tiger. Tiger's bride was from the Hunglou Co-op. As they were talking, Liu Kuei-hua came in to look for the chairman.

Kuei-hua was nineteen with rosy cheeks, jet black hair, big eyes and a nice straight nose. She was medium height and full of energy and drive. She had graduated from junior middle school recently and was considered one of our co-op's best students. A Red and Expert College had been founded in our county and our co-op had the privilege of sending a student. According to qualifications, Kuei-hua came out on top of the list and Party secretary Tien proposed that she be sent. However, Yang supported a young man. It was for this that Kuei-hua had come to see him.

"Uncle Chin-teh, why don't you want to send me to college? Won't you tell me your reason?"

Yang had a very telling habit when he was embarrassed, he quickly got red in the face and stuck his neck out. Now, he flushed as he stammered, "We need you in the co-op. You've got to manage the canteen. Who's going to take your place if you go? Everyone must do his share in the co-op's plan. You ought to know that."

"That's all very fine talk." Kuei-hua planted herself squarely opposite Yang. Fixing her big eyes on him, she said crisply, "A leading comrade should consider things in the communist spirit. He shouldn't have departmental feelings and just think of his own co-op. I'm determined to go to college."

Kuei-hua had hit on Yang's weak point. When the co-op people were discussing who was to be sent to college, Yang had said, "Once Kuei-hua marries, she'll go and live in the Hunglou Co-op. We'd only be wasting our efforts by training someone for them." It was true that Liu Kuei-hua was in love with one of the vice-chairmen of Hunglou Co-op and the two young people were talking about naming the wedding date. Yang was not the only one who thought it would be a pity to train someone who'd soon belong to another co-op. Two others on the committee agreed with him. They thought it was best not to send an unmarried girl. They preferred to send either a young man or a married woman. As a result Kuei-hua was no longer considered as a candidate.

Relations between our co-op and Hunglou were good now, but before liberation there used to be a vicious feud between the two villages, often ending in deaths. To be fair to Yang, he actually said nothing when it first became known that Kuei-hua, one of our best girls, was going to marry the vice-chairman of Hunglou Co-op. But there were a few members who frowned in displeasure and someone even said, "Ba! Marry someone from Hunglou? What a thing to do."

Yang flushed a deeper crimson at Liu Kuei-hua's sharp retort, the charge of "departmental feelings" rankled, perhaps because it was true. "What do you mean by departmentalism?" He puffed hard on his empty pipe. "Or my selfishness! Graduated from school only a couple of days ago and you are bold enough to make accusations. If you want to go, go ahead."

At this outburst, Kuei-hua lost her temper. She stood up abruptly, a torrent of words on the tip of her tongue. But before she could let loose, a stableman came for Yang. The roan horse had taken ill. Yang, who was eager to escape from the quarrel with Kuei-hua and longed to avoid the young lass' sharp words, picked up his pipe and walked out before the stableman finished saying why he had come. "Think things over," he turned to Kuei-hua at the door. "Don't let your individual heroism run wild."

"So it's my individual heroism now!" Kuei-hua followed Yang out without saying another word.

Yang had been a stableman half his life and was practically as good as a veterinarian. He examined the sick horse and decided to apply acupuncture. Kuei-hua stayed around to help. After about an hour, the horse was feeding normally.

As soon as the horse seemed well, Kuei-hua picked up the old subject of going to college, though she now spoke with less temper. "Uncle Chin-teh, we shouldn't just think of our own co-op. If all the co-ops refuse to let the unmarried girls go to college or learn new technique, what kind of a state would we have? Don't forget our men will marry too and bring brides to our co-op."

Yang did not bother to answer. He washed his hands and strode out of the stable towards the northern end of the village where the iron furnace was. Kuei-hua tagged along behind him.

Yang walked rapidly, but Kuei-hua followed just as rapidly. She hardly closed her mouth, trying to convince Yang, but he tried not to hear.

They were only twenty paces from the iron furnace when Shuan-shuan ran up to them panting. "Heaven help us, chairman. We've failed for the sixth time."

"Failed again? Where's everybody?"

"They all wanted to quit. I had all I could do to drag them back." Shuan-shuan bowed his head and burst into loud sobs.

Yang was speechless. Blue veins throbbed on his forehead and he clenched his fists so tightly you'd think he was preparing to fight.

"Failed again! Failed again!" he muttered under his breath.

Yang strode miserably towards the furnace. With a sudden shout, all ten iron workers rushed at him from behind the furnace, shouting and laughing. Grandad Hsun-tsu waved a fifty-catty piece of iron before Yang's face and Grandad So-shan punched Yang in the ribs.

"Look, Comrade Chairman, our furnace has produced iron."

"Ah, iron!" Yang hugged the iron tightly in his arms and everyone burst into laughter. It had been Shuan-shuan's idea to play this practical joke on their chairman.

"How did you manage to find the key to success with this heat?" Yang was very pleased, especially since he saw that it was good quality iron.

Before Yang had quite finished his question, someone called out, "Here's the key to our success." A stranger, a young woman, was pushed out of the crowd to face the chairman.

She was Chao Yung-hua, Tiger's bride from Hunglou. She was a pretty thing too. You might even take her for Kuei-hua's sister at first sight. Kuei-hua went up and hugged her while Shuan-shuan proudly told Yang what had happened. "I went to visit the new couple this afternoon. This young lady from Hunglou told me that she had a bit of experience working on the iron furnace in their co-op. So we asked her to come down when we began this heat. It was she who mixed the batch and advised us how fast to set the windmill to get the draught just right for the furnace. At last we succeeded in smelting the iron. You wouldn't think one of our young men would be so lucky as to bring a real clever iron smelter into our co-op."



Yang blinked and bit his lips. "Actually, I didn't particularly want to learn iron smelting at first," the bride confided. "I used to think it was messy, heavy work. Our co-op chairman criticized me. He said I should learn all about iron smelting so that I could bring my skill here to this co-op."

"Didn't your chairman say that you'd be a bride soon and they'd be wasting their time teaching you technique for some other co-op?" Kuei-hua asked pointedly. The young bride didn't notice the sarcasm in her words. She smiled, shook her head and said emphatically, "Of course not."

Yang Chin-teh was again red in the face; his neck seemed to stick out more than usual. He stood rooted to the ground unable to utter a single word.

*Translated by Tang Sheng
Illustration by Lin Wan-tsui*

*Making Insecticide in a Village →
(136 cm. × 67 cm.)
Painting in the traditional style
by Hsu Chien*



Poems

CHEN YI

A Visit to Mount Mokan

In the summer of 1952, I went to Mount Mokan to visit a friend who was ill, and stayed there for ten days. Enchanted by the beauty of the mountain, I wrote these lines.

On Mount Mokan, dense glades of tall bamboo
Are emerald seas — the paths their narrow shore;
They dip like phoenix feathers in the wind,
And file past every door.

On Mount Mokan, a world wrapped deep in mist,
The fitful sunshine blends with fitful showers;
Pavilions disappear before our eyes,
And deep, sweet sleep is ours.

On Mount Mokan, most infinite at night,
I fly in thought through hills and verdant seas;
The moping chirr of insects breaks the hush,
My heart knows utter peace.

This poem was first published in Peking in the monthly *Poetry* in September 1957. The poet is at present vice-premier and concurrently foreign minister of China. Mount Mokan is a beautiful resort situated in the north of Chekiang Province.

On Mount Mokan we watch, when rain is done,
White banks of downy clouds that swathe the sky,
They blot the earth from sight, but from the void
Some lonely peaks rise high.

To Mount Mokan come those on pleasure bent,
The waterfall sweeps trivial thoughts away;
Far off pagodas make us sing aloud,
We dance and we are gay.

On Mount Mokan go ramble in the rain,
Your strength the thousand steps of stone will try;
Gaze up from deepest gorge to highest tower,
Where slow white clouds drift by.

Oh, Mount Mokan is utterly transformed,
Its woods and streams belong to me and you;
Cool breeze and moonlight now enjoyed by all:
A China new and free!

Translated by Gladys Yang

Folk Tales

The Envoy of the Prince of Tibet

(TIBETAN)

Long, long ago an emperor of the Tang dynasty had a favourite daughter named Princess Wen Cheng, who was as intelligent as she was lovely. When she grew old enough to marry, all the princes sent envoys to the capital to ask for her hand. Sunchenkumpo, the Prince of Tibet, who had lost his heart to her, sent his cleverest and ablest envoy, Lutungtsen, to press his suit, so determined was he to marry the princess.

Seven envoys in all put up in the government hostel, hoping to arrange a match for their royal masters, but no one knew which of them would succeed.

The Tang emperor was rather hesitant about marrying his beloved daughter to the Prince of Tibet, for he feared he would not be able to see her so often if she was going to live in such a far-away place. But he had heard the prince was really a very nice man. Unable to make up his mind, the emperor summoned his wisest councillors for advice. Together they hit on a plan: they would create as many difficulties as possible for the prince's envoy and see if he could overcome them. If he could not, then they could very well dismiss him with a good conscience. The next day men were ordered to bring five hundred mares and five hundred foals to the palace. The foals were loosed in the middle of a field and the mares tethered around it. Then the emperor decreed: "The seven princes are the mainstay of my throne. My sole regret is that I have not seven

daughters to give one to each of them. But since I have one daughter only, I do not know to which prince to marry her. In order to be absolutely fair, I have brought five hundred mares and five hundred foals here. I shall consider the suit of that prince whose envoy can match each mare with her foal."

Then the emperor bade the seven envoys try their fortune. Out of courtesy, the envoy of the Prince of Tibet let the six other envoys make the attempt before him. But when these envoys led the foals up to the mares, the mares kicked out or reared so that the foals were frightened away. Not one mare and foal could the six of them match between them.

Finally it was the turn of the envoy of the Prince of Tibet. Because the Tibetans are brought up in the saddle and excel in horsemanship, he did not have to resort to the clumsy methods of the other envoys. He ordered fine fodder to be brought for the mares, and when they had eaten their fill in comfort they threw up their heads and whinnied to their foals. At that, each foal ran frisking and gambolling to its mother, and nuzzled against her to drink her milk. So without any effort on his part, he paired off the five hundred mares and their foals.

Though the Tang emperor was delighted with this envoy's skill, he was nevertheless unwilling to give the Prince of Tibet his daughter. He issued another decree: "I am well pleased with this envoy's intelligence. But I want to make another test to show that I am absolutely impartial." He bade his men bring in an intricately carved piece of green jade, and told the seven envoys: "A tiny hole twists and turns through this green jade. I will consider the suit of any prince whose envoy succeeds in passing a thread through that hole."

The envoy of the Prince of Tibet allowed the six other envoys to try their luck first. They sat in the court one whole morning, endeavouring by every means to thread the jade, but not one of them succeeded. Finally it was the turn of the envoy of the Prince of Tibet.

The envoy of the Prince of Tibet caught an ant and attached a thread to its feet, then rubbed a little honey on the other side of the jade. When the ant smelt the honey it quickly crawled through the hole. Then the envoy of the Prince of Tibet knotted the thread and presented the jade with both hands to the emperor.

The Tang emperor was amazed, but determined to test this quick-witted envoy further. He declared: "To show ourselves in earnest and satisfy everyone, we must have another trial." He ordered his carpenters to plane a great tree-trunk until each end was exactly the same size, of an equal smoothness and polish. Then he had this carried to the seven envoys. "This is a planed tree-trunk," he told them. "I want you to determine which is the upper end and which the lower, giving reasons for your judgement. I shall consider the suit of any prince whose envoy decides correctly."

Once again the six other envoys tried their skill first. But hard as they looked and carefully as they measured, they had no means of distinguishing top from bottom. Finally it was the turn of the envoy of the Prince of Tibet.

The envoy of the Prince of Tibet had grown up in the mountains and knew that a trunk is heavier at the base than higher up. He told men to lower the trunk into the moat. The moat water flowed very slowly, and the trunk floated slowly on the water until by degrees the lighter end drifted to the front and the heavier end to the back. By this means the envoy determined which was the lower end and which the higher.

The Tang emperor was delighted with the skill of the envoy of the Prince of Tibet, but still he was reluctant to let his daughter go so far from the capital. Once again he conferred with his wise ministers. When they knew his wishes, one of them suggested: "Let Your Majesty choose three hundred beautiful girls, dress them exactly like your daughter and make them stand together. Then order the seven envoys to point out the princess, promising to give her to the one who recognizes her. In this way, the princess will be able to remain with Your Majesty."

The Tang emperor acted on this advice, and issued another decree: "To show our respect for the envoys of the different princes, we must have one final test. You shall single out the princess from among three hundred girls dressed exactly alike. Whichever of you recognizes her shall take her to your master." Once again the six other envoys made the first attempt. But since they imagined that the most beautiful girl must be the princess, every one of them guessed wrong. Finally it was the turn of the envoy of the Prince of Tibet.

This time the envoy of the Prince of Tibet knew that his task was a most difficult one. Having never seen the princess, he had no idea what she looked like. But since he must do his best to carry out his master's bidding, he spent a whole day and night in the neighbourhood of the palace trying to pick up some crumbs of information from the carters, vegetable vendors and washerwomen coming out of the palace to help him when it was his turn. After a while he met an old washerwoman. She said: "How strange that you should ask about the princess, sir! Nobody would dare to tell you anything. The emperor has a diviner who can find out everything that happens. If it was known that I'd told you, that would be the end of me!"

The envoy of the Prince of Tibet reassured the timid old woman. "Don't worry, aunty!" he said. "Tell me what you know. I'll show you a way to tell me so that no imperial diviner can find you out."

To make the washerwoman feel really safe, he found three white stones, set an iron tub on top of them, filled it with water, and in the water put a bench on which he made the old woman sit. Then he fetched a brass trumpet and told her: "Aunty, speak through this trumpet. If you do, the most any diviner can say will be: 'The speaker lives on a wooden hill, the wooden hill is in a sea of iron, and the sea of iron is on three large silver mountains. The speaker has a brass mouth and silver teeth.' No one will be able to guess where the silver mountains are, or what fairy has a bronze mouth and silver teeth. They'll say you are a fairy, aunty. Go on and tell me! Don't be afraid!"

Then the old woman plucked up courage to speak.

She said: "First, sir, on no account choose the prettiest! Though the princess isn't ugly, she isn't the prettiest by any means. It's only because she's a princess that there's so much talk about her beauty. Secondly, don't point to the girl at either end. The emperor has made her stand in the middle so that it won't be easy to single her out. Thirdly, ever since she was a girl the princess has used a special scent smelling of honey, which often makes bees and butterflies fly up to her. She is so fond of insects that she never drives them away. If one of the girls has bees hovering over her head, you may be sure that's the princess. This is what the palace attendants say. The palace attendants told the cook, and the cook told me when I did some washing for him. That's all I know, sir. Go and try your luck!"

The envoy of the Prince of Tibet thanked her and went to the palace to single out the princess. He was not going to make a mistake if he could help it. He pointed neither at the prettiest girl nor at the girls at either end. He waited till at noon bees and butterflies started flying in search of honey, and he saw a golden bee hover over the head of a girl in the middle of the row. The girl showed no sign of fear but watched the bee kindly. At once the envoy of the Prince of Tibet pointed to her and said she was the princess. As it happened, he was quite right, much to the amazement of the emperor, his ministers and the six other envoys.

The Tang emperor was quite puzzled. "This envoy has never seen my daughter," he thought. "How could he recognize her when none of the other envoys were able to? Someone must have told him." He called for his diviner, but though the diviner muttered some incantations, he could not say what had happened.

There was nothing for it but to promise the princess to the Prince of Tibet, and to grant his envoy an audience with her.

When the envoy saw the princess he said to her: "Your Highness, I am truly grateful to His Majesty for consenting



to this match and giving the Prince of Tibet such a noble queen. But when you leave, the emperor is sure to offer you a magnificent dowry. Don't ask him for much, because we have no lack of good things in Tibet.

Just ask your father for seeds of the chief grains, as well as hoes and ploughs. Ask him for skilled craftsmen too. Then we shall have better harvests and lead a better life. For us in Tibet, this will prove more valuable than a dowry of gold and silver."

The princess did as he told her. When the time came to leave home she asked for nothing but seeds of the chief grains, hoes and ploughs, and skilled craftsmen. The emperor was surprised by her request, but gave her as her dowry five hundred pack-horses laden with seeds and a thousand pack-horses laden with hoes and ploughs. He also selected several hundred of his best craftsmen, and sent them with her to the Prince of Tibet.

After that, they had better crops in Tibet than before, and works of better craftsmanship. People say that it was the craftsmen brought by that princess to Tibet who showed the local people how to set up the water-mills which they use to this very day.

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustration by Chung Ling*

The Conch Maiden

(TIBETAN)

Once upon a time there were three sisters, Gold Maiden, Silver Maiden and Conch Maiden. The three sisters were clever and able, and as pretty as the little flowers blooming all over the hills. As their beauty was well known, young men from other hamlets and villages, far and near, came flocking to woo them. Just like bees in the spring time, bustling to and fro, the young men flowed in an endless stream. But, alas, Gold Maiden and Silver Maiden were fastidious in their tastes and hard to please. They thought this man too poor and that man too ungainly. None was to their liking. Conch Maiden, however, was different from her two sisters. Young as she was, she was kind and honest. She only wished to find a diligent young man for a husband.

Early one morning, Gold Maiden, carrying a gold bucket on her back, went out to fetch water. Hardly had she pushed the gate open when she was startled and hurriedly drew back. An old beggar wrapped in a tattered and untidy gown of rough wool was lying in front of the gate, blocking her way.

Brandishing her hand, Gold Maiden said in disgust: "Get away, get away, let Gold Maiden go to fetch water."

The old beggar opened his eyes slightly and murmured: "Maiden, what water are you going to fetch? Is it so urgent?"

Gold Maiden pouted and replied: "Ah-Pa wants water to brew wine, Ah-Ma wants water to churn butter, and I, Gold Maiden, want water to wash my hair. Certainly it is urgent."

The old beggar closed his eyes and said: "I can't get up. If you want to fetch water, stride over my body."

"I cross through places where Ah-Pa is conferring and where Ah-Ma is talking. Why should I not step across you?" So saying, Gold Maiden angrily strode over the old beggar.

The next day, it was Silver Maiden's turn to fetch water. She carried a silver bucket on her back and opened the gate. At the sight of an old beggar lying at the doorway, she was frightened and drew back a few steps, saying: "Get away, get away, let Silver Maiden go to fetch water."

The old man shot a brief glance at her and said: "Maiden, what water are you going to fetch? Is it so urgent?"

Silver Maiden was impatient. Glaring, she said: "Ah-Pa wants water to brew wine, Ah-Ma wants water to churn butter, while I, Silver Maiden, want water to wash my hair. Of course it is urgent!"

The old beggar drew his rough wool clothes around him more tightly. Closing his eyes, he said: "Stride over my body if you want to fetch water, I cannot get up."

Lifting up her skirt, Silver Maiden said: "I cross through places where Ah-Pa is conferring and where Ah-Ma is talking, I certainly will step across you!" So saying, Silver Maiden raised her foot and strode over the old beggar.

On the third day, it was Conch Maiden's turn to fetch water. She got up early that morning and joyfully carried her conch-shell bucket on her back. As she opened the gate she was startled, seeing an old, untidy beggar lying in front of the door. Conch Maiden took pity on the old beggar. Loath to disturb him, she gently awakened him, saying: "Please move away, let me go to fetch water."

The old beggar lay there, motionless. Without even opening his eyes, he said: "I am not blocking your way at all, you can stride over my body."

"I have not stepped across places where Ah-Pa is conferring and where Ah-Ma is talking. I cannot step across you either."

Gently and softly she made her way around the old beggar and walked on, singing as she headed for the river

bank. The willows on the river bank were sprouting green buds. The river flowed with a rippling sound. She set down the conch bucket and, bending over the river, scooped and drank a few handfuls of water. Then, she filled the bucket, one conch-shell ladleful after another.

But now she found herself in difficulty. Without anybody to help her, how could she raise the bucket to her back? She looked around. All was silent. Not even a shadow of a person was in sight. She was worried. Just then she saw a flash of light and the old beggar was standing before her. He was no longer so languid as he was when he lay at the door, but looked brisk. He said to the maiden: "Conch Maiden, let me help you lift the bucket."

Conch Maiden was certainly very glad. She squatted down with her back against the bucket, and slipped the leather belt onto her shoulders.

The old beggar seemed to be making it difficult for her on purpose; he lifted the bucket either too high or too low. Several times the maiden tried in vain to rise with the bucket on her back. At last, she succeeded. But the leather belt was not properly tightened, and the bucket fell and was dashed to pieces on a rock, the water spilling all over the ground. Conch Maiden felt badly because the bucket was broken. She was also afraid that Ah-Pa and Ah-Ma would scold her when she got home. So she covered her face and wept.

The old beggar, however, was not in the least worried. Instead, he grinned and said: "It's only a bucket. I'll give you another one just like it!"

Conch Maiden did not reply but wept all the harder, thinking to herself: "A poor fellow like you, how could you afford to give me anything? It's not an ordinary bucket, but made of conch-shell. You can't buy it anywhere."

But the old beggar really meant what he said! He picked up the broken fragments of the conch-shell bucket and put them together. Then he said to the maiden: "Conch Maiden, come and see for yourself. Isn't the bucket perfectly all right?"

Conch Maiden didn't believe him. She thought he was fooling her. Nevertheless, she glanced at the broken conch-shell bucket, and found to her surprise that it had become whole again. There it stood, filled with clear water. She nearly sang for joy. The old beggar was definitely no ordinary man, he must be a god, thought the maiden. Again and again she thanked him and said: "You are really a good person, you have helped me, can I do anything for you?"

The old beggar said: "I have nowhere to stay tonight. I would like to spend the night in your kitchen."

The maiden hesitated.

"I am afraid Ah-Ma won't allow it; she dislikes beggars. But don't you worry, I'll plead with her."

The old beggar said: "Maiden, you don't have to plead with her. If Ah-Ma won't allow it, give her the thing in the bucket."

Conch Maiden did not know what thing there was in the bucket. But convinced that the old beggar was no ordinary person, she asked no more questions, and carried the bucket home on her back.

While she was pouring the water into a brass jar, Conch Maiden told Ah-Ma that the old beggar wanted to stay in their kitchen. Her brows tightly knit in a big knot, Ah-Ma groaned: "How could you let an untidy, old beggar spend the night in our kitchen? . . ."

Pata! Something yellow fell to the ground from the bucket. The maiden suddenly recalled the old beggar's words. She said: "He also said to give to Ah-Ma the thing in the bucket."

Ah-Ma picked the thing up and saw that it was a gold ring. All smiles, she said: "Well, let him spend the night in the kitchen then!"

In the evening, after dinner, the whole family sat chatting. Ah-Pa was drinking butter-tea, Ah-Ma was spinning wool. Chatting, they touched upon the problem of the maidens' marriages.

Gold Maiden said: "I shall marry an Indian prince."

Silver Maiden said: "I shall marry a prince in the interior."

Ah-Pa asked Conch Maiden whom would she marry. She had no ready answer. Suddenly the old beggar walked in and told Ah-Pa and Ah-Ma: "I'll make a match for Conch Maiden. A beautiful maiden like her should marry Gongsela."*

Who was Gongsela? Where did he live? Nobody knew. They had never heard of him before. Ah-Pa and Ah-Ma were thinking: How can this crazy old beggar know anybody of fame or position? Anyone he recommends must be an old beggar too. So they shook their heads. Gold Maiden and Silver Maiden were whispering to each other and sneering at Conch Maiden.

The old beggar turned to Conch Maiden: "Gongsela is a good man. Will you marry him?"

The maiden said: "I don't know who he is."

The old beggar said: "You may trust me. I will not fool you. Gongsela will make you happy!"

Conch Maiden, remembering what had happened that morning, believed that the old beggar would not fool her. So she nodded and said: "I trust you. I will marry Gongsela. But where does he live? Who is he?"

The old beggar said: "Truly you are a clever maiden. Follow me. Walk along the traces my stick makes, and you will reach the place where he dwells."

Having said this, the old beggar walked out. Conch Maiden followed him. Seeing that they could not stop her, Ah-Pa and Ah-Ma said angrily: "Make sure you are not doing anything you will regret. Once you go, you may never come back."

Gold Maiden and Silver Maiden were still sneering and jeering at their sister.

Conch Maiden walked out. The old beggar was nowhere to be seen. A bright moon hung high in the sky.

She followed the traces left by the old beggar's stick.

*Gongsela is the god of shepherds.

The moon sank in the west. The sun rose in the east. Conch Maiden walked on and on, for how long she did not know. She came to a big pasture where hundreds of sheep, like clusters of flowers, were grazing. The maiden asked the shepherd: "Did you see an old beggar pass by?"

The shepherd boy said: "No, I saw only Gongsela pass by just a while ago. These sheep all belong to him."

Conch Maiden thanked the shepherd boy and went on her way. On and on she walked until she met a cattle herder. She asked: "Did you see an old beggar pass by?"

The cattle herder said: "No, I saw only Gongsela pass by just a while ago. All these cattle here and on the hills belong to him."

The maiden said good-bye to the cattle herder and went on. She walked for a long time until she met a horse herder. She asked: "Did you see an old beggar pass by?"

The horse herder said: "I saw only Gongsela pass by just a while ago. The horses I'm herding all belong to him. Go ahead if you want to find him."

These replies puzzled the maiden. She wondered as she walked on: Who is Gongsela after all? How is it that he has so many cattle and horses? Is the old beggar Gongsela? Shall I marry an old beggar? As she was musing, all of a sudden she saw at the end of the pasture a palace-like high building shining with splendid golden light, though as yet only faintly visible.

The maiden came across an old man with white hair. She asked: "Old grandpa, did you see an old beggar pass through here?"

Smiling, the old man answered: "No, there is no old beggar, only Gongsela who has passed here just a while ago."

The maiden pointed at the far-off palace and asked: "Please tell me, what kind of a temple is that? What buddha do people worship there?"

The old man became even more gracious. He said: "Maiden, that is Gongsela's palace, not a temple. Just follow this path. He is waiting for you."



The maiden thanked the old man and walked towards the palace. Wherever her footsteps fell there, like magic, clusters of fresh blossoms sprung up, in many colours and sweetly fragrant, waving gently in the breeze as if welcoming a guest of honour. Fresh blossoms, blossoming in the maiden's footprints, formed a gay flower-road, trailing behind her to the palace.

