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Front Cover: *Reading*
Woodcut by Liang Tung

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Yueh-fu Songs

The Bride of Chiao Chung-ching

Southeast the love-lorn peacock flies. Alack,
At every mile she falters and looks back!

At thirteen years Lan-chih learned how to weave;
At fourteen years she could embroider, sew;
At fifteen music on her lute she made;
At sixteen knew the classics, prose and verse.
At seventeen they wed her to Chung-ching,
And from that day what joy and pain were hers!
As work kept Chung-ching in the *yamen* far,
His absence made her love the deeper still.
She started weaving at the dawn of day,
Worked at the loom until the midnight hour.
The tapestries beneath her fingers grew,
Yet Chung-ching's mother sore berated her —
Not for poor work or any tardy pace,
But she was mistress: brides must know their place.

This *yueh-fu* song, believed to be made in the third century and later rewritten by scholars who gave it its present form, is a masterpiece of classical narrative poetry. For further information about *yueh-fu* and this song see *The Yueh-fu Songs of Ancient China* by Wang Yun-hsi on page 110 of this issue.

At length in sorrow to Chung-ching she said,
"If I have failed to serve your mother well,
Useless to stay. . . . Please go and tell her so.
Should she think fit, I fain would go away."
The husband, shame-faced, on this errand went.
"Mother," he said, "no lordly post is mine.
To wed Lan-chih was more than I deserved.
As man and wife we love each other so
That naught but death itself shall sever us.
Less than three years have we been wedded now;
Our life together is a budding flower.
Lan-chih, methinks, has done her best, no less.
Why treat her, then, with such unkindliness?"

To which the shrewish mother made reply,
"Dull are your wits and foolish, O my son!
Your wife lacks graces and she lacks good sense.

See her for what she is, self-willed and vain.
The very sight of her offends mine eyes.
I wonder that you dare to plead her cause!
A proper wife I have in mind for you . . .
Yonder she lives, a maid called Chin Lo-fu,
A matchless beauty she, upon my word,
And I have ways to compass her consent.
Now listen! We must get your slut away!
Yes, go must she, and go without delay!"

For filial piety he knelt him down,
And pitiful yet firm was his appeal.
"Mother, if 'tis your will, cast out Lan-chih,
But do not think that I will marry twice!"
At this the mother's fury knew no bounds.
She ranted wildly, strumming on her stool:
"Is reverence for aged parents dead?
Defend a wife and flout a mother's wish?
This stranger in the house I will not bear,
And none henceforth to thwart my will shall dare!"

Chung-ching fell dumb before his mother's rage,
Made her a bow profound and went his way.
In tears and sorrow he sought poor Lan-chih,
Though little comfort for them both he knew.
"The thought of parting rends my heart in twain!
And yet my mother will not be gainsaid.
My duties at the *yamen* call me hence.
'Tis best you go back to your brother's home.
My *yamen* tasks complete, I will return
And take you with me to our home again.
It has to be, alas! Forgive me now,
And doubt not I will keep my solemn vow!"

Lan-chih made answer sorrowful and low:
"Nay, take no care to come for me again.
'Twas in the depth of winter, I recall,
I first came to this house a timid bride.
I bore myself with filial reverence,
Was never obstinate, self-willed or rude.
For three years, day and night, I toiled for her,
Nor recked how long that sorry state might last,
My only care to serve your mother's will
And to repay the love you bore to me.
Yet from this house I now am driven out . . .
To what avail to bring me back again?
I'll leave my broidered jacket of brocade,
(Its golden lacings still are fresh and bright,)
My small, soft canopy of scarlet gauze
With perfumed herbs sewn in its corners four.
My trunks, my dowry, too, I leave behind,
As fair as ever in their silken wraps —
Things, some of them, I had a fancy for,
Though now neglected and untouched they lie.
True, they are only cheap and tawdry wares,
Not nearly good enough for your new bride.
But you may share them out as tiny gifts,
Or, if you find no fit occasion now,
Keep them, my dear," she said, her eyes all wet,
"And her who owned them do not quite forget."