The maiden put her foot on the steps of the palace. Immediately the gate swung open. Gongsela, with his retinue, offering garments as colourful as the rainbow, and ornaments of pearl, coral and emerald, came forward to welcome her. Gongsela asked if she would marry him. She saw that Gongsela was a young handsome prince. Very pleased, she consented to marry him. Now she realized that the old beggar had been Gongsela in disguise.

Gongsela sat on a golden bed. Conch Maiden, adorned with pearls, coral and emerald and dressed in garments as beautiful as the rainbow, sat on a silver bed. They were wedded in the palace on an auspicious day.

*Translated by Chang Su
Illustration by Hung Lin*



*A Street of Lhasa →
(49.5 cm. × 33.5 cm.)
Woodcut by Li Huan-min*

The Wrestler of Bailin

(MONGOLIAN)

Once in the Bailin Banner there lived an old milkwoman. She had an only son who loved wrestling even as a child. She made him a calf-skin bag which he took with him whenever he went sheep tending.

As soon as he came to the pasture, the boy would fill the bag with sand and practise wrestling with it. The years rolled on, and the child became a youth.

Then, the calf-skin bag was no longer strong enough for him. He himself made a bag of bull skin. As usual, whenever he went sheep herding, he filled the bag with sand and practised wrestling. The years rolled on, and the youth grew sturdier and sturdier. He could lift the sand-filled bag above his head and throw it a long distance with great ease. Standing it on end, he could run towards it and knock it over with one sweep of his leg.

The annual "God-Libation Festival" arrived. The young man wanted to take part in the shepherds' wrestling matches. He begged his mother, his mother in turn begged the lord of Bailin, who gave his consent.

The old woman's son defeated all the wrestlers and won first prize. The lord of Bailin, anxious to share in the glory, hurriedly came forward. Pointing at the young man, he declared:

"He is my shepherd."

From that day on, the lord no longer let him tend sheep, but made him a professional wrestler.

For three successive years the old woman's son won the first prize at the "God-Libation Festival." His fame spread far and wide. People named him Wrestler Bailin.

One year, the lord of Wuchumuchin was celebrating his fiftieth birthday. The lord of Bailin prepared many gifts for the occasion. To display his Banner's power, he summoned the young wrestler and declared:

"I command you, go with my representatives to attend the birthday ceremony of the lord of Wuchumuchin. You must win the first prize at the wrestling contest there. Otherwise, I'll cut your head off!" He gave the youth a bridle, indicating that he must win the steed which was always awarded as first prize and ride it back.

Wrestler Bailin knew very well that should he fail in the contest, he was doomed to be killed by his master. So he left the lord's mansion dispiritedly. At home he asked for his mother's blessing. Sorrowfully, the mother and the son parted. Together with the officials sent by Lord Bailin, Wrestler Bailin left his native parts and went to Wuchumuchin.

As soon as they arrived at their destination, they called on Lord Wuchumuchin who was offering a great banquet to entertain the officials from other Banners. After receiving the newly-arrived guests, Lord Wuchumuchin turned to Wrestler Bailin and asked:

"So you are the famous Wrestler Bailin?"

Wrestler Bailin kowtowed and replied, "Yes, great lord."

Lord Wuchumuchin asked again, "When you set off what did your master bid you?"

"If you please, my lord," said Wrestler Bailin, "my master bade me win the first prize in the wrestling contest here."

Again Lord Wuchumuchin asked: "What do you yourself think of it?"

Wrestler Bailin replied without any hesitation, "I also think that I shall ride Your Honour's first-prize steed."

This reply enraged Lord Wuchumuchin who thought: "How dare this wretched pauper look down upon the great lord of Wuchumuchin!" To test the strength of Wrestler Bailin, he picked up a huge ox's spine bone and threw it to Wrestler Bailin, ordering him to eat the marrow. Wrestler Bailin caught the bone and kowtowed. As he raised the

bone to break it, the stewards and servants of Lord Wuchumuchin burst into uproarious laughter, shouting:

"What do you want, a knife or an axe?"

Wrestler Bailin said, "I have no need of either." Using only six fingers, he broke the bone right in the middle. Lord Wuchumuchin was startled and realized how mighty indeed Wrestler Bailin was.

Lord Wuchumuchin postponed the wrestling contest for one month, for he did not want Wrestler Bailin to win the first prize. He sent people to many places to seek famous wrestlers. Only after he had gathered five hundred and seventy sets of wrestlers did he permit the wrestling contest to commence.

The contest began. As quick as wind and as fierce as fire, Wrestler Bailin defeated opponents one after the other. Lord Wuchumuchin saw that things were not going in his favour, so he hastily ordered that man-to-man wrestling be stopped. Instead, Lord Wuchumuchin ordered all wrestlers to fight Wrestler Bailin in quick succession, hoping by so doing to wear him down. Such an arbitrary action was against the rule of wrestling. Although the people were angry, none dared to speak out.

Despite all the tricks of Lord Wuchumuchin, not one of the many wrestlers could compete with Wrestler Bailin.

In the first few days Wrestler Bailin threw his opponents without even lifting his own feet from the ground. But as he wrestled on, the number of strong opponents increased and the time for each round dragged longer and longer. Finally, only Lord Wuchumuchin's champion wrestler with gold armour was left to compete with Wrestler Bailin.

For three days, these two stalwarts wrestled until their leather boots and armour were broken into bits. Still neither had got the better of the other.

Lord Wuchumuchin's wrestler tried to take Wrestler Bailin unawares and tumble him over. But Wrestler Bailin's feet were as if rooted to the ground, they moved not an inch. At last, gathering all his might, Wrestler Bailin lifted the wrestler with the gold armour and tossed him to the ground.

Lord Wuchumuchin had no choice but to award the first-prize steed to Wrestler Bailin. But he also craftily presented him with an iron cart of gold ingots. He said to Wrestler Bailin:

"Thirty *li* away from here is a red bull of mine. Push this cart of gold to the red bull, harness the bull to the cart and let it pull you home. If you fail to push this cart of gold to the red bull, I'll deem it that you disobeyed my order and have your head cut off immediately!"

Wrestler Bailin kowtowed to the lord and departed. Pushing the cart loaded with gold, he plodded towards the place the lord had indicated.

As he neared the bull's pen, he saw an enormous animal three or four times fiercer than ordinary bulls. Its eyes were fiery red, and its horns were smeared with human blood. The bull was a man-eater. It roared loudly, impatiently pacing its pen.

Wrestler Bailin thought to himself: "If I had been defeated in the wrestling contest, I would be killed by Lord Bailin back home. Now I have won the contest, but Lord Wuchumuchin is scheming to murder me. The black-hearted lords simply will not let me live. . . ." But then he thought: "If I survive this hard trial put up by Lord Wuchumuchin, perhaps my life will be spared." Steeling himself, he opened the bull's pen and walked in.

The bull was a confirmed man-eater. When Wrestler Bailin entered, it withdrew a few steps, lowered its head and charged. Wrestler Bailin swerved aside, rushed forward, grasped the bull's tail and dragged it backwards. The bull struggled desperately to go forward. Suddenly, Wrestler Bailin let go the bull's tail and the bull stumbled forward. Wrestler Bailin jumped on the bull's back, broke off one of its horns and pounded the fiendish bull on the head until the animal was subjugated.

So Wrestler Bailin had tamed the red bull. He harnessed it to the cart and drove it home.

But would the cruel Lord Wuchumuchin let so brave a man go? He sent off two "crazy camels" to pursue Wrestler Bailin.

The names of the two crazy camels were "Valley Stream" and "Snake." "Valley Stream" was wont to rush forward with its head high, trying to attack any person it caught sight of. "Snake" was wont to dash forward with its neck lowered and swallow whatever it caught.

Wrestler Bailin was happily driving the red bull along, thinking that soon he would be reunited with his old mother. All of a sudden, he saw two crazy camels dashing towards him from behind, crying savagely as they ran. He hastily jumped down from the cart, took out an iron rod and stood by the roadside. "Valley Stream" rushed forward with its head high. Wrestler Bailin dodged, then stepped in, striking and breaking the back of "Valley Stream." Next, he smashed the mouth of "Snake" as it rushed forward with its neck lowered. The two crazy camels immediately fell to the ground and died.

Wrestler Bailin continued on his way, thinking that now all dangers were over and he could reach home in safety. But who knew that Lord Wuchumuchin had ordered one hundred men with guns to ambush Wrestler Bailin at the border between the Banners of Wuchumuchin and Bailin. As Wrestler Bailin was crossing the border that night, he was shot by the lord's "watchdogs."



When Lord Bailin heard of his wrestler's death, he showed no sign of any agitation. He considered it unworthy to quarrel with Lord Wuchumuchin over an ordinary shepherd. He secretly hushed the matter up.

But the name of Wrestler Bailin has never been forgotten by the people. Generation after generation of the herdsmen remember him. The story of this hero is still being told in the pasturelands to this day.

*Translated by Chang Su
Illustration by Chung Ling*

There have always been authors among the illiterate people. I have not been to the country for many years; but in the old days when the peasants had time to spare, say if they were resting in the shade, stories would be told. The story-teller would be chosen for his wider experience and command of language, his ability to hold his hearers' interest and express himself clearly and entertainingly. In fact, such a man is an author. His words, written down, become literature.

— Lu Hsun

Two Wonder Trees

(HAN)

Once upon a time there was an old man who lived with his son and daughter. All day long the old man and his son plaited bamboo crates to sell. The girl prepared the meals for her father and her brother and helped them with odd jobs. The three of them were very diligent. They worked all day and they worked at night. At that time no cotton grew that could be woven into cloth for making clothes, nor was there oil for lighting lamps. They wore animal skins and bark. They burned firewood at night for light. Year in, year out, as they worked by the low, flickering firewood light, their eyes grew dimmer and dimmer.

One day, as the three of them sat by the light of the firewood, they rubbed their red, swollen eyes and sighed.

The brother said, "If only the moon could shine as brightly as the sun and come out every night!"

The sister said, "Is there a way to make the moon shine as brightly as the sun and come out every night?"

The old father thought for a moment and said, "I heard that in a far, far away place, there is a mountain called Cloud-Ladder Mount. On that mountain lives an old man who plants trees. He has white hair, white eyebrows and a white beard. His white beard is very long, reaching from his chin to the ground. When the moon passes by Cloud-Ladder Mount, the old man often goes on the moon to play. If he could ask the moon to shine as brightly as the sun and come out every night, then the people who work at night would no longer feel the cold, nor would their eyes become sore and blind."

"Let us go and ask the old man to implore the moon!" the brother and the sister said simultaneously.

"That is no easy matter," the old man said seriously. "I heard that the way to Cloud-Ladder Mount is long and hard to traverse. The mountain is several thousand feet high and is all covered with snow."

"To free the people who work at night from cold and prevent them from becoming blind, we are not afraid of any hardship, any suffering. We will climb up to Cloud-Ladder Mount and look for the white-bearded old man." The brother and sister were resolute.

The following day, before dawn, the brother left home.

He swam across one river and then another, climbed up one mountain and yet another mountain, walked through one forest and on through another forest. His feet were sore from walking, so he crept on his hands and knees. When his knees were bruised he took off the animal skin he was wearing, wrapped it around his knees and crept on.

After nine months, the brother finally climbed up Cloud-Ladder Mount, all covered with snow. An old man with white hair, white eyebrows and white beard was sitting on a rock. He was combing his long, long, white beard with a big comb.

The brother crawled up to the old man and told him his tale. At the end he said, "Old dad, I beg you, please speak to the moon, and ask her to shine as brightly as the sun and come out every night."

The old man went on combing his beard. He said not a word.

The brother pleaded again, "Old dad, do please help the people. Many of them work at night and are frozen from the cold. Many are becoming blind."

The old man slowly raised his head. He looked at the brother whose body was purple from cold and whose feet were so badly hurt from the long journey that he could no longer stand up. Compassionately, the old man said, "Wait a while, my child."

The moon came to the top of the mountain. The old man put down his comb, wound his beard around his neck,

climbed to the snow-covered mountain peak and with a jump leaped onto the moon.

The brother sat on the mountain and gazed at the sky.

Before long, the old man came down from the snow-white peak. He shook his white-haired head and said to the brother, "The moon says she cannot do it. Her power is limited, she cannot shine as brightly as the sun. And some nights she must go down to the sea to wash her face, so she cannot come out every night, for if her face got dirty she would shine even less brightly."

The brother was in despair. He thought of the many people who became sick from the cold and whose eyes grew dim from working at night. He wept and wept heart-rendingly.

Drop, drop, drop, the boy's tears dropped to the ground, melting the snow as they fell. The old man's eyes became moist and he said, "Child, the moon in the sky can do nothing. Let us think of some way on earth."

The brother sobbed, "What can we do?"

The old man replied, "If we transform men into trees which will bear oil for people to light lamps with and cotton for people to make clothes with, then the people working at night would no longer suffer from the cold nor would they become blind."

"As long as it is useful to other people, I am willing to become a tree," said the brother.

The old man saw that the boy was sincere in wishing to become a tree to help other people. He combed his white beard and out rolled a pearl as big as an egg. He handed the pearl to the brother, saying, "Child, swallow this pearl! It will transform you into a tree!"

Without the slightest hesitation the brother took the pearl and swallowed it in one gulp. In the twinkling of an eye he became a tree with long branches and abundant foliage. In a moment the tree was abloom with beautiful flowers and in another moment its branches were heavy with fruit as big as eggs. Each fruit was filled with oil.

The old man said, "Child, you will be called the *tung* tree."

A breeze blew, the *tung* tree rustled in rippling laughter.

At home the old father and the sister waited for nine months. Still the brother did not return. They were very anxious and worried.

The sister said, "Let me go to Cloud-Ladder Mount! I will ask the white-bearded old man to plead to the moon to shine as brightly as the sun. And I will bring my brother back!"

The following day, before dawn, the sister left home.

Like her brother, after travelling for nine months under difficult conditions, the sister climbed up Cloud-Ladder Mount, all covered with snow.

The old man was sitting on a rock, combing his long, long white beard with a comb.

The sister crawled up to the old man and said, "Old dad, I beg you, please speak to the moon, and ask her to shine as brightly as the sun and come out every night!"

The old man saw that the girl was purple all over from the cold and her feet were so badly hurt from her long journey that she was unable to stand up.

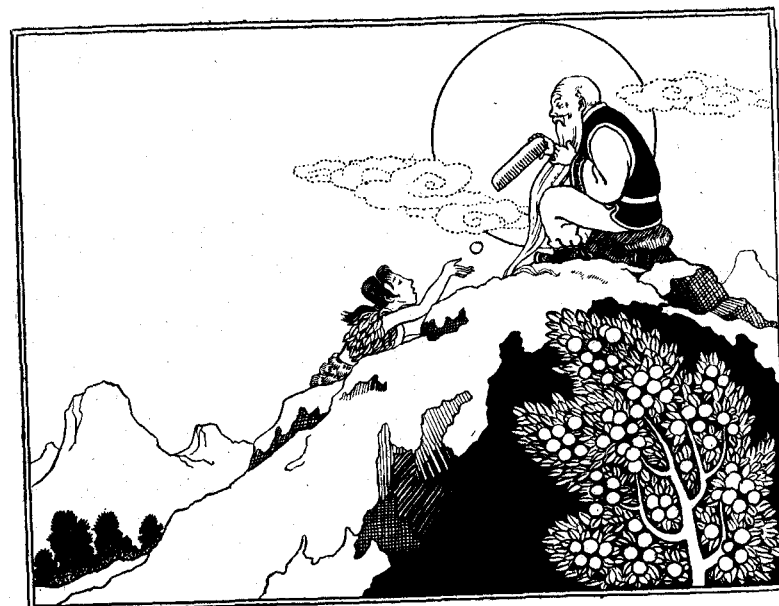
Compassionately, the old man said to her, "Once a boy came here and begged for the same thing. I asked the moon, but she said she is limited in her power and she cannot be as bright as the sun, nor can she come out every night because she must go down to the sea to wash her face."

The girl was in despair and she said, "Then what to do? What can we think of?"

"Light lamps with oil and make clothes with cotton." The old man pointed to a tree in front of them and said, "The boy who came last time was transformed into a *tung* tree."

The girl crawled up to the tree. She caressed the trunk and said, "Brother, how are you? You have become a *tung* tree so that people may light lamps with oil." She turned her head and begged the old man: "I beg you, let me also do something good for other people!"

The old man saw that the girl was sincere in wishing to do something good for others. He combed his white beard



and a pearl as big as an egg rolled out. He handed it to the girl, saying, "Good-hearted girl, swallow this pearl, it will grant you your wish!"

Without the slightest hesitation, the sister swallowed the pearl. In the twinkle of an eye she became a tree with short branches and green leaves. In a moment the tree was abloom with beautiful flowers, in another moment it bore fruit as big as eggs. Each fruit was filled with cotton.

The old man said, "Child, you will be called the kapok tree."

A breeze blew, the kapok tree rustled with jolly laughter.

At home the old father waited for nine months. Neither his son nor his daughter had returned. He said to himself, "I will also go to ask the white-bearded man to implore the moon to shine more brightly. And I will bring my children back."

Like his son and his daughter, he also travelled for nine months. Then he came to Cloud-Ladder Mount. He saw

an old man sitting on a rock, combing his white beard. He also begged him to ask the moon to shine as brightly as the sun and to come out every night.

The old man told him it could not be done. He also told him that already two children had come and they had been transformed into trees. They were ready to give people oil for lighting lamps and cotton for making clothes.

"I also want to become a tree," he begged.

"No, you can't," the old man said quickly, "I have no more pearls which can transform you into a tree. But it is very good that you have come. You can bring these seeds of the *tung* tree and the kapok tree home with you and sow them in large quantities. Let people light lamps with its oil and make clothes with its cotton." He took up a bamboo crate and handed it to the old father. At that moment a breeze blew, the two trees shook their branches and laughed gaily and the seeds of the *tung* tree and of the kapok tree fell into the bamboo crate.

The old man took the crate back home. He sowed the seeds over the hills and over the vales. Before long, all the hills and all the vales were dotted with *tung* trees and kapok trees, trees heavy with fruit.

From then on each household had oil, every home had cotton. People dressed in new cotton-padded clothes and at night they lighted lamps. They worked happily under the bright oil lamps. They no longer suffered from the cold, nor were their eyes blinded by dim light.

*Translated by Chang Su
Illustration by Chih Hsing*

Fables

The Conceited Swan

(MONGOLIAN)

Once upon a time, an otter and a swan lived in the same river. The swan was so proud of his beauty and good eyesight, which enabled him to see things from a great distance, that he looked down upon the otter with his small, near-sighted eyes. He considered the otter unworthy to be his friend and paid little attention to him. Whenever he met the otter, the swan would hold his round head high, stretch his graceful neck and proudly glide away.

One day, while the industrious otter was working on the bank of the river cutting twigs for a new house, the swan leisurely swam near him. When the otter saw him he quickly put the twigs down, stopped his work and greeted him.

"How are you, Brother Swan?" He was as polite as ever.

"Oh, it's you! You have just seen me? My, but you are blind!" The conceited swan nodded his head slightly. "Yes, your eyes will be the cause of your death sooner or later. A hunter will catch you with his bare hands and put you into his bag alive."

"Surely your eyesight is better than mine and you can see further than I, but please listen, do you hear the water splashing at the second turn of the river over there?"

The swan opened his eyes wide and listened carefully for a while. "No, there is nothing stirring. No splashing of water. Nothing stirring even in the forest on the bank."

"Please listen. Is there water splashing over there?"

"Where?"

"At the first turn of the river."



Woodcut by Yang Li

"No, nothing at all. There is no splashing of water. Nothing stirring even in the forest."

"Listen carefully," the otter urged him again and again. "Is there water splashing just over there?"

"Where do you mean?"

"This side of the first turn of the river."

"Nothing, nothing at all. You must be lying, trying to play a joke on me!"

"My ears are as important to me as your eyes are to you," said the otter. "Good-bye, Brother Swan." And he quickly jumped into the water.

"You . . . you are blind," thought the arrogant swan. "You are speaking nonsense. My eyes can see everything. How can you compare your ears with my eyes? What nonsense!" He grew more and more conceited. The more conceited he became, the higher he stretched his white neck. While he was looking around as happily as could be, the hunter, who was coming down the river on a raft, aimed at him. Before the swan could fly away, the hunter's gun clicked and down went the conceited swan into the river.

The Cat and the Rats

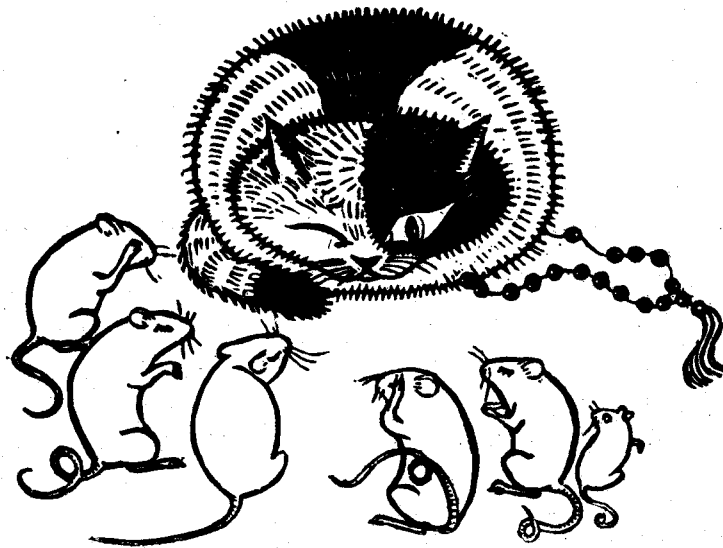
(MONGOLIAN)

The cat had a kind appearance. He walked gracefully with a string of beads around his neck, mumbling prayers all the time. He didn't stir a bit even when rats ran by. After a long time, the rats no longer shied away from him.

One day the cat said to the rats, "I would like to tell the beads to you. If you listen to my prayers carefully you will avoid all calamities."

The rats believed him and looked upon him as their teacher. From that time on the cat prayed with the rats every night. But he made one rule: the rats must sit quietly with their eyes shut. They were not to stir a bit until the beads were told and the cat dismissed them.

So the rats listened to the telling of the beads every night. At first they didn't find anything wrong. But by



Woodcut by Cheng Shuang

and by a little rat discovered that each day another rat was missing.

One night when the rats were listening quietly the little rat opened his eyes slightly. The cat had left his seat. He was at the back dragging a rat out. "Run quickly!" shouted the little rat. "The teacher is eating us."

The rats, as if awakened from a dream, dispersed immediately.

The Wolf and the Lamb

(MONGOLIAN)

A little lamb wandered away from the flock while grazing. He came to a small stream. He was just about to drink his fill of the clear water when a wolf came along. The wolf, craving to devour the lamb, tried to find fault with him.

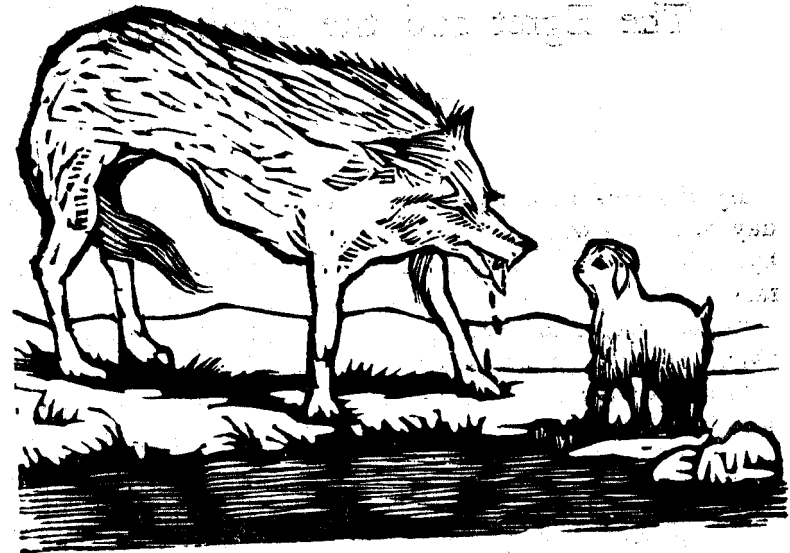
He glared and said fiercely, "How dare you muddy up the water when I am drinking?"

"I didn't. The water flows this way and you are at the upper reaches. The river doesn't flow backwards! How could I muddy up the water you drink?" retorted the lamb.

Finding his argument weak, the wolf looked for another one. "All right, you might be right. But I was told that you are very bad and called me names behind my back last year. Don't you remember? I've been planning to straighten it out with you. Now I've met you."

"When did I call you names? I wasn't born yet last year," explained the little lamb.

The wolf was so greedy that he did not care to reason with the lamb any more.



Woodcut by Na. Cha-ko

"It doesn't matter whether you were born or not. You may not have done bad deeds, but your father has. So you must be the same as your father," said he unreasonably.

He opened his big mouth and swooped down upon the poor little lamb.

The lamb struggled and pleaded, "Please spare me. I don't know what my father has done."

"Neither do I. The only thing I know is that you are fat and delicious and that is your fault. So I want to eat you up."

And the cruel wolf swallowed the little lamb.

You must know that it is useless for a good man to reason with a bad man.

The Egret and the Small Fish

(TIBETAN)

By the side of a little river lived an aged egret. One day, when he was very hungry, a school of small fish swam by. He greeted them with a melancholy expression on his face.

"What has happened to you?" asked the little fish. "Why are you so worried?"

"I'm worried for you because you are all going to die soon."



Woodcut by Sung Yen-sheng

"Why?" The little fish were frightened.

"The water in this river will soon dry up and there will be nothing for you to eat."

The little fish discussed the problem for a while and then asked for advice. "Is there any way out?"

"At the other side of the mountain there is a lake where you can go and live. The water is clear. I'll take you there if you wish," said the egret eagerly.

"But you know that we cannot leave the water and walk on land!"

"Then I'll carry you there one by one."

The little fish agreed. So the egret carried the little fish in his beak one by one to a big flat stone some distance away and ate them all up.

The Tibetan people have an old saying which goes:

"Credulous to sweet words, easily fooled.

Greed for bait leads to one's death."

The Bull's Eyes and the Goose's Eyes

(HAN)

Once upon a time there was a fierce bull who was very strong. He had two horns and a pair of strange eyes. In his eyes everything appeared to be very small — a dog the size of a cat, a cat the size of a rat and a grown-up the height of a five or six-year-old child. Therefore he was afraid of nothing. He rushed here and there all day long, claiming to be the emperor and causing much trouble.

A fairy heard about this and became very angry. She gave the bull's eyes to a goose, and the bull received the goose's eyes. Then he found that a rat was as big as a cat, a cat as big as a dog and a five or six-year-old child a



Woodcut by Wan Ying-yi

grown-up. Upon finding everything very big, he grew mild and could easily be controlled by a child. He was punished for his past mischief by being harnessed to a plough. The goose, possessing the eyes of a bull, became rash and afraid of nothing, not even the bull. When the bull came near, the goose would stretch his neck, spread his wings, honk fiercely and chase after the bull.

The Tail of the Hare

(HAN)

Long, long ago, the hare's tail was not its present length. The first pair of hares had long, hairy tails, and very beautiful tails they were. They were proud of having such tails and considered themselves superior to everybody else. They thought they were extremely clever and often played jokes on others. But they never thought that their petty tricks would turn their beautiful tails into their present short, ugly shape.

This is the story.

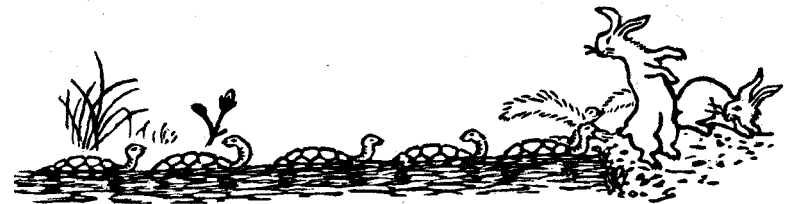
One day, when they were playing on the bank of the river they saw a stretch of tender, green grass growing on the other side. They would have liked to eat their fill, but hares do not swim. How were they to cross? They were thinking and thinking when they heard a swish in the water. It was an old turtle sunning herself. Suddenly the hares had an idea.

"Mother Turtle," they said, "we were told that you have a large family of many sons and daughters. Is that true?"

"Yes, yes," the turtle answered happily.

"Speaking of families," said the hares, "ours is bigger. We have many brothers."

"Don't you boast. I see only the two of you all the time."



Woodcut by Fan Meng

"They are all at home," replied the dishonest hares. "Let's compare and see who has the bigger family."

"How shall we do it?" asked the unsuspecting turtle.

"Let's first count your sons and daughters today. Tomorrow we'll count our brothers. You gather them together and line them up on the water, two by two. We'll count from this side of the river to the other side, pair by pair."

"All right," the old turtle agreed.

So she summoned all her sons and daughters and lined them up neatly two by two on the water with their necks held high. The hares hopped over the turtles' backs as they counted. "One, two, three . . ." Soon they approached the other side of the river. The two hares happily jumped onto the bank and laughed, "You silly turtles, we've fooled you." But they laughed too soon. Though they had jumped out of the water, their tails were still dragging behind. The last pair of turtles grasped the tails with their teeth. The hares struggled and pulled away, but their tails were bitten off.

From then on the hare's tail has been its present length. Is there not a saying which goes, "what can you do with a hare's tail?"

Translated by Yu Fan-chin

LIANG PIN

Keep the Red Flag Flying (*cont'd*)

THE STORY SO FAR

At the end of the nineteenth century, Soching Village in Hopei is under the thumb of FENG LAN-CHIH, landlord, usurer and village head. Feng tyrannizes over the local people and has a particular hatred for CHU KUNG and YEN HSIANG, two peasants who dare to oppose him. After a clash with him Chu dies of rage, and his son CHU CHUNG runs away. Before long Yen Hsiang also flies to the northeast.

About twenty-five years later, when warlords are fighting for the control of north China, Chu Chung returns to Soching with a wife and two boys, TA-KUEI and ERH-KUEI. By this time Yen Hsiang's son, YEN CHIH-HO, has grown up and has two sons of his own, YUN-TAO and CHIANG-TAO. Yen and other peasants have been unjustly defeated in a lawsuit by Feng, who is now abetted by his lawyer son, FENG KUEI-TANG. Furious at Chu's return, Feng has Ta-kuei conscripted into a warlord's army.

Yun-tao meets a teacher named CHIA, a Communist, and joins the Party. He falls in love with pretty CHUN-LAN, a neighbour's daughter; but Feng tries to separate them because he wants Chun-lan for himself. Then Yun-tao leaves for Kwangtung to join the revolutionary army there, and Chun-lan promises to wait for him. They later hear that he is a company commander. His brother Chiang-tao joins the Communist Youth League and goes to study in the No. 2 Normal School in Paoting.

For many months no letter came from Yun-tao, till his whole family worried over him day and night. Then, without warning, great trouble came upon them.

In the autumn of 1928, Yen Chih-ho was overjoyed to receive another letter from his son. Since there was no one at hand to read it to him, he decided to go into town to see Mr. Chia. He had just climbed the dyke when Li Teh-tsai slouched up from the south and caught sight of him in the distance. Tugging at his beard Li called politely:

"Brother Chih-ho! What post has Yun-tao now?"

"Company commander!" said Yen.

Li Teh-tsai forced himself to smile. "A company commander? That's fairly high. He must get over a hundred dollars a month — a lot more than an old peasant like you! But Feng Hung's son, who was made a regiment commander straight away, makes even more."

Yen shot him a sidelong look as he retorted: "What business is it of mine how much he makes?"

When Li saw that Yen was annoyed, he trotted over with a smile. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to town to find someone to read me a letter."

"Why make a trip to town for a little thing like that? Here, let me read it to you!"

"You're Mr. Feng's accountant. How can I trouble an important man like you?"

"Bah, don't say that. When the Northern Expedition succeeds you'll be a high official's father. And now Chiang-tao has gone to that foreign-style school. Not to mention me, even old Feng will have to show you respect."

They sat down under a poplar on the dyke. Li opened the letter and read it grimly in silence. Then he gave a bellow of laughter. "It's finished — your official post!"

Yen stared. "What do you mean?"

"Who said he was an official? He's nothing of the sort! Let me read these few lines to you:

"Dear Father,

Last April I was arrested and put into gaol, where I have been for over a year. Now they are sending me from Nanking to Tsinan to the Tsinan Model Prison. Please come with Chiang-tao as soon as you get this letter. If you come at once we may see each other once more. If you delay, I may never meet my father and brother again in this life. . . ."

When Li Teh-tsai had read this unctuously, dragging out the last word, he shook with laughter. "Yun-tao's finished! This doesn't even look like his writing."

The roaring in Yen's ears prevented him from hearing all Li was saying. He seemed to have been dropped into a hot pan. He shuddered, and cold sweat broke out on his face. The next moment he was burning feverishly. Unconscious how he left Li Teh-tsai, he staggered wildly to Chu Chung's house and shouted at the window: "Is Brother Chung at home?"

"Who's that? Chih-ho?" cried Mrs. Chu inside. "He's picking pears."

Yen turned and stumbled off.

Chu was gathering pears on the branch of a tree when he saw Yen reeling towards the orchard. Yen was hurrying forward with bent head and swinging arms as if something were seriously wrong. Chu jumped down and strode to meet him. "Chih-ho! What is it? What's the hurry?" Yen hung his head and lurched along in silence.

"Chih-ho! Chih-ho!" cried Chu in alarm. "What's the matter?"

Yen was tall and powerfully built, with a strong back and sturdy shoulders. Years of toil and hardship had left their mark on his high brow. In general, there was no one more stoical. Since boyhood he had worked on the land, ploughing and tilling the fields. And for years now he had been a mason too and climbed high scaffolding. He had never been ill in his life, never taken a drop of medicine. But the news that his son was in prison as a Communist had thoroughly unmanned him. As he tottered up to Chu, his head reeled and he collapsed under the trees. All grew

dark before his eyes. Chu stooped to raise his head. "Wake up, brother!" He chafed Yen's temples.

Yen heard Chu's voice as if in a dream. Tears welled from his eyes. From between chattering teeth he cried: "Brother . . . I'm in serious trouble!"

Chu shook his head and clapped both hands to his hips. "Tell me, Chih-ho! What's your difficulty? We've lived together and we're ready to die together. We've shared all our troubles together. If you're hard pressed, I'm not going to keep away. Whatever happens to you is my business too. I'll put a knife in my ribs to help a friend!"

When Yen heard this, he spread his trembling hands. "My boy Yun-tao's been arrested as a Communist."

Chu felt as if lightning had suddenly blinded him. He stared fixedly for some minutes, then said slowly: "He's been thrown into prison, eh?" Rolling his eyes, he commented without thinking: "I did hear that the Kuomintang had a big purge. Thousands of people have been murdered. With things as they are, this doesn't sound too good." Too late he cursed himself for a fool and gulped as if to swallow back his words.

Yen shivered. "Brother, you've got to help me!" he cried. "Come to Tsinan with me to see the boy. You've travelled to Peking, Tientsin, the northeast. I've never left my fields. I'd be lost on my own. . . ." He shook his head again and again.

In April of 1927, the Kuomintang had carried out a great purge. Many Communists had been arrested and imprisoned. Many others had been killed. One evening, about that time, the commander of Yun-tao's battalion summoned all his officers and called the roll. He ordered Yun-tao and a few others to fall out for a court martial.

"What is your name?" asked the officer in charge of the investigation.

"Yen Yun-tao!"

"Where are you from?"

"Hopei."

"Your age?"

"Twenty-seven."

Last of all: "Are you a member of the Communist Party?"

"Yes, I am!"

The trial was short and simple. Not another word was said. Indeed everyone knew that Yun-tao and the other Communists had joined the Kuomintang collectively. Handcuffed and fettered, he was thrown into a dark gaol.

This summer, when the Northern Expedition reached Tsinan, more Communists were arrested. And since Yun-tao was involved in some of their cases, he was transferred from Nanking to Tsinan. At once he asked someone to post this letter telling of his arrest and asking his father to visit him.

Chu Chung agreed to his friend's request at once. Throwing back his shoulders he cried in a voice that carried: "That's easy, Chih-ho! If heaven falls, the earth will prop it up. You can count on me. I'll set off with you as soon as you say the word — there's no difficulty about that."

This lifted a great weight from Yen's mind. He opened his eyes and struggled to his feet. But at once he stumbled sideways to stagger and fall. Chu hastily caught him and asked: "What's wrong with you?"

"I'm feeling dizzy."

Chu put one arm round Yen, who laid his right arm over his friend's shoulder, and so the two of them plodded slowly home. Mrs. Yen was shocked by her husband's haggard, drooping face, drenched in sweat. His eyes were half closed and he was staggering as if his legs would buckle under him. "Mercy!" she cried. "What's the matter?"

"Don't shout," said Chu. "Help me to put him down."

They carried Yen to the *kang*, and made him lie down with his head well raised. Then Chu and Mrs. Yen went to the kitchen, where he sat down by the stove and told her softly: "Sister, I don't rightly know whether to tell you what has happened or not. You're the mistress of the house, so you ought to know. But if I tell you, you must promise to keep a good grip on yourself."

Mrs. Yen had seen her son's letter in his hand. Her heart contracted. "Has something happened to Yun-tao?"

Chu told her what was in the letter. She lowered her head and the tears coursed down her cheeks. Though she could not understand the cruelty of the class struggle, storytellers and plays had taught her the horrors of a prison. She began to sob bitterly. She was still weeping softly when grandmother looked in from the other room and pricked up her ears. She caught the words: "Yun-tao in prison!" The old woman's jaw dropped and she cried: "What's that? Yun-tao in prison?"

Her voice sounded so strange that Mrs. Yen hurried in to her. Grandmother was writhing on the *kang*, her head twitching, her eyes tightly closed. Her face was working, and she was muttering something. Mrs. Yen called: "Mother! Mother! What's the matter?" In panic she chafed grandmother's hands and stroked her head. "Mother, open your eyes! Open your eyes!"

Chu went in and put his hand before the old woman's nostrils. A faint trickle of breath was all that he could feel. "Don't make such a noise, sister!" he said. "Lay her out."

An old person's life is like a lamp in the wind, like frost on the roof. It cannot withstand wind, sun, or any shock. The news of Yun-tao's imprisonment had struck his grandmother like lightning. Her lips trembled as she quavered again and again: "My old man is still away. . . . It's a hard life. . . ." Her eyes slowly sank into their sockets.

That evening they hung white paper money outside Yen's gate.

Presently the tapping of a stick was heard. Chu Ming groped his way in.

He felt his way to the corpse and bent down to wail. Tears welled up from his eyes.

"Brother, she's gone," said Chu, whose own eyes were moist. "It's no use blubbering."

"I'm sorry for Chih-ho and the poor lads," sobbed Chu Ming. Then he dried his eyes with his sleeve and asked what illness had carried the old lady off.

Chu Chung told him: "Yun-tao's trouble is burden enough for them without a funeral." He gave Chu Ming

the news of the Kuomintang's purge and Yun-tao's imprisonment.

The blind man raised his head and breathed hard. "You had better send for Chiang-tao," he advised. "You can discuss with him what had best be done. This is a terrible blow for us poor folk — the army of the revolution defeated and Yun-tao thrown into prison!"

In the few hours since grandmother passed away, Chu Chung's eyes had grown red with weeping. He wrung his hands and cried: "Who could have known? I was just waiting for the day when the army of the revolution would come. I thought we'd knock Feng Lan-chih down and marry Yun-tao and Chun-lan. Ah! We were drawing water in a bamboo basket."

"You'd better look out, brother," warned Chu Ming. "There's no knowing what dirty tricks those dogs will play." He drew a dagger from his pocket and ran his finger down it till the blade rang. "When I heard things weren't going so well, I provided myself with a weapon. I carry this on me all the time. If they try to do me in, I'll grab them and drag one or two to the grave with me!"

As they were talking, neighbours and friends came to pay their respects to the dead. They left in the evening. It was autumn and the night wind was sharp. Two insects were chirping on the steps. Chu Chung closed the door and set a small oil lamp on the table. Its violet flames made the whole room look blue. He and Chu Ming sat down with Yen and the three men took counsel together. Yen agreed to send for Chiang-tao. He said hoarsely: "Send him Yun-tao's letter. Tell him to get Yen Chih-hsiao to write asking some friend to help, so that we can go to Tsinan and save Yun-tao. But don't tell him about his grandmother. She brought the lad up and he was mighty fond of her. . . ." He broke down again at this point.

Chu Ming blinked. "Stop that, brother! You're not well, and what will your family do if anything happens to you? There's a thousand-pound weight on your shoulders!"

"Ming's right," agreed Chu Chung. "You're the head of the family. What's to become of them if you don't get better?" He told Mrs. Yen: "Go and get him something to eat. You've both been crying all day and eaten nothing."

A daughter is flesh of her mother's heart. That evening, Chun-lan's mother had been to the wake and heard the bad news about Yun-tao. She hurried home and whispered to Chun-lan: "Daughter! A fearful thing has happened! Yun-tao's in gaol."

Ever since Mrs. Chu spoke to Chun-lan, the splendour of the revolutionary army and Yun-tao's eyes had been beckoning her like glow-worms twinkling in the distance. Though faint and far away, this gleam of light warmed her whole being like the sun. She lived by its warmth and radiance. When her mother broke the bad news, her heart contracted but she tried to conceal her feelings. "Bah!" She curled her lips disdainfully. "Why talk about him? I'd forgotten him." But already her heart was pounding wildly.

It is true that she shed no tears. She had wept already till her eyes were as dry as a waterless pond—you could throw in a stone and still make no splash at all. She was old enough now to understand something about revolution and counter-revolution. She knew that even if she wept her eyes out that would not help the revolution or Yun-tao. When dusk fell, the evening mist was like a grey cloak, and she longed to pass her whole life under such a veil. Before it grew wholly dark she hid herself in a shadowy corner, letting the blackness swallow her.

After the evening meal it started to drizzle, as if the sky were shedding unending tears. A wind sprang up and leaves rustled. Suddenly she asked herself: Do we live to suffer or be happy? She had no happiness. Her one faint ray of happiness was about to be extinguished. She felt as wretched and hopeless as if she had fallen into a bottomless pit. To her mind, she served no purpose in the world: she had much better die. An idea crossed her mind. After a moment's hesitation, she climbed on a stool and reached down a case from the top of the wardrobe. From

this she took her new coloured trousers and jacket. Having put these on, she dressed her hair, lit the lamp and looked in the mirror. She shook her head over her pretty reflection, thinking: "I'm still so young!" Pushing aside the mirror, she blew out the lamp and threw herself, sobbing, on the *kang*. Then raising her tearful eyes, she tiptoed through the dark to the hall and reached for the chopper on the table. Its blade was gleaming in the dark. Some rustle she must have made aroused her mother, who called from the *kang*: "Chun-lan! What's that on the table?"

She stilled her racing heart and answered as if she were some way away: "Aren't you asleep yet, mother? It must be a rat."

Her mother turned over and muttered: "Are you still awake? Ah, daughter, your trouble is preying on mother's mind. How can I keep you at home all your life? Heaven, let him come back to save my daughter's life!"

These words suggested a new train of thought to Chun-lan. "Yun-tao may still come back!" She put down the knife and tiptoed back to her room. Sitting on the *kang* by the window, she watched the clouds scattering till the moon came out and the sky was blue. She lay down again, her tearful eyes on heaven. The moonlight falling through the window frame shone on her and her white, unhappy face.

22

When Chiang-tao read his brother's letter, he clamped his lips together and said nothing. His long lashes fluttered over his brilliant eyes as he pondered the reason for Yun-tao's arrest and the probable consequences. In the autumn of 1927, the Special Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Paoting had sent a responsible comrade to the No. 2 Normal School, who had told a meeting of the Party and Youth League the decision of those higher up. He formally announced: "When the Northern Expeditionary Army fought its way to Nanking, because the counter-revolutionaries wanted all the fruits of victory for themselves,

they disclosed their true nature and betrayed the revolution, massacring Party members and suppressing the workers and peasants. The Kuomintang and Communist Party can no longer co-operate. But we are not pessimistic. The Chinese revolution has a great future. We must dry our tears, comrades, and take up weapons to struggle. . . .” That marked the ebb of the high tide of revolution, and terror reigned in the north.

Chiang-tao asked the dean of studies for leave to call on Yen Chih-hsiao. He would beg him to write to anyone who might help, so that he could go to Tsinan and save Yun-tao.

Yen Chih-hsiao lived in a tiled house with a large gate. Chiang-tao mounted the high steps and pulled the bell. Presently someone in leather shoes approached, calling: “Who’s there?”

“Chiang-tao!”

The door was opened by Yen Ping. “Well, this is a pleasant surprise! Come in!” She laughed merrily.

“Is your father at home?” asked Chiang-tao.

Ping saw that he was distressed and turned to look at him. “It’s a Sunday — of course he is.”

Their house was built of brick on three sides of a neat little courtyard. Two pots of oleander in the middle of the yard were in bloom, some pink, some snowy white. A plot of dahlias was enclosed by a small wicker fence over which rioted creepers with tiny variegated blossoms. Gourds were growing on a trellis and on the walls.

The three rooms with a southern exposure were spotlessly clean. One of the inner rooms was Yen Chih-hsiao’s bedroom, the middle one was his study, containing several bookcases and some wooden furniture. On the table was a small dish of cucumbers which Yen was eating with his noodles and sesame sauce. When Chiang-tao came in, Yen said: “I was just telling Ping to fetch you and Teng-lung to eat crabs with us. You’ve come just at the right time.”

Yen Ping called from outside: “A friend from Paityang-tien sent us some crabs, which we’ve kept wrapped in straw

in the water vat. Father was waiting for his good students to come to eat them.” She laughed merrily.

Teng-lung was the second son of Feng Hsi, who lived in the house with the big locust tree in Soching. He was studying in Yu Teh Middle School and was Yen Chih-hsiao’s nephew. Since coming to Paoting he had spent a good deal of his time with Chiang-tao and Ping. They had become friends.

Chiang-tao went out and called to Ping: “I’m sorry, I can’t stop for the crabs. I’ve got to go home.”

Yen Chih-hsiao leaned out of the window to rinse his mouth over the flower bed. “What’s that?” he asked. “You’re going home?”

“My father sent someone with a letter. Yun-tao’s in Tsinan. He’s in prison there.”

Yen gave a start, and after a pause asked: “Why?”

“He says if we go there at once we may still see him. If we delay, we shan’t ever see him again.”

Yen Chih-hsiao said reflectively: “Is it as serious as that?” With his hands to his heart, he pursed his lips and puffed out his short beard. He tapped his foot rhythmically on the floor and for a long time said nothing.

Yen looked in his middle forties. He was a tall man with a square, phlegmatic face.

Ping hurried in. “What’s all this about?” she demanded.

Chiang-tao, ignoring her, told Yen Chih-hsiao: “My father says I must ask you for a letter to one of your friends in Tsinan. He knows you have plenty of friends, and begs you to think of a way to get Yun-tao off. . . .”

“A way to get him off?” Yen Chih-hsiao pursed his lips while he thought hard. “I’m out of politics, and most of the friends I had have drifted away. . . . In Tsinan, eh? Yes, there is a man.” He drew a sheet of paper to him and dipped his brush in the ink. Before writing he stared gravely out of the window.

“These are troubled times,” he said slowly. “Yun-tao’s interested in politics and has high ideals; that’s why he’s fallen a victim to politics. I was the same at his age. When I heard the words ‘for the people’ or ‘for the country,’ my

blood would start boiling and I felt on fire. I joined in the May the Fourth Movement, and saw Chang Tsung-hsiang beaten up and Chao's house burned. Later on, I read Li Ta-chao's articles in *New Youth* introducing Marxism-Leninism. But after the tide receded, everybody became officials. As I couldn't find any other profession, I became a Chinese teacher. One of my old friends is secretary general in the Shantung Provincial Government. Of course, he studied politics while I studied literature. I spend my whole time teaching, teaching, teaching. . . ." He spread the paper flat and wrote the letter.

Yen Chih-hsiao had graduated from Peking University and taught in Paoting ever since. In addition to teaching Chinese in the No. 2 Normal School, he taught classical Chinese in Yu Teh Middle School. His special interest was the philosophy of Mo Tzu. He had used his inheritance to buy this little house, meaning to spend his whole life here with his wife and only daughter. With his placid temperament, he had no desire to emulate his father, who devoted most of his energy to entertaining the rich and great and busied himself with local affairs. Of course, he could not avoid social engagements entirely, but he declined all he could. Having lived through the most troubled years of modern Chinese history and seen for himself the suffering that war brought on the people, he hated the warlords and unscrupulous politicians. When his students were about to graduate, he would expound Mo Tzu's pacifist philosophy to them.

When the letter was finished, he sealed the envelope carefully, rubbing off the paste with his thumb. Then he picked it up by one corner and put it on the table. "Go on," he said. "Go to Tsinan and call on him. He's my sworn brother, he'll do all he can for you. If he can't get Yun-tao off, at least you can ask him to make things easier. . . ." Plunged in thought again, he pressed his palm on the letter. "But now the power has changed hands. They're stricter than those feudal officials, especially where political questions are concerned — they're even more self-seeking."

Chiang-tao stood there, fluttering his long lashes as he listened.

Yen went on: "When the Kuomintang Party Headquarters was first established, they painted the party emblem a white sun in a blue sky on the door and wrote blue slogans on the walls, earnestly calling for the overthrow of imperialism and all crooked politicians. But before long, Yen Hsi-shan and Chang Tso-lin started using the flag with the blue sky and white sun too; and these crooked politicians became connected with important Kuomintang officials, addressing each other as 'Comrade.' People were longing for the arrival of the Northern Expeditionary Army, but when it finally came all that happened was that a few new warlords and politicians appeared. Nowadays no more is heard of 'equalized land rights' or 'controlled capital.' No one dares so much as mention the slogan: 'Land to the tiller.' Ha! At last they're showing their true colours. So the people's revolutionary enthusiasm has died away again. They say this is what's called changing the tonic but not the drug — that's all it amounts to."

Chiang-tao took the letter and left. He was not far from the gate when a clear voice called: "Chiang-tao! Come back as soon as you can! Bring me something special from Tsinan, will you?"

Chiang-tao turned. Two mischievous eyes were looking over the wall. He hesitated for a moment. "All right!" He nodded. "But mind you finish all the books I lent you."

"Oh! Get along with you!" The bright black eyes disappeared from sight behind the wall.

Chiang-tao had a mental vision of Yen Ping, slender and tall in her close-fitting black silk gown. She was straight-forward, impulsive, enthusiastic. She had cut her hair short and wore black leather shoes with round toes. When she looked secretly down her nose she seemed to squint ever so slightly, and yet the effect was charming. A casual observer would hardly notice this, but those who did could never think it a blemish.

Chiang-tao often lent her his favourite books, and she had declared that she would model herself on him.

Leaving the Yens, Chiang-tao hurried home like the wind, arriving the following evening. Nearing the gate, he saw the white paper coins hanging there, and tears gushed from his eyes. "Granny!" he cried. "Yun-tao's arrest must have killed her."

He went in to find his parents in mourning. Without a cry, he flung himself down on his grandmother and rocked her in his arms, clasping her hands and pressing his face to hers. His hair bristled and he shook from head to foot. With fingers that quivered he caressed her eyelids. "Granny!" he sobbed. "Open your eyes just once! Look at me one last time!" His mother's heart burned when she saw his agony of grief, and she started wailing again. Mrs. Chu and the other women burst out crying, while even the men shed tears.

That evening when the others had left, Yen said: "Chiang-tao! What's to be done about your brother?"

"We must go at once," answered Chiang-tao. "The earlier the better."

"You must hurry!" urged his mother huskily. "Don't worry about the dead but about the living. My boy's in gaol. . . ."

"It's easy to say: Go!" protested Yen. "But how are we going to raise the money for the journey?"

The whole family was in a quandary.

"I'll have to borrow," said Yen. "There's no other way out. How much shall we need?"

"If you take the train," Chiang-tao told him, "the fare alone comes to forty or fifty dollars. Then you'll have to buy presents there. You'll need a hundred at the very least."

Yen bit his lips. "Your grandmother's funeral will cost money too."

"It's a fearful thing to run into debt," said Mrs. Yen.

The whole family remained silent for some time. Chiang-tao was thinking: "If I go alone to Tsinan, I'm not old or experienced enough to know what to do. But if two of us

go, the fare, the presents and the money we'll have to spend for Yun-tao in prison will come to well over a hundred. The wake, mourning and funeral at home will cost a good fifty dollars. . . ."

Yen was thinking: "A hundred and fifty dollars at three per cent monthly interest will mean forty-five dollars in interest, alone each year. Forty-five dollars will take the crop of one *mou* of land. If we have three good years, we may scrape through; but one bad harvest and we're finished. If I sell land, I shall have to sell three *mou*."