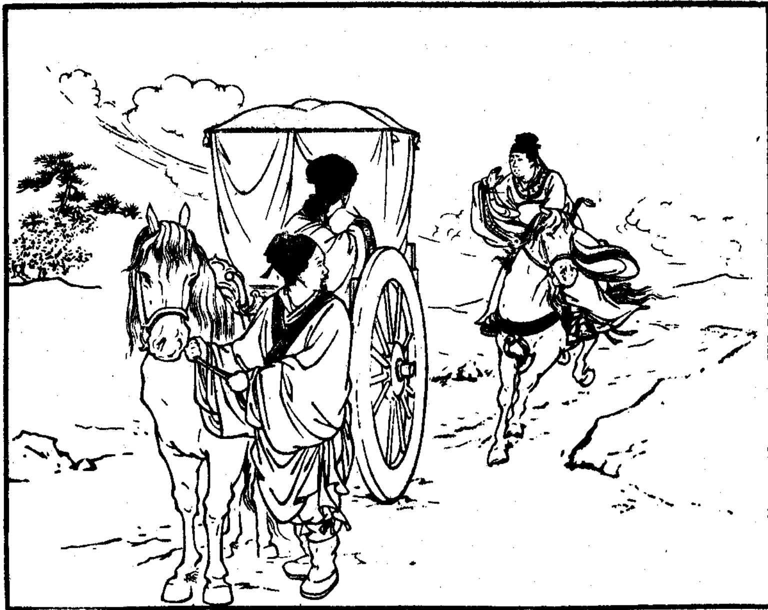
When the loud cock-crow marked another day
Lan-chih arose betimes and dressed herself.
She put on her embroidered skirt of silk,
And silken slippers pleasing to the eye,
Studded her braided locks with jewellery,
Hung pearly ear-rings in her little ears,

With touch so delicate applied the rouge
Until her lips, already perfect, glowed.
Her fingers had a tapering loveliness,
Her waist seemed like a many-coloured cloud.
A peerless beauty did she look, and sweet
The grace with which she moved her little feet.

To Chung-ching's mother then she bade farewell
In tender words that found a churlish ear:
"Lady, I am of humble origin,
Not well-instructed and not well brought-up.
Stupid and shallow and inept am I —
A sorry mate for any noble heir.
Yet you have treated me with kindliness,
And I, for shame, I have not served you well.
This house for evermore today I leave,
And that I cannot serve you more I grieve."

Then, with the warm tears trickling down her cheeks,
She bade farewell to Chung-ching's sister dear:
"When to this house I first came as a bride,
Dear sister, you were just a naughty child.
See, you have grown well nigh as tall as I.
Now I must bid a hasty, long farewell;
Yet, if you love me, sister, for my sake,
Be gentle to your mother, care for her.
When all the maidens hold their festivals,
Forget not her who once looked after you."
With blinding tears and with a heavy heart
She took her seat then in the waiting cart.

For fear of prying eyes and cruel tongues
Chung-ching would meet her where the four roads met.
On the rough road her carriage pitched and shook,
The wheel-rims clattered and the axle creaked.
Then suddenly a horseman galloped up,



Down leaped the rider eagerly — 'twas he!
They sat together and he whispered low:
"My love shall last to all eternity!
Only a short while with your brother stay,
The little while my *yamen* duties take.
Then I'll come back. . . . Let not your heart be sore!
I'll claim you for my very own once more!"

Poor Lan-chih, sobbing, fondly plucked his sleeve.
"Oh, what a comfort to me is your love!
And if you cannot bear to give me up,
Then come, but come before it is too late!
Be your love strong, enduring as the rocks!
Be mine resistant as the creeping vine!
For what is tougher than the creeping vine?
And what more fixed than the eternal rocks?
Yet when I think upon my brother, lord
And tyrant of his household, then I fear

He will not look on me with kindliness,
And I shall suffer from his rage and scorn."
At length in tears the loving couple parted,
And lengthening distance left them broken-hearted.