Mrs. Yen was thinking: "Debts! In debt again! Wu Pa ruined everything by running into debt. He's old and the times are hard, and he borrowed money. All these years, he's been getting in deeper and deeper. He'll never clear himself now. His whole family's crushed by the load."

Discussing how to raise money, they hardly slept at all that night, just sighed and groaned. Yen was quaking inwardly. He remembered how difficult it had been for his father to give them a start in life. Now, while he was the head, the family was being ruined. . . . He racked his brains but could see no way out.

The next morning the funeral ceremonies started.

When the funeral procession set out, Yen and his wife, in heavy mourning, carried the spirit pennant while Chiang-tao followed behind. Chu Chung and Chu Hsing were the coffin-bearers, and with many tears they buried her. Upon their return to the house, Chu said: "Chih-ho, you've got to make arrangements. You can't put off going to Tsinan any longer. If you're too late, you'll be sorry for it all your life. Let's set out tomorrow!" This said, with his eyes on the ground, he went off alone.

That afternoon Yen went to see Li Teh-tsai. "Brother," he said, "I'm in great difficulty."

Li laughed scornfully when he saw Yen's face red and swollen with weeping. "You never expected this, did you?" he sneered. "You weren't in difficulties when you said: 'The army of the revolution will soon be here. The bullies and local gentry will be pulled down. Darkness will turn

into light.' Now the emperor has decreed: They shall not fall! What can you do about it?" He screwed up his eyes and puffed at his pipe without even looking at Yen. When Yen sheepishly hung his head, Li demanded sternly: "Wasn't that what you were saying?"

Yen ignored his question and muttered: "We've had a death in the family and Yun-tao's in Tsinan. . . ."

Li cut him short. "Yun-tao is a Communist. Now the Kuomintang and Communist Party have quarrelled, so he's been thrown into prison, isn't that it? Can you make a revolution? Dolts with heads stuffed with straw, what sort of revolutionaries are you? Young Master Feng, he's a real revolutionary. He pulled down the temple to build a school — could you do a thing like that? You bit off more than you could chew, and now you're suffering the consequences. Do you want a loan to go to Tsinan and save Yun-tao?"

Yen admitted that he did.

Li was silent for the time to smoke half a pipe. "Clodhoppers!" he sneered at last. "I can't bear a grudge against such as you. I'll go and see what can be done."

Li crossed the swamp to West Soching and made his way to Feng Lan-chih's large house. Two brown dogs tied at the gate rushed toward him, barking. He bent down and showed his yellow teeth to frighten them away, then walked quickly in. He crossed the outer courtyard and went into the house. It was autumn, and the old wistaria shut the sun from the yard completely. Feng Lan-chih was smoking in his room. Li told him why Yen Chih-ho wanted a loan.

When he had finished, Feng laughed heartily. "So a day of reckoning has come for those beggars! Yesterday he was shouting: 'Down with feudalism! Down with imperialism!' What have the imperialists done to offend him? They're far off beyond the sea, yet he wants to pull them down! These peasants bear the foreigners a grudge for coming here to trade. A man should be civil even if he won't do business. Why should he try to pull them down? These fellows are just plain unreasonable!"

"Poor men can't read a single character. What do they know?" scoffed Li.

"They said that when the revolution came they'd overthrow Feng Lan-chih. Now the revolutionary army has reached Peking and Tientsin, yet things are better than ever for the rich and powerful. What can they do? They haven't touched a hair of my head!"

Just then Feng Kuei-tang came in, and stood on one side as his father sat talking with Li. When they spoke of the revolutionary army, he said: "Thank goodness Mr. Chiang Kai-shek woke up to the truth in good time and purged the party of them. If not for that they'd have been here by now, we'd have had trouble!"

Feng Lan-chih looked up. "If that had happened, it would have been the end of our family!" For once the old man and his son saw eye to eye. Feng Lan-chih said with satisfaction: "Now that this has blown over, I tell you what: I'll do as you want. We'll open a cotton shop in the market-town as well as a foreign goods store. Nothing matters except making money."

Feng Kuei-tang stared and laughed. "We'll start a processing plant too and send the ginned cotton to Tientsin, then establish direct contact with some foreign firm. That way we shall make even bigger profit!"

Li Teh-tsai soon grew tired of listening to them discussing business while Yen was waiting for him. He said: "Yen Chih-ho wants a loan from you. Can you help him? His son Yun-tao is in prison in Tsinan."

Feng Lan-chih looked stern. "For anything else — yes. But this is too much. Yen Yun-tao is a Communist bandit, who's now been trapped in Tsinan. If I give them the money to get him out, won't I be letting the tiger back to the mountain? I'd do better to throw my silver into the river and make a good splash."

"Never mind," said Li. "You can ask for higher interest. Yen Yun-tao is nothing but a country bumpkin. What can he do?"

"He's growing bigger every day," retorted Feng. "If the money were piling up at home, I still wouldn't lend him

any. Yen's son may be young, but he's a thorn in my side! Ungrateful scoundrel! He wouldn't give me that bird of his when I wanted it. I'll buy Yen's land if he likes."

"The soil in East Soching is too alkaline or too sandy," said Feng Kuei-tang. "What do you want that for?" Not interested in transactions of this kind, he left.

"You'd do better to make a loan," advised Li. "Get higher interest, that's the way."

Feng Lan-chih drew in his neck. "No. I want their Treasure Trove." His beard bristled.

Li laughed. "You've got a long memory."

"How could I forget one of the few good plots in the village?"

Li went back to find Yen, who was sitting with drooping head. "The old man has money but he won't lend," Li told him.

At this curt refusal, Yen closed his eyes and his head reeled. Without money, he could not go to Tsinan to save Yun-tao. His son must be suffering indescribably in gaol. He stayed with his eyes shut for some time, then said: "Won't you ask Mr. Feng to help me?"

"Have you no sense at all?" protested Li. "Didn't you welcome the army of the revolution while he opposed it? Even before that you opposed him — you fought three lawsuits with him."

Yen opened his eyes and his jaw dropped. He thought of going to Feng Hsi, but Feng Hsi had just lost a lawsuit with Feng Lan-chih. Feng Hung's family was even more unapproachable. After careful consideration he realized that the only way out was to sell their precious land. "Rich folk shouldn't be such niggards as the poor," he said. "I built that new house of his."

"You were paid for it!" cut in Li.

Though Yen pleaded hard with him, Li simply laughed. "Will you part with some land?" he asked.

"All right. I'll sell him my pear orchard."

Li made a face. "Heavens above! Even the waste land in the Feng compound is better than that old sand-hill of yours."

"What's to be done then?"

"How should I know? Go and see if anyone else will help you."

Yen lowered his head and thought for a long time. This was a fearful year. No one had money to spare. He stood up and started out, but halted suddenly. The thought of Yun-tao in prison brought tears to his eyes. "If you come at once we may see each other once more. If you delay, we may never meet again."

Li waved him away. "All right! All right!" he said. "If you have trouble, go and brood over it at home. Why inflict it on other people?"

Stung by these words, Yen threw up both arms helplessly. "Heaven. . . . I'll sell him our Treasure Trove!"

"You will?"

Yen stared straight ahead, and swung his right fist. "Yes! I'm finished!" He ground his teeth and shook his fist, as if spoiling for a fight.

"What's this?" demanded Li. "Are you off your head?"

"I didn't mean anything by that," muttered Yen. "I feel as if a rat were gnawing at my heart." His eyes were glazed and he ground his teeth savagely.

Having made up his mind to sell their Treasure Trove, Yen wrote the deed and received eighty dollars for the land. Once home, he put the money on the *kang*, then lay down himself without moving.

"Did you borrow that money?" asked his wife. "How much is the interest?"

Without looking up, Yen said: "No, I sold the Treasure Trove."

She burst into stormy weeping. "How could you! Your father would never have allowed such a thing!"

Yen had not slept properly for several days. Hardly knowing that his wife was crying as if she were out of her mind, he started snoring. In his dream he saw Yun-

tao with a pale, haggard face and two great eyes staring out at him from behind iron bars. . . .

When the funeral was over, Chu Chung went home alone and sat on the stone in his yard to smoke a pipe. In the few days since news came of Yun-tao's imprisonment, his face had grown lean, his eyes sunken. His heart burning, he had helped Yen day and night with the burial, going without food and sleep till he was limp. Now that the mourning was over, he felt quite exhausted. But a task was before him, he had no time to rest. Yun-tao was in gaol waiting for them to save him. . . .

Chu was gazing at the sky and planning what to do when in came Chiang-tao. He walked up to the older man in silence, simply blinking his black eyes. After smoking his pipe to the end, Chu asked: "Which of you will go to Tsinan, your dad or you?"

"My dad isn't well," said Chiang-tao. "It looks as if I shall go."

Chu lowered his head and reflected again for a while. "You'd better think it over. Your brother's in on a charge of being a Red. I don't know what your connection is with him?" He looked searchingly at the lad.

Chiang-tao stooped and muttered something under his breath.

Chu went on: "I hear that when the Northern Expeditionary Army reached Peking, they arrested quite a few Communists. And this is what happened: First they'd get the elder brother and put him in gaol, and when his younger brother went to see him they'd arrest him too, because he was also a Communist. . . ." Chu said no more.

To Chiang-tao's mind this trip to Tsinan should be safe enough. After all, he was young and had never been prominent. . . . He said stubbornly: "Even if they arrest me, I'm going to see my brother!"

"That won't do!" said Chu. "This isn't the time for you to lose your temper. You mustn't be carried away by your feelings."

When Chiang-tao explained why he thought he was in no danger, Chu consented to his going. "Even so, you must be careful," he warned. "We'll work out a plan in detail on the way there."

When Mrs. Chu heard they were going to Tsinan, she came out and asked: "When are you starting? You must take some shoes and socks, and clothes and bedding."

"I'm thinking of leaving tomorrow. . ." said her husband.

"But this is harvest time!" she exclaimed.

"Don't talk to me about harvest with Yun-tao there in prison. Give me two suits of clean clothes, two pairs of shoes and a lined jacket. . . . This isn't like that time I went to town for a lawsuit. I don't know how long we'll be gone, or what may happen on the way, or whether even we can come back."

"Do you mean to go to law for him?"

"That's not certain yet. We'll go and see. . ." He stood up and vigorously paced the courtyard. "We're not old men yet, you know!"

Chiang-tao, looking on, was touched by the old fellow's spirit. "How much money must we take?" he asked.

"I reckon you haven't much to take," said Chu. "Take what you have. If you haven't any, then don't take any. We'll set off on foot, sleep when we're tired, and beg for food in the villages we pass."

The tears started to Chiang-tao's eyes. "Uncle Chung!" he cried. "You're getting on in years, how can you do that? We'd better take the train after all."

"We can't afford that. When I was a lad and went up north alone, I didn't have a cent on me. I walked." He turned to his wife. "Well, that's how it is. You and Erh-kuei must pick the pears and harvest the grain. Stay quietly at home till I come back. And I don't need to tell you, in times like these, not to offend anyone. Don't go out too early or come home too late." He asked her to cook two pans of food for them to take, and as Erh-kuei was out told Chiang-tao to lend a hand. He himself set out for Lesser Yen Village to see how Yen Chih-ho was. But he had barely set foot on the path out of the village when

he saw Chun-lan picking vegetables in her garden. He turned back and said: "Tomorrow I'm going to Tsinan to see Yun-tao. Is there any message you want me to take?"

Chun-lan was bending over the vegetable plot. She flushed and looked up in embarrassment. Her tears fell like two threads to the ground. "You're leaving?"

"Tomorrow."

She hung her head and whispered: "I'd like to go too!"

"You can't do that. These country folk would talk. You aren't married yet. Don't make yourself too conspicuous."

Chun-lan straightened up, red in the face, and glanced away from Chu at Thousand *Li* Dyke. She was recalling the night when Yun-tao left, and what they had said to each other. It was down that road that he had gone. . . . She said: "Tell him my mind's made up. When he's served his sentence, I'll be waiting for him here." Her throat was so tight she could not go on. She hid her face in her hands and started to sob. The tears trickled through her fingers.

The palms of Chu's hands were clammy with perspiration. His face was set in grim lines and his eyes were intent as he promised: "Chun-lan! If you have the pluck to do that, I'll go and fight in the court for his life! So long as you're willing to wait, I must bring you together if it costs me my head!" His face was a fiery red. Yun-tao's sufferings had fanned the flames of his old hatred. When his head cleared a little, he said: "The revolution is at low ebb now. You'd better not go out too often. Don't offend anyone. We have no power, so if we anger them we shall get the worst of it. For the present, our best course is to put up with things. Understand?"

"I understand."

"If you've anything for Yun-tao, bring it over." Saying this, he strode off to Yen's house.

Yen Chih-ho had recovered consciousness and was lying on the *kang* with a high fever. When he heard steps, he caught hold of a tattered jacket and covered up the money he had got for his land, not wanting his friend to see it.

When Chu came in and saw Yen's feverish face, he put out his hand and said: "My, you're hot!"

"I feel on fire."

"In that case, you can't go tomorrow. I'll go with Chiang-tao."

"It's only right for a father to go to his son. . . ."

"You mustn't be swayed by your feelings. What if you fell ill on the road or something happened to you?"

"We'll see if I'm better tomorrow. . . ."

Chu called Mrs. Yen and told them both: "Tomorrow I'm going to Tsinan to save Yun-tao. You must be very careful here at home. Don't go down to the fields till it's light, and close the gate early at night. Look after your pigs, dog, chickens and ducks, and don't let them do any mischief that might start a quarrel. Now those devils know that we're in trouble, they're sure to do all they can to ruin us. Mind you do nothing to anger them while I'm away. Even if they stand at the gate and swear, or call Yen Chih-ho bad names, don't say anything. When I come back, we'll settle scores with them. Just do as I say, Chih-ho. You're my good brother. If you don't listen to me, I'll have it out with you when I come back."

Yen made an effort to sit up, and his tears flowed as he said: "You're right, brother."

Chu told Mrs. Yen: "Chih-ho isn't well, so you're in charge of the family. However hard it is, you must get the crops in. From spring to summer we sweated over these crops. If you can't manage on your own, ask my wife or Erh-kuei and Brother Hsing to help."

"I'll remember all you've said, brother," she promised.

"There's another thing I want to say. Though Yun-tao's in gaol, Chun-lan is still one of our family. She's young and you must help her — don't let her do anything rash. Tell her not to go out too much, because she's a fine-looking girl and all the young fellows around have their eyes on her. That old scoundrel Feng has tried to get hold of her too. If anything happens, think well before you act! If she does as we say, we'll treat her as a daughter and make

her family's business ours. If she doesn't, then she can go her own way, we won't worry."

Mrs. Yen sobbed until she nearly choked, so that she could not speak.

Just then Chun-lan came in with a little bundle. She walked to the folding door and stopped on the threshold. In a choked voice Mrs. Yen said: "Come in, child. Sit on that little chest. What have you got there?"

Chun-lan put her bundle on the edge of the *kang*. "This is a pair of shoes with soft soles, the kind he liked to wear at home. There are two jackets too." Her black bright eyes glanced from Yen Chih-ho to Chu Chung. She had made these for Yun-tao to wear after their marriage, and hoped Chu would take them to him.

"I'll tell you something, Chun-lan," said Chu. "Yun-tao's in prison and Chiang-tao is going to Tsinan too. With Chih-ho ill, they're short-handed here. Come over in your spare time and help put things to rights. Though you aren't married yet, your families are old neighbours, both the old and the young are on good terms. Besides, you practically grew up in this house."

"I will, uncle," promised Chun-lan. "I'll look in every morning and evening."

When everything had been arranged, Chu left. Yen struggled to see him out, but Chu said: "There's no need. You're not well and you mustn't get up." He took the same path back. From the end of the village he went to find Chu Ming to tell him that he would be leaving the next day and ask him to keep an eye on things in his absence.

Chu's visit had tired Yen, and he felt dizzy. He fell asleep again. Presently he heard muffled voices, and opened his eyes to see Chiang-tao.

"Tomorrow we're off to Tsinan," Chiang-tao told him. "Uncle Chung says it costs too much by train, so we shall walk. Aunty is cooking some food for us to take."

Yen tried to raise himself. "Here! I want to get up. If you're going tomorrow, help me out to look at my Treasure Trove."

"Is the Treasure Trove sold?" Chiang-tao bit back any comment. "It can't be helped," he thought. "But that was one of the finest pieces of land by the Huto River. The soil is so good that even in years of drought or flood we raised a crop. . . ."

"This plot of land cost your grandad sweat and blood. It's supported us all these years. Like children drinking milk, we drank your grandad's blood. When the old man left he said: 'Till it for food and clothes, but never sell it.' Now I've had to sell it! I've had to sell it! This is the blackest day in my life. I must go and have one last look at it."

"It's dark," objected his wife. "Don't go. You're not well."

Seeing how his father staggered, Chiang-tao followed close behind him. Yen went out and turned east up the dyke, and then headed south. The sun was sinking in the west, making a patch of dull red at the horizon. The sky was growing dark, the leaves on the trees seemed black shadows. The Huto was gurgling noisily, the poplars were rustling, and birds flying back to their nests cried out fitfully. When they reached the ferry, Chiang-tao took the pole and punted his father across. Yen leaned on his shoulder to walk along the Treasure Trove.

The early millet had been reaped and the ground ploughed ready for sowing wheat. Creepers on the ridges were in tiny flower. Their feet made deep prints as they walked. Yen felt the soil spongy beneath him, as if he were walking on yeast, and the ground gave off a sweet smell. He stumbled on and on, tears streaming from his eyes. Then, without warning, he dropped to his knees, put a handful of soil in his mouth and chewed on it. Gulping, he swallowed it down. At first, in the dusk, Chiang-tao did not see what was happening. Then he exclaimed: "What are you doing, dad?"

Yen munched the soil and mumbled: "Taste it, boy! Taste it! Tomorrow it won't be ours. This is the last chance we have of smelling our good earth."

Chiang-tao was in a panic, completely at a loss. Feng Lan-chih had taken advantage of their trouble to seize Treas-

sure Trove from his father. Furious, he said: "Don't worry, dad! We'll get it back sooner or later."

Yen looked at him and asked: "Do you mean it?" Abruptly he flung himself on the ground and stuffed more earth into his mouth.

Tears ran down Chiang-tao's cheeks. He shuddered uncontrollably as if someone had thrown a bucket of cold water over him, drenching him from head to foot. Even his heart was icy.

24

That evening Yen's illness took a turn for the worse. The next morning Chu got up before it was light and called for Chiang-tao. With the eighty dollars hidden in his clothes, Chiang-tao took the back path to Chu's house. He was made to sit on the *kang* and join in the farewell meal of dumplings that Mrs. Chu had made. Chu sat on the edge of the *kang* to smoke a pipe till the sun rose above the horizon. Then he gave Chiang-tao two bags of corn muffins to carry, and the lad hid his dollars under the muffins. Chu put on his old padded jacket of blue homespun cloth. His wife saw them out of the gate to the end of the village. "Chiang-tao!" she said. "See that he has proper meals and enough sleep. He's getting on in years!"

"Of course I will." Chiang-tao turned round. "Go back now, aunty."

Chu headed east briskly, his moustache in the air, while Chiang-tao followed him. On these unfamiliar roads, when they looked down Yun-tao's face flashed before their eyes; when they looked up they counted the clouds that floated across the sky. As they were tramping, Chu said: "Traveling outside isn't like being at home. You must be on your guard. Keep your wits about you. In big places, crowded with people, be very careful!"

"Yes, uncle, I will."

"Just take your cue from me. Move on or stop when I tell you."

Travelling by day and resting by night, they finally reached Tsinan and found a small inn.

"We want a room, innkeeper!" called Chu.

Out came the innkeeper, an old man with white hair. "You want a room? All right. Here you are." He opened a cubicle about half the size of an ordinary room, with space for no more than a small *kang* and small table. "How about this?" he asked.

"It'll do," said Chu. "How much is it a day?"

"Forty cents—the official rate. Food is extra. Where are you from, sir? What business are you in?"

"We're from the country near Paoting in Hopei. We've come to Tsinan to try to make some money."

"There are plenty of good Shantung products," replied the innkeeper. "Take our Loling dates, for instance. They may be small but they're as sweet as honey, and they don't have any stones. They're famous all over the country. And then there are our black, long-legged donkeys. Just shake the reins and they open wide their eyes and bray."

"Some donkeys!" Chu chuckled as he washed his face.

"Tsinan is full of fine sights," went on the innkeeper. "There's Black Tiger Fountain, Paotu Fountain and Pearl Fountain, which you haven't seen. And visitors from every part of the country go to see Ta Ming Lake and Thousand-Buddha Mountain. Ta Ming Lake is sometimes called Half City Lake..." He described a semi-circle with his hand. "The town is surrounded by hills, half surrounded by lakes... It's as pretty a sight as you can see." Having said this, he left the room.

When Chiang-tao had washed and settled down comfortably, Chu went to the innkeeper's room and found him alone there, cooking. "Please take a seat, sir," he invited Chu.

Chu sat on a bench and said: "I've heard that Tsinan has a model prison too."

"That's right, we have."

"What's model about this prison?"

"What's model about it?" The innkeeper laughed. "It's big. It holds plenty of prisoners. After the southerners

came, they arrested a good many men and shut them up here."

"What sort of men?"

These detailed questions made the innkeeper straighten up to look at Chu. "I'm not too sure about that," he answered. "I've heard that they're 'political prisoners.'"

"Where is this prison?"

"Quite a way from here. But ask anyone in Tsinan where the 'big prison' is, and he'll be able to tell you—it's well known." He raised his head to stare at Chu again.

"Why, are you here to visit some relative?"

"It can't be all that easy to see anyone."

"Depends what he's in for. Take a sneak-thief, for instance. We people outside would consider him a robber and have nothing to do with him; but in prison stealing is the smallest offence. These days the worst thing you can be is a 'political prisoner.' You'll either lose your head or be sentenced for life. All prisoners who have been sentenced can have visitors. You can't see anyone before he's sentenced."

"Why not?"

"For fear you may pass on some message. They can't sentence a prisoner without evidence."

Chu shook his head and wondered: "Will we be able to see him?"

Having asked the way to the prison, Chu went out with Chiang-tao to buy presents and take Yen Chih-hsiao's letter to the provincial government. There were two rows of guards at the gate of the government building. Chu dusted Chiang-tao's jacket and said: "I'll wait for you here. Go on in. Don't be afraid. Put a bold face on it. When you speak to the fellow, be sure you make things clear. Don't beat about the bush or hem and haw.... Go on. I'll stay here till you come back."

He watched from the gate as Chiang-tao walked confidently in. After the time for a meal the lad came out. Chu advanced with a smile and took his hand to lead him round the corner. "Well?" he asked. "What happened? Did you see him?"

"I was just in time," said Chiang-tao. "If we'd come any later it would have been no good."

"Tell me what you mean." Chu smiled.

"He says this case will be tried by the military tribunal. It doesn't come under their jurisdiction. We can see Yun-tao all right, but that's all he can promise."

"Did he ask you any questions?"

"He asked after Mr. Yen and the rest of the family...."

It sounded to Chu as if the man were dependable. They went back to the main street and bought some meat, cakes and eggs to take to Yun-tao in prison the next morning.

The next day dawned overcast, with grey, louring clouds and a fine drizzle which made the stone pavement wet and slippery. Trudging through the mud, Chu and Chiang-tao made their way at last to the model prison. There Chiang-tao stopped involuntarily, taken aback by the sight of the high prison walls and stern, forbidding gate. "Go on!" whispered Chu, giving him a gentle push. They walked slowly to the gate. "Give me that letter and wait for me here," said Chu. "I'll spy out the land."

Chiang-tao waited outside the gate while Chu took the letter to the porter's lodge. A shifty looking fellow examined the letter and went inside with it, to reappear presently, smiling. "Come on, I'll help you to register," he said. "How many are you?"

"Two of us."

The man took him to get a bamboo slip, then went back to his lodge. Chu stepped outside and signalled to Chiang-tao, who entered the prison with him. Stooping, they climbed high stone stairs and walked down a dark, covered corridor. Passing through a stone doorway, they found a crowd waiting to see the prisoners: white-haired old men come to visit their grandsons, young wives anxious to see their husbands, children paying a visit to their fathers....

They walked past a wooden fence into an old building divided by wooden palisades, and stood by the tenth window. This was one foot square, with iron bars through which you could barely slip your hand. They waited by the palisade to see Yun-tao. Chiang-tao and Chu were the

only ones at this window, though all the others were crowded. And people turned to stare at their simple, countrified appearance.

The prison cells were dank and mouldering. Here and there the roof had caved in and grass was growing. As not much rain had fallen, the grass was withered and rustled in the wind. The corners of the damp, dark building were festooned with cobwebs. Standing there, rather overwhelmed, Chiang-tao heard the clanking of fetters, and looked round as someone approached. It was a man with thick eyebrows and great round eyes. Slowly, step by step, with a clanking of chains, he walked over. Chiang-tao had a closer look and saw it was Yun-tao. In the years since they parted, Yun-tao had grown taller and thinner. His face was pale and scarred. Fettered hand and foot, he limped as he came through the door. His great eyes, limpid as pools, had deep shadows under them and were so sunken that his eyebrows seemed higher and his eyelashes longer than ever. He stopped and started at the sight of Chiang-tao by the window. When he saw Chu behind his brother, his pallid lips quivered in the semblance of a smile. He said hoarsely: "Chiang-tao! Uncle Chu! You've come!"

Chiang-tao stood quietly in front of the window, his black eyes fixed on Yun-tao.

"Brother, we've come!"

Chu stepped forward too and leaned against the iron grill. "Here we are! We've come to see you, lad!"

"Good!" Yun-tao heaved a long sigh. "My heart will be at rest after I've seen you. Is granny well?"

"She died," said Chiang-tao.

Yun-tao looked up at the sky. "She died!" he echoed gravely. "Father and mother?"

Chu answered with forced cheerfulness: "Your dad's ill, or he'd have come to see you himself. Your mum's quite well."

For some minutes Yun-tao stared intently at Chiang-tao and Chu. He was thinking of his old home, of his grandmother's kindly face. Whenever she saw him she would

smile to herself. He could never forget the lovable old soul. He said: "Let me tell you something!" He fingered his fetters, worn so smooth and bright. "Chiang-tao! Uncle Chu! I think for me this is the end. . . . Dad and mum brought me up and hope I'd do my bit for the toiling people. . . . But now, young as I am, I'm doomed to spend the rest of my days in gaol." He shook his head several times and tears like sparkling pearls fell from his eyes as he grieved for his lost youth. "But that's not what worries me now. . . . Chiang-tao, from now on it's up to you! You must understand what your brother gave his life for. . . ." His black eyes flashed to Chu, and the older man held up his head to return his look. Abruptly, Yun-tao raised his manacled hands and jangled his fetters stepping forward as if to break through the barred window and clasp their hands. An old guard hurried forward and stopped him. "Here!" he growled. "Time's nearly up!" He tried to drag Yun-tao off. Yun-tao stamped his foot angrily and wrenched free. "Get away!" he roared. Then he turned back, glaring, and cried between clenched teeth: "Chiang-tao! You must avenge me! . . . How is Chun-lan?" He halted again.

"She's waiting for you!" Chu told him. "It's all settled that you're to marry when you come home."

"Is this a time to talk of marriage?" demanded the guard. By sheer force he dragged Yun-tao off.

Chiang-tao stared and stared as his brother, dragging his fetters, went back into the prison without turning his head.

The guard jerked his fat round belly, frowning, and signed to them: "Get out, now! Go on! Your fifteen minutes are up!" He reached out to close the small window.

Chu hurried forward and put out a hand to stop him. "By your leave!" he said. "We've brought some food for him."

The guard puffed out his lips and stretched out a hand. "Hand it over!" he ordered impatiently.

Chu passed him the paper package. The guard opened it, cocking his head to see what was in it. With a silver pin he prodded it here and there. Then he slammed the window shut and left.

Chu stood stupidly there for some minutes in front of the closed window.

"Let's go now, uncle!" said Chiang-tao.

Abruptly Chu woke up. "All right, let's go." With bent head he walked slowly out of the prison, and Chiang-tao helped him back to their inn. As if in a stupor he squatted on the *kang*, refusing to eat or speak. He buried his head on his knees and seemed to be dozing.

Chiang-tao's heart was in a tumult. The counter-revolutionaries wanted to rob Yun-tao of his youth. He felt indescribably wretched. It occurred to him that this lawsuit might well cost him both his schooling and a job, as his father would lose all that remained of their property. He remembered Mr. Chia's words: "... The only way to change this cruel fate is by struggle and yet more struggle!"

Chiang-tao, longing for his brother, saw in his mind's eye the white face behind the bars. When Chu Chung woke and found the lad in a study, his heart smarted and he stood up. With lips clamped together he paced restlessly in and out, as if he had pepper in the palm of his hand. When it was time to eat, he heaped Chiang-tao's bowl with noodles and urged him to make a good meal. When it was time to rest, he lay watching till Chiang-tao fell asleep before closing his own eyes. In the middle of the night he made sure that the boy was well covered. His old heart was very troubled.

Chiang-tao made another trip to the provincial government, but came back sadly crestfallen. When Chu saw that, he did not question him, but sat tight-lipped on the *kang*, squatting there silently for one day and one night. The next morning Chiang-tao said: "Uncle Chung, let's go and see my brother again. We've come all this way. I want to see him once more. . . ."

"Right!" Chu's lips tightened.

Chu and Chiang-tao made their way to the prison gate. A minor official in a black uniform was standing on the steps in front. Chu nudged Chiang-tao and told him to wait while he went up and asked: "Excuse me! I've come to see someone."

"Who?" asked the other listlessly. "What name?"

"Yen Yun-tao."

"Yen Yun-tao is a political prisoner!" The functionary seemed quite familiar with Yun-tao's name. He tossed back his head and muttered: "You're not supposed to see him without a letter." He rubbed the back of his head as if to jog his memory.

Chu asked Chiang-tao for his letter, and handed it over. When the official had read it, he led them inside to get a visitors' slip. Then once more they went down that dark corridor till they came to the barred window.

After the time for a meal, two guards stamped out with gleaming bayonets. Behind them a man with a red-tasselled sword was escorting Yun-tao. This was very different from their last encounter!

Chiang-tao watched as, step by step, his brother clattered in chains up the steps. Yun-tao stared wide-eyed at Chiang-tao and Chu Chung, and when he saw that old Chu's eyes were wet, his own grew red. Today his face was flushed, a dark vein was leaping at his temples, his hair was hanging dishevelled over his face. They did not know what had disturbed him or what could have happened in the prison.

Tight-lipped and solemn, Chiang-tao went up to his brother. Chu followed him to the window. When the visitors to the gaol saw Yun-tao's expression, they crowded round the palisade to watch. Some guards came up, cracking their whips over the heads of the crowd. "Move on!" they shouted. "Mind your own business!" When the others had gone, Chiang-tao stepped forward and said: "We're going home tomorrow, Yun-tao. Have you any messages?"

On the other side of the bars, Yun-tao straddled his legs. "You're going?"

"We must," said Chu. "That's why we came to see you again."

Panting, Yun-tao threw back his head and stared in front of him. Then he cried in ringing tones: "Go back and tell the folk at home, Yen Yun-tao is no thief or brigand! I'm a member of the Chinese Communist Party, who tried to overthrow crooked politicians and rid the suffering people of the local despots. We fought the feudal warlords right up

to the northern bank of the Yangtse River. The Northern Expedition was nearly victorious. The revolution nearly succeeded. But Chiang Kai-shek sold out on us. He plotted with the imperialists, with the warlords and the landlords, then turned and stabbed us in the back, butchering Communists. . . ."

His bushy eyebrows twitched as he spoke, and his flashing eyes opened wide. When he spoke of Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal and the failure of the revolution, huge tears rolled from his brilliant eyes.

Chu Chung was very moved. "That's my fine lad!" he murmured. "Plucky fellow!"

Before Yun-tao had finished, a savage guard with a heavy, fleshy face stepped forward. He struck him several resounding blows on the head, until blood flowed from his mouth. "Mother's! Are you mad?" he demanded. "Are you out of your mind? You've been cursing all night."

Chiang-tao saw red, and his eyes nearly started from their sockets. He wanted to brandish his fist, he wanted to shout. But they were surrounded by armed guards. His heart ached over his brother's plight and he shed silent tears. Chu marvelled: "Is he in his right mind? I can't bear to look! This cuts more sharply than a knife."

Yun-tao was beyond knowing fear. He flew into a greater passion and opened his eyes wider.

"Down with the Kuomintang despots!" he shouted. "Long live the Chinese Communist Party!"

As he shouted blood trickling from his lips stained his jacket red.

A crowd had gathered again. They murmured: "Stout fellow!" "That's a true Communist."

The soldiers seized Yun-tao and dragged him to the door where, his bloodshot eyes distended, he shouted: "Chiang-tao! Uncle Chung! Go back and tell my father, tell Uncle Ming, tell mother and Chun-lan! Ask Chun-lan to wait for me, I swear I'll be back. I'm going back to Soching to settle scores with our mortal enemy!"

Chu Chung was gazing at Yun-tao when a whip cracked down on his head. He clutched Chiang-tao and they stum-

bled off till, breathless, they were outside the prison gate. The thought of his brother's proud bearing made Chiang-tao clench his fists, throw out his chest and stride with his head held high down the main road. Back in the inn, he squatted on the *kang* and hid his face in his sleeve. He could not bear to think of his beloved brother imprisoned for life by men more cruel than beasts.

The innkeeper noticed that they had eaten nothing all day. He came in and greeted them. "The whole town is agog," he told them. "They say there's a stout-hearted Communist in the big prison—a man with real courage." He muttered sympathetically: "The Kuomintang 'revolutionaries' are no match for fine fellows like that. They just bully the weak and cringe before the strong."

"What do you have in mind?" Chu sensed a hidden meaning.

"I'll tell you." The innkeeper lit his pipe and sat down. "This summer when the Northern Expedition reached Tsinan, the Japanese refused to let the army pass—there have been Jap troops stationed here for some time. They threatened to open fire if the revolutionary army came. The Northern Expeditionary Army sent an envoy to negotiate, but the Japs tied him up."

Chu hunched his shoulders. "Why? Did they want a fight?"

The innkeeper scowled and made a gesture. "They gouged out the envoy's eyes," he declared indignantly. "They cut out the fellow's tongue. . . ."

"I bet there was fighting after that!" said Chu.

The innkeeper relaxed and grinned. "Guess what happened? The Northern Expedition bypassed this place!"

Chu Chung stared incredulously at Chiang-tao.

"When the revolutionary army got to Wuhan," explained Chiang-tao, "they were still co-operating with the Communist Party. The Communist Party aroused the people to demonstrate for the return of the foreign concessions from the imperialists. Later the Kuomintang were afraid. They suppressed the workers and peasants, and butchered Communists. When they reached Tsinan, their envoy had his tongue cut out and his eyes gouged out by the Japs."

The innkeeper patted Chiang-tao's shoulder. "You're a bright lad. You'll go far." He shrugged and went out, chuckling to himself.

Chu was in a terrible quandary. For the sake of friendship he did not like to go back. He sat down and smoked another pipe, thinking: "Unlucky Yun-tao! . . . He left his poor father and mother—how lonely he's going to be now. . . ." He gazed intently at Chiang-tao, the image of his brother with his big eyes, thick eyebrows and long, fluttering lashes. Ah, what a fine lad!

Ever since Yun-tao's letter arrived, Chu had been grieving for Yen Chih-ho and his son. His whole heart seemed on fire. Now knowing that Yun-tao's life was in no danger, he felt slightly reassured. But he was at the end of his strength. He lay on the *kang*, dreaming fitfully.

He dreamed that he was sleeping on the threshing-floor. Yun-tao came up to him, and said with a smile: "It's raining outside, uncle. Go inside and sleep." Then raindrops large as coppers fell from the black clouds, and the poplar leaves rustled noisily.

The sun had set, darkness was falling, and Chiang-tao heard whistles from factories outside the city. He thought over the lives of his grandfather and father, the lives of Chu Chung and his father Chu Kung, the cruelty of society. He decided: "In the class struggle blood must be shed. If you haven't the courage and determination to fight, you will never win the final victory." This conclusion seemed to open a window in his head. Everything was in a different perspective after that.

Chu opened his eyes to find himself not on a threshing-floor but a *kang*. Smoking, he described his dream to Chiang-tao. "Yun-tao is bound to come home. We shall have him back again in Soching some day."

Chiang-tao retorted: "Your dream came of longing for Yun-tao!"

Chu said: "Judging by that dream of mine, Yun-tao will be home. The Communist Party isn't finished!"

"Of course it isn't finished!" replied Chiang-tao. "When the counter-revolutionaries were carrying out the Wuhan

massacre, Mao Tse-tung led the revolutionary soldiers, workers and peasants to the Ching kang Mountains, and Chu Teh with the forces of the Nanchang Uprising fought his way to Hunan. Chu and Mao met in the Ching kang Mountains and set up Soviet power. They built up the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. They're going to fight the landlords, divide up the land, have agrarian reform and give the peasants land of their own to till!"

With this belief in their heart, they returned home from Tsinan.

25

The years of the terror passed slowly. Chiang-tao's knowledge of his brother's imprisonment was like a knife in his heart. During the winter and summer holidays he went home, returning to Paoting each term. After class, he would do Party work outside the school. And in the evenings he went to the storeroom where, by the light of a small oil lamp, he would read by the shabby cupboard. After studying Chu Chiu-pai's *Lectures on Social Science*, he felt as if a door had been opened in his mind to let in the light of the sun.

He went from school to factory, from factory to farm, secretly sowing the seeds of revolution in men's hearts, waiting for the time when a storm should spring up on the plain.

The next autumn, the Paoting Committee of the Communist Party came to the area between the Huto and the Chulung Rivers — one of the most important districts in that region — to inspect the work. In accordance with the people's needs, they decided to set afoot a large-scale peasant movement. That winter, Chiang-tao was sent back to Soching to rouse the peasants and organize them to oppose the pig tax.

The morning on which Chiang-tao left Paoting, the sky was heavy with white, louring clouds. A heavy frost lay over the road, roofs, and branches.

He had not gone far when a biting wind sprang up, buffeting and pushing him forward. He could hardly have

halted even had he wished to do so. It began to snow as well, and snowflakes were hurled by the blast into his face. His cheeks were numb, his nose was red with cold. Flurries of snow came whirling down from the sky, swirling this way and that like cotton fluff. The icy particles hissed as they reached the ground.

He hurried along till it was dark, by which time he was sweating and his legs were limp. He decided to stop and rest, but when he halted he felt bitterly cold. In the distance he made out a clump of trees, but on trudging over he found no sign of a village and had to retrace his steps with chattering teeth. He thought of crouching under a bank out of the wind, but his legs were too stiff to squat. His long, padded gown, frozen stiff, was like a suit of armour, which clanked with each step he took. He chafed his hands and looked up at the sky where grey clouds stretched without end. Numb with cold, he wondered: "Heaven! Where am I? What's the direction?" A short rest did nothing to refresh him, merely making him conscious that he was soaked to the skin. Gritting his teeth, he pressed on as fast as he could. He tramped till late into the night, when at last he discerned Mr. Chia's village through the snow. He had been here only that spring, and still remembered the tree before the door and the well at the foot of the tree with its stone coping. The door opened on to a field outside the village. Now all the country was white and the willows were bent under the snow.

Coming to the little porch, he knocked at the door, but there was no response. He knocked again twice, but still there was no sound. Having covered two days' journey in one, he was aching all over and longed to sit on the doorstep and rest. He shook himself so that snow fell from his clothes to the ground like cotton fluff. Suddenly, southwest of the village, he heard the thud of hooves approaching, and black-coated mounted police galloped past through the wind and snow. He gave a start and wondered: "What are they doing so late at night in a snowstorm like this?" Normally, he should have left immediately. But today he dared not consider such a thing. He was utterly exhausted after his

long journey, and not having eaten or drunk all day he longed for a drink of hot water to warm him up. Without further thought he went on hammering at the door. Presently he heard the crunching of snow on the roof. Before he could look up to see who was there, crash! a bright muck-rake came flying down from the eaves. He quickly ducked under the porch. Then a rake came flying to his feet, splattering his face with slush. He shivered and his hair stood on end. "It's me!" he called sharply.

An old, husky voice challenged him from the roof: "Who are you? Tell the truth! Or you'll lose your head!"

"It's me. . . . Chiang-tao!" He frowned and his heart started pounding. Sweat stood out on his forehead.

After a short pause a head peered out in the darkness over the eaves.

"Is that you, Chiang-tao?"

At the sound of Mr. Chia's voice, Chiang-tao's heart beat more normally. "Yes, it's me!"

Presently the door creaked open. There stood Mr. Chia in an old white goatskin jacket and woollen cap. He came out, his shoulders hunched, and groped for Chiang-tao's icy hand. "You've come at last!" He patted him on the back and chuckled.

Mr. Chia lifted the heavy door-curtain and let Chiang-tao in. There was a small table on the *kang* inside, and round the little lamp some men were sitting. At Chiang-tao's arrival, they raised their heads to stare. A wood fire on the ground lit up the whole room, and as Chiang-tao sat down to warm himself an old man entered carrying the muck-rake. He was wearing a goatskin waistcoat, and was heavily bearded. He walked up to Chiang-tao and looked him over. "You're lucky, comrade!" he said. Then he patted the lad's shoulders and drummed the bright trident with his fingers so that it clanged. "I saw the police gallop past, and thought one of them was hiding under our porch to arrest us!" He chuckled.

Ever since the Kuomintang seized power in the north, whenever communist activity was discovered in the coun-

tryside they sent out mounted police to scour the villages and make arrests.

"This is my father," Mr. Chia told Chiang-tao.

Chiang-tao hastily stood up and shook the old man's hand.

"You're cold." The old fellow smiled. "It's a bitter day."

Chiang-tao tore a seam of his cap and produced his letter of introduction. Mr. Chia took the slip of paper over to a lamp and read it frowningly, after which he burned it.

The room was warm and cosy, full of smoke and the smell of cow-dung and the beancake in the trough. Warming himself by the fire, Chiang-tao felt his numbed limbs grow limp while his ears began to itch strangely. He put up a hand and touched some kind of mucus. Chia Hsiang-nung strode quickly over and seized his hand. "Here! That won't do. Your ears are frost-bitten." He grasped Chiang-tao's hands and wrinkled his forehead in sympathy. "Yes, those who roam the countryside in the north often lose a nose or ears. Don't touch that place, and in a few days you'll be all right. If you touch it, your ear will drop off."

The others raised startled eyebrows or looked narrowly at Chiang-tao's red swollen ears. Mr. Chia told him to take off his gown and dry it by the fire. It steamed heavily when the ice started melting. Chia removed his own jacket and made Chiang-tao put it on. Then he hurried out to return in a few minutes with a large bowl of bean noodles. "Have something to eat, Chiang-tao," he said. "That'll warm you up."

Chiang-tao took the bowl and was drinking the noodle soup when someone behind him thumped him on the back and caught hold of his right arm. Chiang-tao's left hand shook and he nearly dropped the bowl. Chia reached out and took it, saying: "Look out! Don't spill your noodles!"

Chiang-tao turned and saw a tall, slim lad with red cheeks and a prominent nose. It was his classmate Chang Chia-ching, who had led the harvest rising that year south of the Huto River. His nickname was Comrade Chang Fei.* He was working in the county Party office.

* A hero in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, famous for his courage and fiery temper.

Chang Chia-ching was another of the lads who had joined the Communist Youth League under Mr. Chia's guidance. After receiving Party education he had begun to read revolutionary literature. When he read poems or novels about the revolution, he forgot to eat or sleep. He took to wearing shabby clothes and eating simple fare. He had the greatest admiration for communism and sympathized with working folk. In the summer he led a troop of ragged children to prune cotton. In winter, sitting on the manger, he told the hired hands how Chu Teh and Mao Tse-tung had gone to the Ching-kang Mountains. He spoke of the way the landlords oppressed the peasants, the exploitation of rent and usury. His father, who found him like this several times, was nonplussed by his behaviour. Why should his boy spend all his time with the poor? When he asked Chia-ching what he was doing, he said he was recounting the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* or playing games. Fearing the effect on his character if he had no company but that of labourers, his father tried to devise a way to stop him. He taught him to ride, shoot and hunt. He bought a grey falcon, a hound and a fowling-piece to shoot rabbits. He hired a falconer too. "This is a civilized, gentlemanly hobby," he said.

During the winter and summer holidays, and in spring and winter when work was not too pressing, Chang Chia-ching would go out to hunt with Wu Pa of the timber mill and the hired hands and ragged urchins. He learned how to shoot rabbits and birds, using up several cases of cartridges. He never picked up anything he shot, but let the children have it. After hunting he would lie in a ditch and tell stories about the revolution. That was how he learned to ride and shoot.

Last autumn the Paoting committee had launched an autumn harvest movement in the Huto-Chulung district. Chang Chia-ching's task was to start the struggle in his home. He spent whole days under a spreading tree explaining what caused the difference between poor and rich, till Wu Pa lost patience and deliberately provoked him. "Don't talk so much, Chang Fei!" he sneered. "Your old man has

ten *mou* of orchard and a hundred acres of fields. You live in a tiled house and wear silk and brocade. Why twaddle to us poor folk like this? You're just talking for fun, making fools of us all."

"Just have a little patience," begged Chang. "A day will come. . . . A day will come when these fields belong to the poor."

"Do you know what you're talking about?" demanded Wu.

Chang jerked his head desperately: "Of course I do! Just wait and see. . . ."

Wu Pa looked sceptical. "When will that day come? I've no rice in my vat, no flour in my bin. Even the rats in our house are squealing with hunger. While you're talking big, my wife and kids are starving. I think you're a fool!"

He turned and marched away.

Chang Chia-ching's face was scarlet. The others were staring at him. Flushing right down his neck, he braced himself to stride after Wu.

"We must organize!" he cried.

Wu stopped and threw him a sidelong glance. "Organize what?"

"We must organize a Peasants' Association, a Poor Men's Union. . . ."

Wu stamped in fury. "Organize your grandmother! You've got to give a lead."

This rebuff left Chang depressed for several days. He thought: "No wonder they say it's no good if you don't come from a worker or peasant family. The people don't believe you."

A few days later Chang went to the timber mill again to find Wu. "I'll show you!" he said. "We'll seize the cotton from my father's twenty *mou* by the big well. I'll take the lead."

When Wu saw that Chang meant what he said and that his whole heart was set on revolution, he gave up his job in the timber mill and started working for the revolution too. They organized a Peasants' Association, a Poor Men's Union and a Brotherhood. Soon it was nearly time for the cotton harvest. Chang Chia-ching and the members of the Peas-

ants' Association agreed that when the sun was overhead he should crack a whip that would be the signal to lead the poor to gather the cotton.

That day many peasants came to the cotton fields, carrying wrappers and sacks as if they were going to a fair. When it was noon, in groups or by twos and threes they crept forward like a storm-cloud. Chang had a blue handkerchief round his head and a wallet at his waist. He tucked the skirt of his gown into his wallet, climbed on the big cart and with both hands cracked the great whip high over his head. He gave three resounding cracks. At the sound of the whip a roar went up, and the crowd surged forward to strip the white field of its cotton. When Chang's father heard what was afoot, he hobbled over, panting and swearing with fury.

"What are you swearing for?" demanded his son. "Autumn is nearly over, yet folk have no clothes for the winter."

He cracked the whip three times again, and the peasants rushed to take maize from a neighbouring landlord. They grew emboldened, ready for further action. Chang cracked the whip three times towards the west, and the fields of the landlord over there were stripped. He cracked towards the east, and the landlord on the east was plundered. The autumn harvest movement here had got off to a flying start.

Chang Chia-ching's father nearly burst with rage. "A man's nature is hard to change," he spluttered. "I don't know what's wrong with the boy. I'm through with him!" After that Chang Chia-ching worked with Chia Hsiang-nung.

When the movement was over, all the peasants said: "The Communist Party doesn't just make empty promises. It does a real job."

When Chiang-tao saw Chang Chia-ching, he asked: "What have you been up to, Chang Fei?"

The old man shook a finger at them, chuckling. "When two lads haven't seen each other for some time, what a to-do there is when they get together!"

Chiang-tao and Chang were two of Chia's best pupils, and he watched them with a smile. "Two fellow students have

met again today. He is working south of the Huto and you to its north. Let's see which makes the best showing!"

Chiang-tao seized Chang Chia-ching's hands and told him briefly all that had happened to him since they last met.

When Chang and the others had finished their business, they picked up their bags and prepared to leave. Chia called them back from the door. "Wait a bit!" he cried. "You must hide your tracks."

"How are we to do that?" asked Chang.

"Take off your shoes and tie them on back to front."

"Why? What for?" Chang took off his shoes as he was told.

"Now the mounted police won't know which way you're going or be able to trace you," Chia told him. He gave them some hempen ropes to tie on their shoes. Then he opened the front gate a crack and saw them out.

After taking a few steps, Chang called back: "You know some dodges, all right!"

When Chia had seen them off, he came back and said to Chiang-tao: "You came late. The meeting had just ended. Let's have a good talk." Smiling all over his face, he clasped the lad's hand. "Tell me, do you understand the countryside?"

Chiang-tao poked the fire with a stick so that it flared up. "I was born and bred in the countryside. How could I fail to understand it?"

"Do you understand the peasants?" Chia asked again.

"My great-grandfather was a peasant, so was my grandfather. Father was a peasant in his young days, before he learned a mason's trade and became half worker. How could I fail to understand the peasants?"

"All right. But don't let's boast!"

After toasting himself by the fire and having a meal, Chiang-tao felt much less tired. This teasing remark put him on his mettle. "I might boast to other people," he protected, "but how could I boast to my teacher!" He stepped up to Chia. "Come on! Give me a job."

Chia looked at him from the corner of his eyes. "I want to hear your report first."

"What report? Since I left the district, we've had no direct contact."

"Tell me about the feudal forces in Soching, and mind you make a clear analysis."

Chiang-tao rubbed his head. "Oh, I haven't prepared for that."

Chia chuckled. "See! I told you not to boast."

Chiang-tao showed his teeth in a grin. "Boasting a little doesn't matter among friends." He rolled his great eyes thoughtfully. "All right. I'll make a report."

Chia threw some more faggots on the fire, which sputtered as they burned. The firelight lit up their faces and the walls. Chiang-tao cleared his throat and began: "When I was a boy, Yun-tao told me that there were several big floods in Soching in the old days, and three families took advantage of the floods to better themselves. . . ."

"The most influential is Feng Hung. His eldest son, Feng Yueh-hsuan, graduated from the Paoting Military Academy and went to Japan to study. Now he's a cavalry regiment commander in the Shansi army. His second son is called Feng Ya-chai. . . ."

"The wealthiest is Feng Lan-chih. He has plenty of silver dollars to put out. He rents over two of his three or four acres of land, farming the rest himself with three or four hired hands and quite a few day-labourers. His elder son, Feng Yueh-tang, has some small post outside. His second son, Feng Kuei-tang, studied law at the university and got a job in the army. Now he's come home for a spell. The third son, Feng Huan-tang, is a special sort of peasant. . . ."

Chia raised his dusky face to listen, glancing sidewise. Now he clapped his hands and interrupted Chiang-tao. "That's the man for us! Feng Lan-chih is the merchant in charge of this pig tax."

"That's right," agreed Chiang-tao eagerly. "Feng Kuei-tang always wanted to do this sort of business. At first Feng Lan-chih was too feudal. His head was too hard for a steel pickaxe to crack. Time and again his son reasoned and pleaded with him, but it was no use. However, after

Chiang Kai-shek betrayed the revolution in April 1927, Feng Lan-chih gave him the keys. . . .

"Then there's Feng Hsi. . . .

"These three chief families in Soching are known for a hundred *li* around. If you mention 'The big Feng compound,' people know you mean Feng Lan-chih. If you say 'The locust tree Feng family,' they know you mean Feng Hsi."

"Good. Very good," said Chia. "When you're describing conditions, you need to go into every detail. The only way to do the work in the villages well is to be thorough. But you haven't told me yet about the relations of exploitation at Soching."

Chia threw two more pieces of wood on the fire so that the room was filled with smoke. The old man put a pot of water on the flames, and soon it started singing. Then he offered them boiled water.

Chiang-tao went on: "Feng Lan-chih's grandfather was a farmer who had his share of storerooms and granaries. Now in Feng Kuei-tang's days they've begun to do business. They've opened the Chun Yuan Grocery Store and the Chun Yuan Cotton Shop, both of which lend money too. As soon as old Feng saw they were making a profit, he withdrew his objections. Feng Hung, who is a glutton, has opened the Hung Hsing Restaurant. The girls and wives in his family have invested their savings in the Ssu Ho Tea-shop and Wine Tavern. Since these shops opened, Soching has become a big market-town, controlling the economy of the country around. The three big families took advantage of the famine and flood to buy up large tracts of land, so that the peasants have no land to till. . . .

"They use the money they make for usury. All the villagers around Soching are either their debtors or their tenants. . . . When the crops are in and cotton is gathered, they spend what they can't eat or use themselves on sending their sons and daughters to school or making up to rich families. When they arrange a marriage, they consider the status of the other house, and one of their most important jobs in life is going round calling on officials. On this

lovely stretch of country, they've spread a net of wealth and power. Caught in this net are the peasants who toil and suffer the whole year round. . . ." Chiang-tao slowed up, but continued: "According to Marxism, objective existence determines men's consciousness. Since the big Feng compound went in for business, Feng Lan-chih and Feng Kuei-tang have changed their characters quite a bit."

Chiang-tao was gesticulating and talking faster and faster. Chia watched his expression through narrowed eyes and listened to him intently. Suddenly he could not help bursting into laughter. "All right. Judging by this, you know your social science!"

It was midnight now and very still. The only sounds were the wind outside the window, the spatter of snow and hail on the ground, the oxen munching hay. The old man came in from time to time from his post on the roof. When Chia had heard Chiang-tao out, he clapped his hands to his head. "The river flows east for a time, and then west again," he said. "In these few years you've changed. You can make a detailed analysis of a problem, going to the heart of the matter. I'll have to take big strides to catch up with you." He smiled and raised his head to look out of the window, apparently pondering deeply.

Chia had a trick of glancing sidewise. Another of his mannerisms was to raise a trembling right hand when he was disturbed, and say: ". . . The only way is struggle and yet more struggle!" This expressed his resolution. He had indeed grown resolute in the fight. In Tientsin he was released from prison at noon, and that same afternoon he started on another task.

"I hope you'll give me more material on Feng Lan-chih," he said.

Chiang-tao told him how Feng had tried to ruin Yun-tao and get Chun-lan as his concubine. Chia gnawed his lips in anger. "That's significant material! Short and to the point. Our mortal enemy!"

When Chiang-tao finished, however, Chia was smiling. He stretched and rubbed his hands. "You've taught me a lesson," he declared. "I won't say any more about the sub-

jects you've covered: for instance, the way the feudal powers use rent and usury to tie the hands of the peasants. But there's one thing you haven't mentioned." He looked hard at Chiang-tao.

Chiang-tao craned his neck to reflect, but could think of nothing. Chia fixed him with his eye and shook his head. "Political power, comrade! How can you discuss feudal forces without touching on the question of political power? They use political power to grind down the peasants."

Chiang-tao rapidly nodded. "You're right. I forgot."

"They've issued a great many taxes and impositions. Recently they've been checking up on documents and licences, there's a new levy on each pound of salt, and the peasants are being forced to plant opium. . . . They want to seize the last means of livelihood left to the poor, so that the peasants can't keep going any more and must rise in revolt. The task of our Party is to help the peasants understand this, to organize them to protect their own interests. Considering the time of year and the peasants' most pressing needs, we're going to concentrate on the thing that concerns their economic interests most closely — we're going to start a movement to oppose the tax on killing pigs!

"Did you ever hear of such a tax? Never before in history has there been a tax on the pigs killed for New Year. This means that the pork dumplings eaten at New Year are taxed: people are no longer free to eat pork dumplings. The peasants want to eat a morsel of meat, but they insist on snatching it away. Taking this pig tax as our chief concern, and the chief merchant Feng Lan-chih as our main target, we'll arouse the villagers to resist taxes and levies. Later on, we'll arouse them to resist rent and interest, to overthrow the local despots and get rid of dirty officials. . . . The fun is just beginning, there's more to come!" He stooped, looked sidewise, and rolled his eyes thoughtfully. Then he added: "Who keeps pigs? Poor peasants, middle peasants, rich peasants, small and middle-sized landlords. On a question like this we can mobilize a broad section of the populace. But there's one thing to remember!" He clenched his fists and brought them crashing down. "The main thing is to

rouse the poor and middle peasants. If we neglect this, we'll have no foothold later." His face was gleaming with sweat. He wrinkled his nose and laughed. Then he slapped Chiang-tao, saying: "Think it over. Have I said anything off the line? Don't hesitate to correct me."

Chiang-tao's long lashes fluttered as he gazed thoughtfully at the smoke wreathing to the ceiling. "Yes. We must concentrate on what affects the peasants' economic interests most closely."

"You must be painstaking and thorough in rousing the masses," warned Chia. "A sudden cloud-burst only wets the ground; but that isn't good enough. I've no specific experience to pass on. I'm new to these peasant movements. Use your initiative! Work out a set of rules. . . ."

While he was talking, his father hurried in with the muck-rake. "Things don't look so good!" he cried. "The mounted police have just gone by again."

"How many?" Chia stared in surprise.

"Seven or eight horses. They galloped past over the snow."

Looking grave, Chia said firmly: "Please go and have another look, father." Since he started work in this district, the forces of darkness had been dogging his steps. The ruling class was using its whole military and political machine to track him down, and he knew the odds against him. He said: "Go to it! We must start Party work in their military and political organizations. When the time comes, we'll get those bastards down!"

His father went panting to the door, still carrying his rake. He turned back with a threatening gesture. "If I see anyone suspicious, I'll kill the dog!"

Chiang-tao was deeply moved by the old man's courage. He could hardly repress a shudder at the thought of his own reception at the porch.

When they had settled what Chiang-tao's work was to be, Chia concluded: "Time is short, we mustn't just sit talking. If you have any difficulties, bring them to me. Now come and warm yourself." He held Chiang-tao's hands over the fire. "What about that girl comrade of yours?" He turned the lad's face to him so that he could see it.

Because they had not met for a year, Chia was in high spirits today. The relationship between him and Chiang-tao was not that of an ordinary teacher and pupil, nor yet of ordinary friends, but the deep love between comrades. "Tell me," he repeated. "How is Yen Ping getting on?"

Chiang-tao put his head on one side to look at him. "Yen Ping? She's all right. How do you know about her?"

Chia chuckled. "I have a wireless. I know everything you do." He sat down by Chiang-tao and said: "Tell me, what is she like now?"

Chiang-tao cradled his knees in his arms and rested his head on them, sidewise, to watch the flames. "She's begun to read books on social science," he said softly. "We are only friends, but I'm trying to prepare the ground."

"Didn't you prepare the ground some time ago?"

"For her to join the Youth League, I mean!"

The old man ran in again. "Things look bad! There's a lot of activity tonight. The dogs in several villages are barking like mad." He stopped with his mouth open, signing to his son to listen.

Chia looked grave as he pricked up his ears. Yes, dogs were barking in the distance. "Never mind, father. Don't you worry," he said. "I'm sorry, Chiang-tao, but you'd better be going. This house of ours has become a danger spot. A few days ago the mounted police took some men from the village in front for questioning. Ah, we haven't learned yet how to cover our tracks successfully."

"All right, I'll go," said Chiang-tao. But he was very loath to leave. Though he was warm now, the moment he went out he would be icily cold. His legs were aching and his feet were swollen.

"Don't dilly-dally!" Chia pressed him. "When you say you're going, go! Just make up your mind to it. Go on. I'm going to town too." He put on galoshes, stamped his feet, put on a hat, and was ready to leave.

Chiang-tao exchanged the fur jacket for his own padded gown, and fastened his shoes back to front before he left. At the gate, the old man was asking his son: "What's going

to happen if the bastards see all these footsteps at our door tomorrow morning?"

Chia put his mouth to his father's ear. "You can sweep the snow away as soon as it's light. All they'll know will be that there was movement in this village. They won't know where exactly."

The old man strode lightly along. "Suppose they follow us?"

"That won't matter either. Once we're away from here, we can face the magistrate with them."

His father nodded and chuckled to himself.

When Chiang-tao pushed the door open, the wind whirling the snow about the street lashed straight at him. He kept Mr. Chia's indomitable figure in mind as he walked. Once out of the village, he sped as if on wings through the wind and snow. After a little he turned to look over his shoulder. His heart missed a beat when he saw someone behind him, but a closer look revealed that it was the old man carrying his muck-rake. Chiang-tao waited for the old fellow to catch up.

"What are you doing here, grandad?" he asked.

"Hsiang-nung told me to see you off. He's gone to town too."

"Go back quickly," urged Chiang-tao. "It's cold and the snow is deep."

The old man laughed and brushed the snow from his beard. "How can I leave you in a difficult spot?"

Chiang-tao had to plead with him for some time before the old man trudged slowly back.

Chiang-tao bounded along as fast as his legs would carry him through the whirling snowflakes, till he saw the two large poplars outside his gate like two old bearded men in white waiting for him. Then all his tension slipped away. Gliding down the cold, deserted lanes, he made his way to the front of the village and stopped in his small porch.

Through a crack in the door he could see a light in the window, and make out his mother's form as she sat, huddled in her quilt, spinning thread.

The low whirr of the spinning-wheel brought him the warmth of home and his mother's love. Here on the soil of his native village, his parents worked from early till late. He knocked several times, and saw his mother slow down the spindle and wipe her eyes with the back of one hand, raising her head to mutter: "Is someone at the door?"

"It's after midnight." His father, woken from his sleep, turned over on the *kang*. "Who would come to our door in a snowstorm like this?"

After a moment, Chiang-tao called through the crack: "Mother, it's me!"

"There is someone!" cried Mrs. Yen. "It sounds like dear Yun-tao's voice!"

She moved anxiously to the window.

Yun-tao's name plunged his father into gloom again, and he sighed heavily. "If you must dream, try not to upset other folk. He'll never come back!" Through the window Chiang-tao saw his father reach out with two large, bony hands for his wallet. He filled a pipe and muttered: "A child is heart of his mother's heart, flesh of her flesh. . . ." The smoke set him coughing.

Mrs. Yen was still listening with raised head. "Ah, the boy's already been in prison a year. People say if there's an amnesty he can come out. . . ."

Yen had not told his wife that Yun-tao was sentenced for life, for fear of upsetting her. He had said he was in for ten years. When she asked why there was no letter, all he could say was that regulations were strict and no prisoners were allowed to write. She used her savings to buy cloth and made shirts and socks which she told her husband to send. These years of Yun-tao's absence were breaking her heart. During the long, dark winter nights the two old folk yearned, each in a different fashion, for the boy. Chiang-tao thought: "I'm sure dad's shedding tears under the quilt." On such a bitter night he hardly liked to disturb them. But after standing a few minutes outside he

started shivering with cold. He rapped lightly on the door again, then came to the corner of the wall and called: "Mother! It's Chiang-tao back!"

"There is someone there!" His mother's hand stopped in the air as she was reaching for a length of thread. She cocked her head, and smiled for joy when she recognized Chiang-tao's voice. The door creaked and her feet crunched over the thick snow. She could still hardly believe her ears, for she demanded eagerly: "Who is it?"

"It's Chiang-tao, mother!"

The door squeaked open. At the sight of her son, she cried shrilly: "Why! Chiang-tao! Where have you come from so late at night?" She pulled him inside, and picked up a whisk to brush the snow off him. It fell on the ground and did not melt for some time.

Yen Chih-ho turned over and sat up in the quilt. He raised his head and smiled. "Well! Isn't it after midnight? Is it nearly dawn?" He turned to look at the window bright with the gleam of the snow.

Mrs. Yen was crying quietly to herself. "Such a cold night! Take off your things quickly and sleep."

Chiang-tao sat on the edge of the *kang* while his mother pulled off his shoes. His shoes and socks, frozen together, fell with a thud.

Mrs. Yen felt a pang to see what he had been through. "It's nearly New Year," she remarked. "Your dad said, 'Chiang-tao will soon be back for New Year.' I've kept something good for you to eat."

Then she thought of Yun-tao — he ought to write a letter.

Chiang-tao slept in his mother's warm quilt, permeated by his mother's warmth and fragrance. His bones were aching, he had no energy even to turn over or speak. Lying on his stomach he fell sound asleep. Yen thought to himself: "It's only the beginning of the twelfth month. He's come back some days earlier than usual. And he's hurried home through all this snow and ice. He must have some urgent business." He was on the point of asking, but refrained. "I'd only remind her of our Yun-tao again." Tuck-

ing his head into the quilt, he turned over and spent the rest of the night in thought.

The next morning Mrs. Yen got breakfast early, after which she sat down by Chiang-tao to stroke his forehead. At the sight of his regular features and lightly closed eyes, she could not help beaming with joy. When she noticed the pallor round his lips, she bent forward quietly to kiss him, but stopped, feeling suddenly shy, because her son seemed quite a man now. She was hesitating when Chiang-tao woke. Stretching, yawning and smiling, he called: "Mother! Mum!" He reached out his strong arms and hugged her hand to his chest. "How I've missed you!"

She laughed. "I missed you, and that's the truth. But it's not true that a son misses his mother." She went out for fuel to dry his clothes, and as she worked she sang:

A sparrow's tail is like a thumb;
A son who weds forgets his mum;
He carts his poor old mum outside
While on the *kang* he seats his bride.
"Oh, bride, dear bride, what will you take?"
"Some sugar plums, a fancy cake!"
"And what will you be eating, mum?"
"Some cockroaches, a little scum!"

"When a boy marries he forgets his mother."

"I shall never forget you, mum!" protested Chiang-tao.

"You haven't married yet. Get up and have breakfast."

Smiling cheerfully, she went on: "Ah, a mother thinks the world of her boys, but as soon as their legs are strong they run away. . . . But don't you go running after 'revolution.' Each time I think of your brother in prison it's like a knife in my heart. I've worried so much over the two of you! Let's not have anything to do with revolution. If anyone wants to bully us, so long as he doesn't attack us outright, or come to our door, we needn't pay any attention."

"No, mother," said Chiang-tao. "We can't put up with insults for ever."

"Don't you be so cocksure! Hard words don't kill, knives do!"

She put the food on the table on the *kang*. It was a special meal to welcome Chiang-tao back: white *kaoliang* with beans on top, cakes of maize flour, steamed pickles and bean sprouts. There was a pigeon too. "Your dad caught this pigeon in the first snow," she told him. "We didn't like to eat it. We said, 'We'll keep that for Chiang-tao.' I salted it and kept it for you." She clapped her hands and chuckled. "It was too good for anyone but our Chiang-tao!"

The food steaming on the table filled the whole room with the appetizing smell of salted meat. His mother brought him his socks, shoes and padded trousers, all dried by the fire. Chiang-tao had no sooner dressed than his father came back to eat after sweeping the snow. There were tiny particles of ice on his beard, which dripped down as they melted.

Yen wiped his beard with his padded sleeve, brushed the mud off his trousers and scrambled on to the *kang*. His wife handed him a small wooden stool to sit on.

While taking his meal Chiang-tao was thinking of the pig tax: "I must start my work with the very poorest families." He pushed aside his bowl and went out.

Yen watched him through the small window panes. "Chiang-tao!" he called. "You've only just come back, yet without even saying a few words to your mother you're off. What's the hurry? Where are you going in all this snow?" He raised his head, thinking: "He must be here on some business."

"I'm going to see Uncle Carter," called Chiang-tao as he left.

The snow, which had fallen heavily for one day and one night, was still coming down. It lay on the ground like a cotton quilt more than one foot thick. Your feet sank deep at each step. Walking on snow is like walking on the sand: a special effort is needed. Snow festooned the eaves and branches like strips of cotton. A few hungry sparrows on the threshing-floor in front of Yen's house were chirping as they hunted through the hay. As yet no one had walked over the snow, which was one stretch of dazzling white.

Chiang-tao trudged to the Carter's door, raised the matting curtain and bent his head to step into the small room. The Carter with his bent back was rather asthmatic. After working all his life as a hired man, he still had no land or home of his own. He lived in a small mud hut belonging to the landlord, with paper pasted over the two sticks set crosswise in the mud window. When the wind blew the paper rustled. There was a pan on the small *kang*, a tattered basket on the floor, half a broken vat. The greasy quilt on the *kang* was as flat as a pancake.

The room was white with smoke as the Carter crouched by the stove blowing at the fire. When he heard someone come in he looked up and stared with watering eyes. "So it's you, Chiang-tao! Well I never! We must drink a few cups of wine together today. Have you just come from Paoting?" He kept coughing as he spoke and waving his hands, while his red eyes streamed in the smoke.

"I came to see how you are, uncle," said Chiang-tao.

The Carter straightened up and grumbled: "Bah! A poor man has no spirit, a lean horse has long hair. I've plenty to say to your father, but not much to say to you. You're a scholar, I'm an old peasant." He dabbed at his eyes again and again with his sleeve.

The Carter's tanned face was pitted with deep wrinkles, which ran criss-cross like so many brooks. His coarse blue padded trousers and jacket, after at least a dozen years of wear, were losing the padding in several places. He stood with bent shoulders, facing Chiang-tao. His padded shoes were down at the heels, the toes curling in the air like the prow of a boat.

Chiang-tao sat on the *kang* and said: "Uncle, you ought to find someone to help you. As it is, you've no one even to cook for you."

The Carter laughed bitterly. "What, in this hut? No food, nowhere to live, no clothes to wear. A woman isn't like bedding you can roll up and carry away on your back. I've got one foot in the grave. How could I think of marriage?"

"Who'll cook for you if you have no children? And won't you be lonely in your old age?"

The Carter rubbed his nose. "The way you talk! If I don't marry, how can I have children? Besides, it's only over New Year that I have to cook. Ah, I've done nothing but eat at other men's tables all my life." He shook his head repeatedly as if this were a deep-rooted grievance.

Chiang-tao pitied the old man with all his heart for the hard life he had led. "When you've slaved for a year, you should be able to eat for a few days in your employer's house. Why must you come home and start cooking for yourself? Can you make dumplings? This hut of yours is icy, so is the *kang*!" It certainly was cold in there. The sharp winter wind blew through the gaps in the curtain and the window. One breath of it was enough to chill you to the bone.

The Carter filled a bowl with potato stew. "You eat first, nephew," he said. "I've only the one bowl."

Chiang-tao passed the bowl back to him with both hands. "I've eaten already, uncle. Go ahead."

Chiang-tao picked up a brush and swept the floor and the *kang*. The Carter was shivering with cold as he squatted with his bowl by the stove, trying to warm himself. "They say dumplings should be eaten in the family on New Year's Day, with no outsider there. I don't belong to their clan — how can I eat their New Year dumplings?"

"But you don't know how to make them yourself."

Slowly swallowing his potato stew, the Carter said: "Yes, my fingers are too awkward. For New Year's Day I mean to raise some flour and make a large flat cake. By putting some minced meat in it, I'll make one big dumpling. Then I'll cook it slowly in a covered pan. That will taste good." He smiled at the prospect of that delicious meat. "Anyway, there's no regular work in the first month." He showed his yellow teeth in a grin. "Another good way is to put a little oil in the pan and fry some leeks. Then add meat and vegetables and drop spoonfuls of flour on top — that's the same as dumplings. Dumplings are just meat and vegetables with sauce added." Holding the bowl

in his left hand, the chopsticks in his right, he was pacing up and down the room. Apparently he derived great satisfaction from this fruit of many years' experience.

They talked for some time, till Chiang-tao was on edge with impatience. Still he could not lead up to the subject he had in mind. He said: "After working hard all year in the wind and sun, you can't even spend a happy New Year! After a life of toil you should be able to have your own plot of land, a roof over your head, a wife and children. . . ." A lump came into his throat.

"A hired man sells his strength," rejoined the Carter. "How can he keep out of the wind and sun? If you don't work well this year, who'll hire you next? The proverb says: Men leave a name behind, swallows leave the sound of their flight. It's not easy for the poor to fill their belly. I worked for Feng Lan-chih ever since I was a boy, until he changed his ways and sold his oxen to buy those mules and horses. If not for that, I'd have worked for him till I died. Ah! I'm not much use now. All I can do is look after Feng Hsi's two miserable oxen."

Chiang-tao, acting on the assumption that the poorer and more oppressed a man the more revolutionary he would be, was baffled by this conversation. He began to realize that peasants could not throw off the effect of thousands of years of feudal oppression and traditional teaching overnight. In fact, his experience here was very lacking. In his desperation he could hardly keep still, and finally he opened the subject himself. He spoke of the need to oppose taxes and levies, rent and interest, increases in the price of salt and the tax on documents and licences. Having made this speech, he waited for the Carter's reaction.

The Carter disagreed with him completely. Spittle flying from his mouth, he said: "How can you talk like that? Since ancient times it has always been this way. How can you borrow money without paying interest? Unless you were a friend, no one would lend to you. Private citizens must sign documents, officials must have seals. For that of course you must pay. Men own land because they've worked hard for it, eating sparingly and devising ways

and means. How can you refuse to pay rent? They wouldn't let you farm it if you did! Of course salt is going up in price—what trader doesn't want to earn a little money? The cost of transport is mounting all the time, and when the river rises the boat floats high." He threw back his head as he talked, recalling his life, confident that things could never change. There was no reason to change and no way to change. For him it was much easier to drift with the tide than to battle against it. Why should a man look for trouble? After gulping down one bowl of potato stew, he filled another. "You're a student," he told Chiang-tao. "You ought to learn to look at things reasonably. Don't start having foolish notions."

The Carter was growing quite heated. Words flowed from him like a torrent past a sluice-gate. He might be slow, but once he got started no one else could get a word in. Chiang-tao watched him in amazement. The lad could hardly defend himself, let alone strike back.

Blinking his long lashes, Chiang-tao puffed at the Carter's pipe, smoking pipe after pipe. It passed his comprehension that an ordinary peasant could have such deeply engrained orthodox views. As a village intellectual, nothing he could say had any effect on the old man. He laid down the pipe, hesitated for a little, and then rose to leave in some embarrassment.

When the Carter saw him go out without speaking, he lifted the curtain and said: "What, are you off?"

"I've been out some time. I must go back."

"Well, come again."

Chiang-tao went home and lay down on his mother's warm kang. He racked his brains for several days. In the day-time he read the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In the evening he opened his great eyes wide to stare into the dark night, listening to the wind as it howled in the poplars outside. One night he looked up to see that the sky was bright outside the window. He sat up and dressed. His father, woken by him, asked: "What are you up to?"

"I'm going to town."

"What's the time?"

"It's light."

"It can't be. I've only just dropped off to sleep."

Chiang-tao insisted on leaving. He found a stick, opened the door and set out. The snow had stopped though the sky was still overcast. He headed north, then took a west turning to reach the highway to town. When he came to Thousand Li Dyke he saw the broad river banks covered with snow, with only the dark shapes of trees visible. He dragged his legs over the small bridge. It grew lighter as he walked, and he looked up to see that the moon had pierced the clouds. He stopped and thought: "Well! What time is it after all?"

He found the city gate closed fast. It would not move when he pushed it. He squatted down to rest till he heard a cart come up and the gate opened to admit them. When he reached the school, Mr. Chia was sitting by his fire.

"You're up early today," said Chiang-tao.

"I'm going to the country to see how the work's progressing." Chia hunched his shoulders and looked sideways at Chiang-tao, as if to say: "What are you doing here so early?"

Chiang-tao told him all about his talk with the Carter. Chia slapped him on the back, laughing heartily, then clapped his own bald head. "Comrade," he said, "I told you not to boast! To settle a specific problem you have to approach a specific group of people. To oppose paying rents, you mobilize the tenants. To oppose paying interest you mobilize the debtors. To oppose paying this pig tax, you mobilize the owners of pigs. How could you expect results when you were talking to the wrong man?" He bent down, chuckling to himself.

Chiang-tao was taken aback. He suddenly burst out laughing. "I've been dense. But now I see! Uncle Carter is an old hired hand, who's never borrowed money or kept pigs. Since he eats in other people's homes, he doesn't worry about the price of salt. Since he doesn't own any land, he's nothing against taxes or levies. The movement

to resist taxes and levies isn't going to solve his problem. Of course, he's slow to see the truth. Is that right?"

"That's only a part of it," replied Chia. "When we're working in the country, hired hands are part of our class force, and we must do our best to educate them. Though this movement doesn't solve their problem, they're against feudalism! Once they're aroused, they'll be among the most active. . . ." He brewed some tea and poured a cup for Chiang-tao. "Come on. Drink some hot tea. Why were you in such a hurry?"

Chiang-tao put his head on one side and looked out of the window. "Nothing. So that's the way it is?"

Chia clapped his own head again with a laugh. "Think it over. You like to use your brain! You've studied dialectical materialism. To solve a problem you've got to find the contradiction." He stared hard at the ground and nodded gravely. "It's not easy to lead the work. First you have to find the problem, and only then can you set about solving it. It's like splitting wood: you've first to find a crack, get your wedge in it, and then hammer hard. If you don't find that crack and get your wedge in, you may pound for all you're worth and not get anywhere."

While he was speaking, it flashed through Chiang-tao's mind that Feng Lan-chih was the biggest despot in So-ching. He was in the sharpest conflict with the peasants. He had fought those three lawsuits with Uncle Ming and Chiang-tao's father. . . .

(to be continued)

Translated by Gladys Yang

Notes on Literature and Art

YU WEN

Peking Stage in 1958

Last year we saw a great leap forward in industry and agriculture. The breath-taking, tremendous changes experienced by six hundred and fifty million people stirred the mind of every playwright. A good crop of new plays is a prerequisite to an active theatrical season. Inspired by the unprecedented mass enthusiasm for socialist construction, many people wrote plays graphically reflecting our exciting era. The rich fare presented on the Peking stage in 1958 is a natural consequence of the many new dramas created.

Tien Han, the veteran dramatist, finished two new plays: *Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir* and *Kuan Han-ching*. Lao Sheh, famous novelist and playwright, also wrote two plays: *The Tea-House* and *Red Compound*. Chen Pai-chen, another experienced playwright, after the completion of his satire *Alas, the U.S. Satellite* wrote another farce called *The Paper Tiger*. Many short plays reflecting the changes in people's lives have been written by workers, peasants and other amateurs. Quite a few actors and directors have also tried their hand at writing plays. *The Red Storm*, a collective work, was penned by Chin Shan, who is a famous actor; he also took part in the performance. *Red Flag Unfurled* and *Song of Victory* both describe how doctors and nurses in Shanghai, under the leadership of the Communist Party, saved the life of the steel worker Chiu Tsai-kang. The first of these plays was written collectively by the doctors of the Kuangtzu Hospital in Shanghai and professional playwrights. With many

newcomers swelling the ranks of our playwrights, our plays have become richer and more varied in theme and content.

Lao Sheh is a writer with an intimate knowledge of Peking. His play *Dragon Beard Ditch*, written after liberation and dealing with life in Peking, made an unforgettable impression on its audiences. Since his two new plays *The Tea-House* and *Red Compound* also take life in the capital as their theme, they make a special appeal to Peking audiences. The former succeeds, within the confines of a small tea-house, in depicting the changes in Peking from the end of last century to 1948, the eve of the liberation. Here we have a masterly sketch of three stages in the old Chinese society, the changes being expressed through the characters and incidents in the tea-house. The play begins in 1898, after the failure of the reform movement, the first bourgeois reformist movement in Chinese history. In the tea-house we can see quite a cross-section of society. Pang, the eunuch, represents the conservative forces of feudalism; Chin Chung-yi, one of China's newly emerging capitalist class, talks about saving the country by developing industry but in practice proves weak and ineffective; Chang is a gallant, high-hearted man; the cautious owner of the tea-house, Wang, longs for a quiet life; the peasant, who has lost his land, has come to the city where his family is broken up. . . . The next scene shows us Peking more than ten years later in the troubled days of the warlords. The manager of the shop is doing his best to improve business, but his clientele has changed: the eunuch has gone with the end of one historical epoch; shrewd Chin Chung-yi seems to be doing well, while Chang has gone into trade in a small way. The play ends on the eve of liberation when the tea-house that has seen so many vicissitudes in fifty years is seized by Kuomintang thugs. The cautious, hard-headed owner, Manager Wang, is driven to desperation; the former capitalist Chin is bankrupt; the idealist Chang is a peanut-vendor on the street. When these three men meet again in the tea-house, they sing a dirge to the years gone for ever, and the author hints that a revolutionary storm is approaching.

Lao Sheh's *Red Compound*, by depicting the daily life of a group of ordinary citizens, reflects their delight in socialist construction. Many plays dealing with new people and their new life appeared in 1958. Thus in *Red Flag Unfurled* the

Party secretary, Lin; and a group of young doctors show a true working-class stand when they determine to save the life of a patient at all costs. Their boldness in brushing aside conventional ideas and in overcoming apparently insurmountable difficulties reflects the spirit of the new men in this new age.

Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir is a paean in praise of labour and socialist construction. Playwright Tien Han, with boundless enthusiasm and romantic imagination, describes how the people of Peking constructed the Ming Tombs Reservoir with voluntary labour in only five months. The play also goes back into the history of the district in the past seven hundred years, and imagines what it will be like twenty years hence.

The Red Storm gives us a general picture of the February Seventh Strike. More than thirty years ago this strike, called by the Peking-Hankow Railway workers and other railway men against the reactionary warlords, was the stirring prelude to other political struggles of the Chinese working class. The ruling class cruelly suppressed the strike, but the powerful and resolute fighting spirit of Lin Hsiang-chien and Shih Yang, leaders in the struggle, became a force that inspired the people to continue their struggle. The play portrays how the workers, fighting for freedom and human rights, tried to set up their trade union, while the ruling class did its utmost to obstruct them. In this sharp class struggle, leaders appeared among the workers. Lin Hsiang-chien and Shih Yang came from different backgrounds and had different characters. Lin had grown up among the masses; he was simple and honest yet resolute and always in the front line of the struggle. Shih Yang was a fervent and eloquent revolutionary intellectual, an outstanding propagandist. Both were Communists, bravely leading the masses in their fight against the enemy. They dedicated their lives to justice and truth, and the cause of the revolution. In those trying years this historic strike inspired many revolutionaries to greater efforts. Now, more than thirty years after the event, this stirring drama reminds people how much we should treasure our socialist society, won with the blood of our revolutionary forbears.

Another notable achievement last year on the Peking stage was the appearance of political satires. These new plays reflect international politics in this new era when the east wind prevails over the west wind. Chen Pai-chen's *Alas, the U.S. Satellite* is an outstanding example. It shows the American

war-mongers' alarm and embarrassment when their rockets burned in mid-air. This short play stresses that the Soviet people are miles ahead of the Americans in scientific research. In *The Paper Tiger*, Chen Pai-chen satirizes the American imperialists and their aggression in the Middle East and on Taiwan. Such little satirical plays have all been well received, for they express the people's opposition to the cold war and their desire for peace, as well as their contempt and scorn for the ostentatious imperialists who in actuality are nothing but paper tigers.

During the past year another encouraging sign was the development of several promising young actors and actresses. The proverb says: "An actor is made by acting." In the course of the nation-wide rectification movement, actors have made tremendous progress in their ideological level, and this has enabled them to interpret the theme of a play more correctly and portray characters more truthfully. Most Peking audiences recall Crazy Cheng, a character in Lao Sheh's play *Dragon Beard Ditch* which was first performed here eight years ago. Cheng was an actor, driven mad in the old society; in the new society he regains the opportunity to work and perform. The young actor Yu Shih-chih gave a first-rate performance of this role. In 1958 Yu Shih-chih skilfully performed two other roles, each quite different from his earlier portrayal. In *The Tea-House* he played Manager Wang, from his bitter youth under the Manchus to his bitter old age under the Kuomintang. In *Red Flag Unfurled* he played Comrade Lin, a Party secretary, frugal, honest and admirable. In each role he delineated his character in its particular circumstances with the utmost accuracy.

Actress Ti Hsin's performance of the woman Communist Yi Ning in the play *Unforgettable Times* by Tu Hsuan also made a deep impression. The play describes the underground struggles of the student movement under the leadership of the Party during the stormy years of 1931-1935. Suspicion is cast on Yi Ning in the Party by a traitor. Arrested and tortured by the enemy in the days of the White Terror, this young woman Communist never wavers in her loyalty to the Party. In the end she gives her life for the revolution. Ti Hsin gave a splendid portrayal of a resolute, loyal and brave woman Communist.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung's suggestion that our literature and art should be an integration of revolutionary realism and rev-

olutionary romanticism and his own practice in poetry writing have greatly inspired our dramatists and artists. Plays like *The Red Storm* and *Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir* are not only works of revolutionary realism, but also embodied strong revolutionary romanticism. And in this respect Tien Han's new masterpiece *Kuan Han-ching* is an outstanding achievement. Relying upon available historical data, plus Kuan Han-ching's plays themselves, Tien Han has re-created this great playwright and his contemporaries in a vivid drama. The episodes and characters are not necessarily taken from history but the delineation of Kuan Han-ching's character is very convincing and we see him as a beloved playwright of the people. Describing how Kuan Han-ching wrote his famous play *Snow in Midsummer*, Tien Han depicts his noble spirit and tells a moving tale. A play like this shows what a wide range of themes contemporary Chinese playwrights have found for their writing.

CHIANG WEI-PU

Chinese Picture-Story Books

In the libraries of Chinese factories and schools and in the reading rooms of people's communes, the number of which is increasing daily, picture-story books are one of the most popular types of reading. In the bookstalls and bookshops scattered through big cities and small towns, picture-story books attract thousands of customers every day. During the last few years, picture-story books have been taken up too by the national minorities. Picture-story books are not only favourites with children and adults who can only read a little, but even well-educated readers skim through the best of them when they have leisure.

These books usually have a progressive message or deal with familiar stories, and their form makes them readily acceptable. They tell stories through a series of illustrations with a short explanatory text. The drawings vary in style; the main thing is that they should be expressive, logically connected and dramatic. The length of the commentary varies also, and sometimes it is in verse; but the pictures are the most important thing. The explanations should be concise, lively, and well coordinated with the pictures to help the readers to understand the contents. If well written, they bring out the value of the illustrations and convey ideas which the latter cannot express.

This form of literature has existed for some time in China. The stories of the Sung (960-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties often had illustrations at the top of each page. The popular romances and novels of the Ming (1368-1644) and Ching (1644-1911) dynasties frequently had portraits of the characters at the beginning of the book and sometimes there were additional pictures at the start of each chapter. These may be considered the forerunners of picture-story books. The New-Year paintings so popular throughout the country are also sometimes in serial form, for they used to be mounted on screens with sixteen, twenty-four or thirty-two pictures to one set. Thus they have something in common with picture-story books. Then there are serial wall paintings, like the hundred and twelve illustrating the life of Confucius in the Confucian Temple at Chufu, Shantung, a monumental work of the picture-story genre.

Not until after the May the Fourth Movement of 1919, however, did the picture-story book become widespread as a form of popular literature. While the new compradore capitalists, following the economic and cultural invasion of China by the imperialists, made use of this form for the propaganda of capitalist and semi-colonial ideas, the revolutionaries and progressives wanted it for revolutionary education of the people.

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation, magazines published in the anti-Japanese bases and liberated areas often carried picture stories, usually moving tales true to life which served to encourage and educate the people. At the same time, the imperialist aggressors and the Kuomintang authorities carried out propaganda against the revolution by selling huge quantities of serial stories

based on American thrillers, sex-ridden Hollywood films and other decadent comics. These reactionary, vulgar and pornographic picture-story books poisoned the minds of many of our people, and had a particularly pernicious influence on children.

Today the situation is entirely different. Picture-story books are written for the interests of the people. Tremendous improvement has been made both in quality and quantity. The number of picture-story books printed has increased enormously in the last few years, from just over 21 million in 1952 to 52 million in 1955 and well over 100 million in 1956 — nearly five times the 1952 figure. Whereas in 1952 there were about 670 titles, in 1957 there were more than 2,300. The great leap forward on the production front in 1958 was followed by tremendous developments in the cultural life of the people. In the first six months of the year more than 1,600 titles were printed including 700 new titles.

A large proportion of the new picture-story books deal with the revolutionary struggle and socialist construction. Examples of these are stories about the anti-Japanese war like *The Shepherd's Message* and tales of the Liberation War like *Reconnaissance Across the River* and *Defend Yenan!*, the story of the 25,000 li Long March *Across Mountains and Rivers* and *Volunteer Heroes* depicting the struggle to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea. Picture-story books have also been published about heroic men and women of modern China who are worthy models for the younger generation — Tung Tsun-jui, Huang Chi-kuang, Lo Sheng-chiao, Liu Hu-lan and others.

Another large percentage of these books is devoted to stories of historical figures, revolutionary struggles, patriots of the past, and pioneers in the search for freedom and truth. Such picture-story books as *Water Margin* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in many volumes are extremely popular. Other favourites are those based on old legends, dramas, fables or folk tales, like *School-Master Tungkuo*, *The White Snake*, *Mistress Clever*, *The Lovelorn Peacock Flies Southeast*, *The Western Chamber*, and *The Angel Maid and the Mortal*.

Mention should also be made of the books introducing the achievements of the Soviet people during their revolution and the period in which they built up socialism. Such stories are increasing all the time. *The Young Guard*, *A. Matrosov*, *The Story of Zoya and Shura*, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, *Gorky's Child-*

hood, and *Far from Moscow* are only a few of the picture-story books which have had a great influence in China. Books describing life in the People's Democracies include *The Day We Hoped for* and *Riverside Village*, which describe the Korean people and youth in their struggle against aggression; *The Young Hero of Vietnam*; *Peace Settlement*, which deals with country life in Hungary; and *Spark*, a story about Czechoslovak workers. All these are also very popular. There are also picture-story books about the struggle of the people in different parts of the world against imperialist aggression and for peace and democracy.

A number of picture-story books are designed specially for younger children. These usually have shorter texts and the main themes are folk-lore and legend, children's life at home and at school, scientific subjects or tales about great men and women. Such books help to mould the children's moral character and increase their general knowledge. Some of the illustrations are in colour, and these are particularly liked by children.

MAO TUN

Rambling Notes on Literature (cont'd)

IV. THE CLASSICISTS AND THE MODERNISTS

Mention has been made of the classicism of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe and the "modernist" schools fashionable at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century which still exist today. I shall now say a few words about these.

European classicism arose in seventeenth century France. Since France in the reign of Louis XIV was a highly influential country and Paris was then the political and cultural centre

of Europe, literary trends in France had a considerable influence on other European states and classicism became the chief literary trend in Europe at that time. It was in France, however, that classicism became the orthodoxy and the great classicist writers of tragedy, comedy, poetry and prose, as well as literary critics, appeared. Yet it was also in France, later, that the fiercest attacks on classicism were made.

Classicism was able to spread from France to neighbouring countries not only because France was a powerful state with a glorious cultural tradition, but because other European countries also had a suitable climate in the rationalism then prevalent, and a suitable soil regarding economic and social conditions. Since the fertility of the soil varied from place to place, however, classicism bore different flowers and fruit in different countries. On the whole it was not so influential elsewhere as in France. In England, for example, it did not cause so much stir. Whether the well-known poet and critic Alexander Pope should be considered as a classicist or not is still a debatable point.

Even in France, classicism was not the only school. Not to speak of the eighteenth century, during the seventeenth century when it was at its height it was also opposed by certain famous writers, though these did not form an influential school.

As we all know, an important event took place in Paris on February 25, 1830, notably the performance of Hugo's *Hernani*, which led to the final conflict between the new romanticism and the old classicism and resulted in the end of classicism. Hugo in his preface to *Hernani* described romanticism as liberalism in literature. The success of *Hernani* marked the end of a long struggle lasting dozens of years against classicism. The romanticists naturally opposed the classicist method of writing; but viewed superficially they seemed to be against the restrictions in classical prosody which limited their freedom, as if this were merely a technical problem connected with literary style, literary language and the laws of the Three Unities.

Here I would like to mention another well-known incident in French literature. A few years before the performance of *Hernani*, Shakespeare's *Othello* was staged in Paris, and the use of the word *mouchoir* threw the audience into an uproar. For according to classical prosody, this was one of the "vulgar" words inadmissible in poetry.

From this we can see the importance attributed to technical points of literary style by the supporters of classicism. These supporters were members of the upper class, mostly from noble families, who posed as the arbiters of taste and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries formed the main audience in the theatres.

It was originally one of the rules of classical prosody to classify words as "cultured" or "vulgar," and the latter category was supposed to be excluded from poetry and tragedy. "Vulgar" denoted all colloquial expressions, technical terms or words which were lively and exciting. Poetry must use only "cultured" words. If no suitable "cultured" word could be found, a paraphrase was preferable to a "vulgar" word. In Racine's day these rules were not yet so strict and unreasonable, and Racine himself had no objection to such a word as *chien*. His eighteenth century successors did not have his courage, though. When they had to mention an animal like a dog, they chose an "elegant" expression which was difficult to understand: *de la fidélité respectable soutien*. This strikes us as ridiculous, but the French classicists of the eighteenth century were extremely punctilious about their choice of vocabulary.

This division of words into "cultured" or "vulgar" was not something that took place overnight. Malherbe, a precursor of classicism, was the first to urge that coarse and vulgar words should not be used in poetry. He demanded purity and simplicity in vocabulary so that poetry could be understood and accepted by all. His proposal seems reasonable enough, and we can say that he inherited critically and further developed the ideas of the Pléiade, a group of writers who opposed court and academic poetry and aimed at the formation of a national style. In 1549 this group issued a declaration calling upon men to defend and develop the French language. Indeed, during the latter half of the sixteenth century this was a progressive literary movement.

We say that Malherbe critically inherited the ideas of the Pléiade because the poets of the Pléiade claimed that in order to write epics, tragedies or comedies with a distinctive French style they must study Greek and Roman authors; and though in theory they were correct, in actual practice they produced nothing by mechanical imitations. This was not the case with Malherbe. He carried forward the movement of the Pléiade because he had his own theory of poetry based on personal

experience, which became the foundation of later orthodox classicist poetry. In fact this was the positive element in orthodox classicist poetry.

In 1629, one year after Malherbe's death, the Academie Française was established. This was an official organization, formed to carry out the government's policy on literature and language, which advocated what later came to be known as the classicist method of writing. Early in its history it struggled resolutely against two bad tendencies in literature: the extravagant baroque style, and the artificial "salon" style fashionable in the upper circles in Paris.

We can therefore see that the establishment of the Academie Française played a positive role. As the centralized monarchy was consolidated and prospered, however, the academy grew increasingly conservative. It persistently refused to admit Molière as a member, though even at the time he was generally acknowledged to be the founder of French comedy. To "defend" the dignity of classicist poetry it ignored many great works, including Corneille's *Le Cid*, which was widely hailed as a landmark in the history of European drama. More than this, when the "Age of Enlightenment" was producing a flowering of literature in France as well as other European countries during the eighteenth century, the French theatre influenced by the Academie Française allowed only the performance of dry and monotonous classicist dramas. We can see then that soon after its establishment this official body played a negative role. This explains why the classicist tradition which was already declining by the end of the seventeenth century persisted in France for another century: it was backed up by the Academie Française supported by the nobility. Of course, we must not forget that eighteenth century France had one great classicist writer, Voltaire, who wrote quite a number of tragedies; but Voltaire did not abide strictly by the rules of classical prosody, and his views were not altogether the same as those of his predecessors.

We are justified in describing the seventies and eighties of the seventeenth century as the best period of classicism in France. The finest works of Racine were written between 1667 and 1677, while Boileau's *L'Art poetique* was published in 1674. Some historians consider the seventeenth century as the age of classicism in French literature, but the eighteenth century classicist literature — mainly the drama — as pseudo-

classicist, bearing a merely superficial resemblance in form but not in spirit to the great works of the seventeenth century. I agree with this estimation.

So if we consider Racine's dramas as models of classicist literature and Boileau's *L'Art poetique* as a model of classicist literary criticism, we can gain an idea of what classicism really was. Boileau's theories, especially, exercised a great influence on later writers.

Racine wrote meticulously and most skilfully within the limitations imposed by the classicist rules of writing, and his tragedies were recognized as models of classicist literature. Though we may find Molière closer to the modern taste than Racine, the latter's outstanding art nevertheless forms a precious part of world literature.

Racine could operate most skilfully within the narrow confines of the classicist tradition. He was like a superb juggler who can produce infinite varieties of movements where others feel too cramped to stir. We cannot but marvel at his wonderful craftsmanship.

The plots of his tragedies are simple, free from artificial devices and strictly in accordance with the rules. They develop in a logical, natural manner, with no weird or contrived incidents. He never introduces irrelevant episodes for dramatic effect. His language is clear, easy and polished, dignified without being pompous, passionate without being wild. His style is not like a rapid torrent but a deep tranquil lake, calm on the surface but seething with life underneath. Its apparent simplicity hides great depths of meaning and beauty.

If we compare Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* with Racine's *Bérénice*, there are many similarities between the themes; but the difference in treatment creates two utterly different styles. Shakespeare has created characters of every description, who show off *Cleopatra* to great advantage. His drama is packed with innumerable incidents: wars, conspiracies, marriages and divorces, intrigues, reconciliation and finally death. Moreover, Shakespeare shifts the scene many times: from Alexandria to Rome, from Athens to Messina, from the porticos of Pompeii to the plain of Actium. *Bérénice* affords an utter contrast to this. The whole play is set in a small antechamber and takes place within two and a half hours — the time needed for the performance — while there are only

three characters. But through the mental development of these characters the tragedy is carried to its climax, the audience feels that tremendous events are happening in this small chamber, and is keenly aware of their impact on the minds of these three characters. Of course, by this comparison between Racine and Shakespeare, I have no intention of discussing the relative merits of their different methods, but wish merely to point out the distinctive artistic achievement of classicist tragedy.

We must at the same time note that although Racine's characters dress like ancient Romans (most of the themes of classicist drama are taken from Greek and Roman legends and history), these are not the real men and women of ancient history but Racine's conception of them. Through their lips he expresses what he wants to say. This is a common feature of classicist tragedy. But what ideas did they put into the mouths of these ancients? Primarily two: opposition to feudalism and religious dogma, and an exposure of the evils of the nobility and monarchy. Thus in *Bérénice*, the idealized Roman emperor Titus was used to satirize Louis XIV. It would be more correct to say that ideas of this sort reflected the outlook of the rising bourgeoisie, the upper strata of France's third estate, rather than that they were inherent in the original theme and further developed by the writer. Indeed it was this anti-feudal, anti-religious and anti-monarchic content that gave the classicist literature of the seventeenth century its progressive role. However, the rising bourgeoisie of those days was not sufficiently revolutionary: it mistrusted the masses and finally compromised with the monarchy. This is reflected in the views of these classicist writers, who despised folk literature and had great respect for the literary tastes of the nobility.

The philosophical basis of the classicist method is the rationalism prevalent in the seventeenth century, as is very evident in Boileau's *L'Art poétique*. Rationalism is a theory of knowledge which considers reason as the sole source of true knowledge and the criterion of truth. Rationalists proposed that men should apprehend the world through reason, for knowledge acquired through sensation is deceptive and can only give an unclear idea of things, liable to lead men astray. In so far as the rationalists opposed medieval philosophy, denied the authority of the church and proposed that reason

should take the place of blind faith, they had a positive aspect. But by considering reason as the sole source of true knowledge, denying the necessity for experience or sensory knowledge, and failing to realize that experience is the first stage of knowledge, they severed reason from experience and made the rational processes absolute. Thus the rationalists considered that truth was derived directly from human reason, and its validity need not be verified by practice and experience but depended upon the clarity and accuracy of our conception. In other words, the criterion of truth is not something outside man's reason but within it. Thus the rationalists inevitably reached a dead end of pure abstraction without specific content. Such was their negative aspect. The seventeenth century classicist writers showed more of the positive aspect of rationalism than Boileau, the authoritative classicist literary critic, whose *L'Art poétique* reveals more of its negative side.

Boileau specified all the strict and complex rules for writing poetry and tragedies. He declared that nature, reason and truth were a trinity, with reason dominant. So although he was in favour of imitating nature, he did not believe in copying objectively existing nature but nature distilled through reason. (By "nature" he meant everything in the real world.) He was for literature advocating the truth, but only the truth affirmed by reason. He thought that literature should express the truth, but again only the truth affirmed by reason.

The classicist method of writing stemmed from this understanding of reality. Because reason was given such a prominent role and the necessity of experience in the process of knowledge was denied, the understanding of reality could not but be one-sided. In the portrayal of character the rationalists demanded merely a fixed, unchanging type idealized by the author's reason. They were opposed to descriptions of the natural appearance of things, preferring intellectualized writing like regular, artificial gardens. They admired calm intellect and disapproved of sentimentality or fancy. They advocated purity in the literary language, yet their division of words into vulgar and cultured finally served only to limit the scope of the literary language more and more. As all the rules of classicist poetry had a dual nature, it is little wonder that those which exerted a positive influence under certain conditions exerted a negative one when circumstances changed. Boileau's method of reasoning naturally did not take into account the law

governing change. Relying on reason, he affirmed that his principles were infallible and absolute. We have seen the result which followed.

Now not a few people like to emphasize that literature is something exceptional. They carry this argument so far as to deny that different methods of writing originate from different ways of thinking (which produce different views of reality), and that the rise and decline of different literary trends in history spring from changes in the social economy and the developments of the class struggle. Such denials and emphatic assertions are the time-worn tricks of bourgeois critics; but these men who declare that literature is something exceptional will not admit that they are the same as the bourgeois critics. Instead they ask: How then do you explain the complexity of certain works by great writers in the past?

Of course, we should pay attention to the complexity of great works of classical literature and not over-simplify things; on the other hand we should also bear in mind that this complexity is based on the authors' views of reality. We cannot fit all the great writers of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe into one framework any more than we can the works of one man. This is something to remember when we study the French literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

However, the great writers of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, whether supporters or opponents of classicism, all shared the idealist conception of history. As for the classicists, another thing they had in common was rationalism. But the development of the class struggle and the revolutionary movements in Europe at the time aroused different reactions in their minds which gave rise to different characteristics in their writing. This is very clear in the French literature of that period.

We must not underestimate the influence of rationalism on seventeenth century European thought and on the progressive intellectuals of that day. The founder of rationalism, Descartes, was a dualist on the basic philosophical problem—the relationship between existence and thinking. Spinoza who was born later sharply criticized Descartes' dualism, and his materialist ideas had a great influence on French thought in the eighteenth century; but Spinoza in his theory of knowledge

inherited Descartes' rationalism. His view of social development was also idealist. He was against the social system of that time, urging the establishment of a rational society and considering the prerequisite for such a society the understanding of human "truth." In other words, the conditions for setting up a rational society were to be found in pure "reason," having nothing to do with changes in the material world. The "realm of reason" about which the eighteenth century encyclopaedists waxed so enthusiastic, was no more than idealized bourgeois society. Voltaire, the brilliant spokesman of the age of enlightenment and the greatest and last of the eighteenth century classicists, even considered that class inequality was right and proper: in this respect he represented the bourgeoisie. The seventeenth century classicists did not go beyond the limits of bourgeois ideas either in their views of society. Molière's comedies which we still enjoy today contain many progressive ideas, but in them he criticized the aristocracy from the standpoint of the bourgeois way of life: he took exception to the nobility's extravagance and immorality from the moral standpoint of the bourgeois class, and used idealized bourgeois ethics to expose the greed and avarice of the bourgeoisie of that time.

But by the later half of the eighteenth century conditions had changed. The class conflict was sharper, the dual nature of the bourgeoisie and its intrinsic rottenness had destroyed the people's illusions about the "realm of reason" and made them desire a thorough change. Then eighteenth century classicist literature discarded the anti-religious, anti-clerical and anti-monarchic views which had earlier been the specific political beliefs of this school; and since nothing was left but cut-and-dried mechanical rules, these were abandoned in the march of time.

We are reviewing this past history not out of academic interest but to compare the early classicism with the literary trends from the end of the nineteenth century until today, to see how the classicist literature which reflected bourgeois ideology during the rise of the bourgeoisie later degenerated into formalism, while today the subjective idealism upon which the bourgeoisie relies in its final struggle on the ideological front is expressed in literature as the abstract formalism of half a dozen or so "modernist" schools.

It is worth our while to study and compare these two methods of writing. Classicism, born at the time of the rise of the bourgeoisie, made a fierce attack on religion and challenged the authority of the church and the monarchy, thereby serving not only the interests of the bourgeoisie but those of the people as a whole. All the great classicist writers came from the upper middle class. They were the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie, despising and shunning the middle and lower classes, the artisans and peasants.

The "modernist" schools appeared during the decline of the bourgeoisie. They claim to detest the social order and modern culture of the bourgeoisie; they spurn all literary traditions and want to create a new literature and art which are absolutely free to suit the modern age. The result is that while their art may be very "new" and even fantastic, it does not suit the spirit of this age at all, quite the reverse. All "modernist" artists and writers are petty-bourgeois intellectuals who detest the bourgeoisie but despise the masses. They believe their work will destroy the vulgar, corrupt bourgeois way of life; but in fact its effect is to weaken the people's will to revolt. It was no accident that futurism was the official school of art in Mussolini's fascist regime, and that Nazi Germany protected expressionism.

The origin of their contradictions can be found in the ideological basis of their methods of writing.

As we have seen, the ideological basis of classicism was rationalism, a one-sided theory of knowledge applied to literature. However, rationalism at that time was still a progressive trend of thought, and this is the basic reason for the progressive role of seventeenth century classicist literature.

The ideological basis of the "modernists" is just the reverse. Their ideological basis is "irrationalism," the common denominator of some of the most reactionary trends of subjective idealism since the later half of the nineteenth century, seen in Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson and James. Irrationalism is a sort of mysticism, denying reason and the reasoning faculty, denying the ability of science to discover truth, denying the possibility of knowing the world around, but giving pride of place to such blind unconscious forces as instinct, physical urges and the will. The philosophical ideas of Bergson, in particular, supplied ideological nourishment for futurism and expressionism, the precursors of the modernist schools. Bergson used

the mystical "instinct" to oppose rational, logical understanding, and all the novel forms of expression produced by the absolute "spiritual freedom" of which the modernists boast are simply adaptations of Bergson's reactionary theory. In addition to irrationalism, certain trends of the modernist school, like expressionism and surrealism, introduced another element—Freudian psycho-analysis.

When we say that the various modernist schools consist of utterly formalistic abstract art (this is even more evident from their plastic art), we are referring to their insistence on form without content. "We are interested only in how a thing is expressed, not in what is expressed"—this remark sheds light on this characteristic of the modernists. But even these formalistic works devoid of content express the authors' view of reality and attitude to life, a view and attitude which are as deadly as opium and have long been labelled "decadent." So when we say the modernists produce abstract, formalistic art, we are speaking of their method of writing; when we call them decadent, we are speaking of their view of reality and attitude to life, the thought content of their works which are devoid of content.

In the past some historians of literature have tried to explain the rise and decline of various trends in literature and art in terms of an eternal cycle of "the ideal" and "the real." (The "idealist" writers try to express in their works their ideals of "What life should be," regardless of whether these coincide with the actual situation or not; while the "realists" describe life as it is and their works reflect reality without expressing their ideals or fancies.) According to these critics, literature progresses in cycles. After classicism appears passionate romanticism with its yearning for the exotic and bizarre, which marks the rise of "the ideal"; but after some time this declines and makes way for realism with its descriptions of "common, ordinary" things. Then at the zenith of realism the modernist schools appear, indicating that "the ideal" is back again. We know that such views are entirely erroneous. But it is true to say that one of the ancestors of the modernist schools was passive romanticism. In these brief pages we need not discuss the kinship between passive romanticism and the symbolists who preceded the modernists. I would simply like to note in passing that the symbolists differed in some respects from the modernists: they were not so fantastic as to be unin-

telligible (at most they propounded riddles); and they did not want form alone without any content (pernicious in varying degrees, as a whole they were negative). However, in so far as the symbolists were pessimists and mystics, they resemble the modernists. The symbolists reflected the mood of the *fin de siècle*, while the later modernists reflect the despair and utter abandon of petty-bourgeois intellectuals dissatisfied with the world as it is but afraid of revolution, during an age when class struggles are sharpening, the tides of revolution are rising higher, and the crises of capitalism are intensifying. The symbolists at least admitted their pessimism, appearing as men who had lost all hope in the future, all interest in the present, eager only to escape. But the modernists give themselves airs and make a loud clamour, flourishing their "programmes" and posing as great heroes, pioneers of "spiritual freedom" or discoverers of "forgotten beauty." They even claim that all past creations of the mind are outmoded and should be thrown on the rubbish heap. "Nobody but me amounts to anything."

Yes, these modernists give themselves much more insufferable airs than did their predecessors.

Futurism and expressionism are the two oldest modernist schools based on the ideas of Nietzsche, Bergson and Freud. Both schools have experimented in the plastic arts as well as in the realm of literature. Both have "programmes" which claim to sever all connections with the past and make a fresh start with the "self" as the centre. Both want "freedom of expression," in other words, freedom from the rules of grammar and syntax. They believe in coining new words, in emphasizing the musical effect of poetry, and in sacrificing ideological content for the sake of euphony. A poem may be musical and meaningless. Apparently the futurists and expressionists are not responsible if you cannot understand them. You have only yourself to blame.

The "theory" of futurism and expressionism, both of which took shape in the decade before the First World War, was really a replica of the impressionist school of painting which appeared at the end of the nineteenth century. The impressionists said that an artist should express only his own immediate impressions or subjective reactions to an object; thus impressionism is not restricted by reason and need not summarize visual experience or bring out what is typical and significant. The impressionists also declared that all the human relationships and achievements

of the human spirit generally recognized in the past and in their own day were outmoded and vulgar and ought to be discarded; art should excel in new forms, regardless of whether these had any content or not. In other words, there is no need for ideological content. This shows that futurism and expressionism, which claim that all the achievements of the past should be thrown into the dustbin, have simply inherited the traditions of impressionism of half a century earlier, developing them boldly into something more absurd and reactionary.

However, the futurists have made efforts to explore the musical potentialities of language. The expressionists have stated a wish to explore the deeper meaning of reality; and because this is hidden within things instead of appearing on the surface, they portray things as quite different from what they are in order to express their hidden meaning. Although this is arrant nonsense they have some arguments to support their case. By the time of the First World War the slogan of the Dadaist Movement which originated in Zurich was simply: Return to the primitive! The Dadaists had no use for thought or logic, and did not even want "Art for art's sake." Spurning all traditional art forms, they went so far as to repudiate formalism. This seems thoroughgoing enough; yet the Dadaists were self-contradictory. They were petty-bourgeois intellectuals who, when the whole world was enveloped in the flames of war, tried to delude themselves by hiding in "neutral" countries to engage in foolish day-dreams. Since, however, their efforts ran counter to common sense, surrealism which was an offshoot of this school attempted to find some "positive" ideas to remedy the negativeness of Dadaism, its simple and complete denial of everything. Thus the philosophical basis of surrealism, as we all know, is existentialism. The surrealists cleverly translate the "essence" of existentialism into literary language to pass themselves off as progressives. They claim that if we want thought to be truly effective and to enjoy freedom of thought, we must liberate it from all intellectual fetters and raise it above all aesthetic and moral prejudices. Surrealist art and literature rely on this "freedom of thought" to express a higher reality which was ignored in the past. They tell us this higher reality is the all-pervading combination of truth and falsehood, thought and action, dream and reality. While this may sound rather more "positive," in fact it is still the common language of all the modernist schools: irrationalism

and egoism. To them the real world is merely a conglomeration of fantasy and chaos.

We must admit that the modernists also reflect a "state of mind," that of a large group of petty-bourgeois intellectuals under capitalist oppression between the two world wars. Dissatisfied with the capitalist social order, they did not trust the people's strength either. Caught up in the class struggle which was growing more acute all the time, they felt that they had no future and scuttled about in bewilderment like rats in a house on fire; yet despite their abject terror they tried stubbornly to preserve their personal dignity. Starting from the standpoint of "self," they sought spiritual freedom and the emancipation of the personality. They were ridiculous and naive dreamers who seriously believed that by opposing the nineteenth century realist tradition they were dealing a blow at the vulgar and ugly capitalist civilization; that by denying all restrictions and showing no sense of responsibility for society, they were undermining the capitalist system of exploitation; while as artists they even believed that by separating themselves from the people and standing alone, so that not only the people but even their own cliques could not understand their work, they were surely heralding "a cultural revolution" and "a new age."

From impressionism to surrealism, the modernist movement has lasted for about half a century on the European and American continents, as well as in some countries of Asia. Among those absorbed into this movement there have been quite a few talented writers and artists who did their best to blaze a new trail. Some of them realized eventually that the modernist method was incompatible with their goal, and therefore changed their direction; but others persisted in their error. Their choice depended on their attitude towards the people's revolutionary movement. The writers and artists who keenly supported the labouring people's struggle for liberation and devoted all their strength to this sacred cause, inevitably discovered that the realist method alone could link their work as artists with the revolutionary movement of the labouring people, serve the needs of revolution and most fully and effectively develop their talents. This is substantiated by facts. Mayakovsky, Eluard and Aragon are good cases in point.

In the field of plastic art there is still a market for the modernists today in America and Europe; but their novel works

are appreciated not by the masses but by a few well-fed members of the leisured class. Yet according to the theory of the modernists, such connoisseurs are precisely the representatives of the vulgar bourgeois taste which they deplore. Although this is most ironic, the modernist enthusiasts do not seem to care whether they are performing a tragedy, comedy or melodrama.

Here I would like to make a short digression. Two years ago, a French expressionist painter, Georges Martiou, visited Japan and during a three-day stay in Tokyo painted twenty-one oil paintings of different sizes. One picture called "The Invasion of the Mongols" took him two hours only and was sold to a Japanese florist for the high price of three million Japanese yen. According to Martiou, he starts to paint without any idea of what he will portray. He simply takes his palette and stands in front of the canvas, then decides upon his subject. His method is to stand six yards from the canvas and throw the colours at it. By this strange method he can finish a large painting within an hour. I imagine anyone with sense will say: "This is no painting, but nonsense!" Yet men like Martiou believe they are doing serious work. They have a theory, too, for this extraordinary method of painting. In the summer of the same year a young American artist, Harry Colman, who took part in the World Youth Festival at Moscow, explained that when an artist sees a thing he has certain reactions: he feels excited or serene, happy or sad. In accordance with these emotions, he tosses the colours on the canvas quickly or slowly, thickly or thinly, and the contractions of his muscles represent his tumultuous mental processes. In Harry Colman's opinion, an artist is free only when actually engaged in creative work; the effect of his work on others is to arouse similar feelings in their minds and arouse their desire to create something for themselves. This is the theory of the "dynamic" school. It seems even more radical than earlier theories, for these might argue that a painting of a man should not look like a man and a drawing of a dog should not look like a dog, choosing forms, colours and lines to express their feelings; but at least they used their minds to combine circles, semi-circles, cylinders and cones into some sort of pattern. Even those modernist artists would gape in bewilderment at the strange paintings of the dynamic school. Harry Colman's "Symphony of the Youth Festival" proved incomprehensible to everyone and aroused a great controversy when ex-

hibited at the festival. If we compare these masterpieces of the dynamic school, one of the most modern of the modernist schools, with the work of its early forerunners, the impressionists, we can see that although the impressionists did not care for content either and emphasized the subjective feelings and first impressions of the artist, at least they evolved a new technique for conveying the effect of light, and their works could be understood by people in general. Among the dynamists, however, profound as their theories may be, one cannot find any new creative technique and their masterpieces are incomprehensible to normal people. Frankly speaking, according to their theory a good athlete—a discus or javelin thrower, for instance—must be able to toss off some remarkable paintings, and the basic training for artists should be the same as for athletes. I am not making fun of these admirable artists, but this is the natural conclusion reached by the average man after hearing their theory of art and seeing their works. At the same time anyone with any common sense must come to the conclusion: This is not art! The dynamists may regard us with pity and say: "What a shame that you can't see the wonder of this." But I fancy we are willing to let them and their followers guard the secret.

If we look at the historical development of the modernist schools (I include both literature and art—when we speak of the plastic arts alone, we usually refer to them as abstract art), they are becoming increasingly abstract and fantastic. Their predecessors, the symbolist writers and impressionist painters, had no use for ideological content either, but at least they laid stress on beauty of form and in modes of expression and techniques scored certain achievements in hitherto unexplored fields. But all these latest descendants of theirs can do is to use the irrational and abnormal to shock people. This is formalism stripped of even formal beauty, the dead end to which their way of thinking and working was bound to lead.

At the same time, we must not deny that certain of the new technical achievements of the symbolists, the impressionists and even the futurists can be absorbed by realist writers and artists to enrich their technique. There are many such instances. In literature, for example, Mayakovsky made use of the euphony of futurist poetry to give his later poems a distinctive style. In plastic art the Swedish painter, Carl Larsson, at the end of the nineteenth century used the new technique

of the impressionists to fill his works with light and atmosphere, freshness and truthfulness.

Again, we cannot deny that the plastic arts of the modernists have made some positive contributions to the applied and industrial arts. Thus in furniture designing, interior decoration and architecture we have absorbed certain elements introduced by the modernists which are not too incongruous and may even possess a certain simple and imaginative beauty. Of course, some of these designs are unduly fantastic. For instance, once I noticed the dining hall of one of the largest and most modern hotels in Oslo cluttered up with large oval and triangular white porcelain lamp-shades, ugly in the extreme; but this is a case of improper application. On the whole, we can affirm that the modernist designs have a positive value in the field of applied arts. However, that is about all that can be said for them. While affirming this positive aspect, we cannot ignore the fact that whether in literature or in the plastic art, behind the modernists' formalism without content lurks the stubborn, irresponsible "ego," wilfully opposed to everything, viewing the world and men's past and future with bewilderment and despair.

So although there are many schools of modernists and there seems to be a considerable difference between them, all of them actually follow the same principles, have subjective idealism as their common ideological basis, adopt the same agnostic attitude towards reality, and use the same method of creation.

Because their attitude is agnostic and they deny that the development of human society is guided by any law, the writers and artists of the modernist schools either turn escapist or describe reality as senseless chaos and human beings as animals with only physical urges. Being egoists, they emphasize "spiritual freedom," deny historical traditions, look down on the masses and oppose collectivism. Being agnostic pessimists and egoists, their method of writing or painting is irrational formalism. We can therefore say with reason that their works are reactionary, harmful to the labouring people's movement for liberation, and actually serving the interests of the bourgeoisie. (Of course, we must not confuse the trends of modernist literature and art with the political stand of individual writers or artists in those schools. Many modernist artists in the capitalist countries of the West have joined the revolutionary

movement or are working for the peace movement. Since this is common knowledge I need not dwell on it here.)

The more sober-minded of the modernists today are sorry that their art is separated from the masses or, to use their own words, that so few people understand it. They sigh and say, "Abstract art can hardly last much longer." They still believe, though, that the modernist method is more profound than the realist, better able to portray the spirit of things and to develop the artist's individuality and creativeness. They insist that unless literature and art take a novel point of departure from time to time they will wither and die. This refers to both their content (their recognition of reality) and their form (their mode of expression); but above all they seek the novel and strange in form. When their precursors at the end of the nineteenth century attacked realist literature and enumerated its crimes, all they could accuse it of was being "common." By "common" they meant too close to real life, reflecting too much reality. This proves precisely that they had closed their eyes and dared not face reality; they were standing apart, cut off from real life. Had this not been the case, they would have been able to see in real life, seething with the class struggle, some most unprecedented, "uncommon" things. It is a strange coincidence that today, fifty years later, the opponents of socialist realism also complain that socialist realist literature is dry and monotonous. With a complete disregard for the facts, they say that socialist realism has not enriched the literature of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, but has on the contrary introduced formulism, schematism and monotony. In other words, it is "common." And they confidently claim that if we want our literature and art to flourish, we must liberate writers and artists from the old realism, from reality and the truthful reflection of reality, and encourage them to seek new modes of expression. Their conception of "modes of expression" is most ambiguous: sometimes it seems to mean technique, at others the method of writing; but since it is used to oppose realism, it must, basically, mean the latter. As this is not the realist method, what method is it? Some will not answer frankly, but others tell us they mean the modernists' method of writing and they hope that some day realism and certain characteristics of the modernists will combine to form a new method.

Is this possible?

I do not think so for one moment.

Those who believe it possible do not recognize the close relationship between the method of writing and the world outlook. They often consider the method of writing as the modes of expression (i.e. various technical problems regarding form and technique) regarding this as a purely technical problem which bears no relationship to a man's way of thinking.

The facts prove, however, that the method of writing is not only closely related to the world outlook but guided by the latter. One specific world outlook produces one specific way of thinking, which in turn gives rise to a specific method of writing. This is not a formula made up out of our heads, but the conclusion reached after analysing the theory and practice of different writers. As I have already cited many facts to prove this, I shall not dwell on it here.

Is there, then, some relationship between modes of expression and ways of thinking? Do any modes of expression appear out of the blue, bearing no relation to a man's way of thinking? This is surely impossible. The proof lies in the way different modes of expression were produced.

Earlier on I gave some reasons for the number and strictness of the rules of classicist prosody which were considered absolute and completely binding. These rules were formulated because the classicists were rationalists. Later the romanticists broke through the hard shell of rationalism and changed the way of writing, because though they accepted the materialist world outlook (their understanding of the laws of historical development remained idealist, for they believed history was created by heroes and supermen and the people were simply "mobs"), they loved their ideal of the future social system, the type of utopian socialism in literature introduced by Rousseau. Again, the mystic ambiguity and melancholy gloom peculiar to the works of the symbolists can be explained only by the writers' world outlook. The impressionists considered light as the main element in painting (this is connected with the fact that they were escapists who took no interest in man's spiritual world, the society in which he lived or his social position) and they developed a new technique to express the changes in light effect. As a matter of fact this already existed in realist painting, but the impressionists made this their aim and exaggerated it into "Light for light's sake." This was their error. The futurists' attempt to express in their themes and style the spirit

of modern industrialized society, the force and velocity represented by heavy artillery and aeroplanes, produced their new mode of expression, making poetry into melodies. The cubists considered the artist's "complexes of sensations" as the foremost prerequisite for a comprehensive portrayal of any object, and therefore created their "three dimensional" mode of expression. The "complexes of sensations" was their method of thinking. Although this was Mach's theory and not an invention of the cubists, they "discovered" the way to give expression to this "theory."

I fancy these examples suffice to show that any mode of expression, including such purely technical devices as scansion, composition, sequence of ideas and syntax, arises from the method of thinking. Some critics insist, however, that literature and art have certain peculiar characteristics, and this leads them easily to the conclusion: "They are governed by special laws." So they argue: "If you consider that a man's method of writing is determined by his world outlook, how do you account for the fact that great writers in ancient and modern times have not always stuck to one method of writing? And how do you account for the fact that a well-known writer like Balzac was a royalist in his politics, but a realist in his method of writing?"

I shall try to answer this question in the next instalment.

(to be continued)

A Pause During a Stroll →
(170.5 cm. × 92.5 cm.)
by Jen Po-nien (1840-1896)

Jen Po-nien is one of the best traditional Chinese painters in the last hundred years. Apart from landscapes, flowers and birds, he is particularly well known for his figure painting. See *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1957 and No. 3, 1958 for his other works.



Chronicle

"Mao Tse-tung on Art and Literature"

Mao Tse-tung on Art and Literature has been published by the People's Literature Publishing House. A compilation of essays and portions of articles in which Chairman Mao discusses literature and art, the book is divided into fifteen headings, including "Cultural Movement," "The May 4 Movement," "New-Democratic Culture," "Reform Our Study," "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature" and "On the Style of Writing." The reader can find gathered in this one small volume Mao Tse-tung's analysis of some of the fundamental problems of art and literature—the questions of art and literature serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, what stand writers and artists should take, the relation between popularization and elevation, the criteria of art and literary criticism, as well as how to acquire a lively, fresh and vigorous style in writing.

Inner Mongolian Folk-Song Exhibition

An unusual exhibition of the beautiful folk songs of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region opened in Peking on December 24, 1958. In the exhibition hall in Peihai Park, visitors could not only see the folk-song manuscripts which were on display, they could also hear them sung. Folk singers and composers from Inner Mongolia were present in the exhibition hall to perform. Among them was the well-known singer, Paoyingkelite, who won a first prize at the Fifth World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship.

"Battle of Chihpi"

A new Peking opera, *Battle of Chihpi*, is an adaptation of the traditional opera, *The Meeting of Gallant Men*. The Battle of Chihpi occurred on the eve of the Three Kingdoms period

(220-280). Because it was the focal point of clever military strategy and shrewd statesmanship, as exercised by some of the most forceful characters in Chinese history, the battle has long been a favourite theme in many a novel, drama and poem.

The new adaptation, while retaining all of the fire of the traditional drama, presents the tides of the battle from a new conception of history based on dialectical materialism. A number of innovations have been made in the acting, singing, music, make-up and stage sets.

The opening performance of the *Battle of Chihpi* in Peking was also noteworthy for its all-star cast. Ma Lien-liang, Li Shao-chun, Tan Fu-ying, Chiu Sheng-yung and Yuan Shih-hai all played important roles. Rarely do so many famed performers appear together in one opera.

Traditional-Style Paintings from Kiangsu Province

An exhibition of traditional-style paintings from Kiangsu, home of many famous artists in Chinese history, was held in Peking from December 1958 to January 11, 1959. One hundred and sixty-one paintings done in the past year or two were displayed. Most drew their themes from the life of today, portraying the 1958 great leap forward in industry and agriculture. Outstanding works among the exhibits were *Iron and Steel Furnaces Everywhere* (see *Chinese Literature* No. 2, 1959), *The Immortals* and *Yuhua Mount* by Fu Pao-shih, *A New Picture of Fisherman, Woodcutter, Farmer and Scholar* by Wei Tsu-hsi and *Meishan Mountain Reservoir* by Chang Wen-chun (see *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1959). These new paintings, skilfully using traditional technique in composition, colour and brushwork to introduce contemporary themes, are an expression of art that is national in form and socialist in content.

Sassanian Coins Discovered in China

Ancient silver coins, unearthed in 1956 in the city of Hsining, Chinghai Province, have just been identified by experts as ancient Persian coins of the Sassanian period, in the fifth century. There are seventy-six of them, four of which are damaged. Some years ago when ancient tombs were opened

in Kansu Province a golden Byzantium coin of the Justinian era, struck in Constantinople, was discovered. Because there was a hole in the coin and because it was found together with some noble lady's trinkets, this led to the belief that it was probably part of an ornament. But this was only a single coin. The present find of Sassanian coins, in large quantities, proves that there was a considerable exchange of currency along the ancient silk route. The discovery is of major importance in the study of ancient communications between China and the West.

Popular Art Albums

Two art albums — *Selected Paintings of Army Men*, containing ninety-seven pictures, including thirteen pages in colour, and *Selected Paintings of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers* containing ninety-two paintings, including thirty-two in colour — have been placed on sale at very low prices by the People's Art Publishing House. The paintings have been chosen from the many interesting artistic creations of China's workers, peasants and soldiers during the past year.

A New Version of "The Western Chamber"

Tien Han, one of China's leading playwrights, has made a new treatment of *The Western Chamber*, a Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) drama by Wang Shih-fu, adapting it for a new Peking opera. The original story is well known to Peking opera fans, having been performed on stages in China for decades under the title of *Hung Niang*, the name of the delightful, resourceful little maid-servant who arranges trysts for her young mistress with a secret lover.

In his adaptation, Tien Han retains the best features of *Hung Niang*, but gives the young mistress a more prominent role. Emphasis is placed on the lovers and their fight for a marriage of their own choice. A first performance of the new opera in Peking was well received.

Polish Pianist in Peking

Tadeusz Zmudzinski, the noted Polish pianist, gave a recital in Peking on December 16, 1958. The first part of his programme consisted of Brahms, the second, Polish composers, with many selections from Chopin. Zmudzinski also played three pieces by Szymanowski, a modern Polish composer. Though the Chinese audience did not know Szymanowski as well as Chopin, they were impressed by his music and Zmudzinski's presentation.

After Peking, Zmudzinski made a concert tour of Sian, Chengtu and Kunming.

Map Drawn by Lu Hsun Discovered

As is well known, Lu Hsun was a medical student and for quite a while devoted himself to the study of science. Some years ago, a book on Chinese mineral resources, bearing his name and the name of a man called Ku Lang as authors, was found and was included in Lu Hsun's complete works published here in 1952. The book had been published in 1906, and originally included a map showing the distribution of various mineral resources in China. The map, however, was lost. Recently it was found again in a Shanghai second-hand bookshop. In very good condition, the map has been turned over to the Lu Hsun Memorial Museum in Shanghai.

A Romanized Chinese Periodical

A weekly newspaper printed in both Chinese characters and the new phonetic alphabet began publication on October 12, 1958 in Peking. In addition to news, the paper contains poems, feature stories and articles. It is eagerly read by the thousands of people learning the new phonetic script, and will be useful to foreign students studying the Chinese language.

Good New Films from Shanghai Studios

The Tien Ma, Hai Yen and Chiang Nan Studios in Shanghai produced 45 films last year, two and a half times that of the 1957 output. More than half are features dealing with the

big leap which took place last year. *The Important Lesson*, *Great Waves*, *Chasing After One Another* and *The Coiling Dragon Lake* reflect the enthusiastic spirit of the "leap" and the initiative and inventiveness of China's workers and peasants. Scenario writers gathered material by working in the villages and factories side by side with the people. As a result, character delineation in the films is rich and true to life.

Selected Chinese Wood-Block Prints

The Yungpaochai Art Shop in Peking has published a volume of selected Chinese wood-block prints, including 167 prints of various themes by many artists of different schools, ranging in historical periods from the Tang dynasty to the Ching dynasty. The prints depict the life of the labouring people in ancient times, portray men and animals, flowers and birds, mountains and rivers, and include famous book illustrations such as the prints in the Ming dynasty edition of *The Western Chamber*. A preface to the selection by the late collector Cheng Chen-to offers some brief explanations.

Just off the Press

The Family

A tightly packed story of China's turbulent twenties, *The Family* is a heated exposure of a large disintegrating feudal household, with all its stupid cruelties and hypocritical conventions. Pa Chin tells of tragic love affairs and broken marriages, of those who struggle, cry out and go down in defeat — and of an awakening younger generation that fights back blow for blow, breaking away from the old and decadent.

The book is profusely illustrated with pictures, strongly Chinese in flavour, showing family life and social conditions of the times.

324 pages

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Selected Poems from "The Goddesses"

The first collection of poems by the famous contemporary poet and scholar Kuo Mo-jo, *The Goddesses*, created a great stir in the Chinese literary world when it was published in 1921. It is considered as a symbol of "the spirit of the age" and has won for itself a permanent place in the history of modern Chinese literature.

Kuo Mo-jo's poems speak with a volcanic intensity of emotion. They combine some of the best images of Chinese classical poetry with the vigorous appeal of the folk song. Extravagant fantasy, boundless enthusiasm, brilliant colour and a keen sensitivity combine to give the poet's style its unique quality.

The present edition of *Selected Poems from "The Goddesses"* contains two poetic dramas and 32 poems, with a short biography of the author and a preface which Kuo Mo-jo wrote especially for the English edition.

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