When Lan-chih, all unheralded, reached home,
Doubt and suspicion clouded every mind.
"Daughter!" Her mother in amazement cried.
"Alas! What brings you unattended back?
At thirteen, I recall, you learned to weave;
At fourteen years you could embroider, sew;
At fifteen, music on the lute you made;
At sixteen knew the classics, prose and verse.
And then at seventeen, a lovely bride . . .
How proud I was to see you prosper so!
Yet, dear, you must have erred in deed or word.
Tell me the cause of your return alone."
Said Lan-chih, "Truly I am brought full low,
Yet in my duty did I never fail."
The mother wept for pity at her tale.

Upon the tenth day after her return
There came one from the county magistrate,
A go-between, to woo her for his son,
A lad who had bare twenty summers seen,
Whose good looks put all other youths to shame,
Whose tongue was fluent and full eloquent.
Her mother, hoping against hope, said, "Child,
I pray you, if it pleases you, consent."
To which, in tears again, Lan-chih replied:
"Dear mother, when I parted with Chung-ching
He said, 'Be faithful!' o'er and o'er again,
And we both vowed eternal constancy.
If I should break my word and fickle prove,
Remorse would haunt me till my dying day.

Can I then think to wed again? No, no!
I pray you tell the marriage-maker so."

So to the go-between the mother said:
"O honoured sir, a stubborn child is mine,
But lately sent back to her brother's house.
A small official found her no good match —
How should she please the magistrate's own heir?
Besides, she is in melancholy state;
Young gentlemen require a gayer mate."

So the official go-between went off
And, ere reporting to the magistrate,
Found for the sprig another fitting maid,
Born of a nearby family of note;
And, haply meeting with the Prefect's scribe,
Learned that His Excellency's son and heir,
A worthy, excellent and handsome youth,
Himself aspired to wed the fair Lan-chih.
So to the brother's house they came once more,
This time as envoys from the Prefect sent.
The flowery, official greetings o'er,
They told the special reason they had come.
The mother, torn this way and that, declared:
"My child has vowed she ne'er will wed again.
I fear I know no way to change her mind."
But Lan-chih's brother, ever worldly-wise,
Was never slow to seize a heaven-sent chance,
And to his sister spoke blunt words and harsh:
"See you not, girl, how much this profits you?
Your former husband held a petty post.
Now comes an offer from the Prefect's son:
A greater contrast would be hard to find.
Turn down this offer if you will, this prize,
But think not I shall find your daily rice!"

What must be, must be, then thought poor Lan-chih.
"Brother," she said, "what you have said is good.
I was a wife and now am none again;
I left you once and then came back again
To dwell beneath your hospitable roof.
Your will is such as cannot be gainsaid.
True, to Chung-ching I gave my plighted word,
Yet faint the hope of seeing him again!
Your counsel I must welcome as a boon:
Pray you, arrange the ceremony soon."

When he heard this, the official go-between
Agreed to everything the brother asked.
Then to the Prefect's house they hurried back
To tell the happy outcome of their work.
It seemed so good a marriage for his son,
The Prefect thought, that full of sheer delight
He turned the pages of the almanac,
And therein found the most auspicious date
To be the thirtieth of that same month.
Whereon he summoned his subordinates:
"The thirtieth is a heaven-favoured day,"
Said he, "and that is but three days ahead.
Have all in readiness to greet the bride."
The household was abuzz from floor to roof
As was befitting for a noble match.
There were, to fetch the bride, gay gondolas
Fresh-painted with designs of lucky birds
And silken pennants fluttering o'er the deck.
There were gold carriages with jade inlay
And well-groomed horses of the finest breed
With saddles shining, harness all bedight!
As for the presents, strings of cash they told
Three thousand, pieces of brocade and silk
Three hundred. And among those precious gifts

Were globe-fish brought from some far distant clime.
The welcoming cortege, five hundred strong,
Would gladden all eyes as it passed along.

In the bride's house the troubled mother said:
"Lan-chih, the Prefect's messengers have come.
The welcoming party will arrive full soon.
'Tis time you donned your bridal finery.
You have agreed. . . . No time to tarry now!"
Lan-chih, too sad to utter any word,
Sobbed neath her kerchief to conceal her grief,
Her pale, pale cheeks all wet with bitter tears.
She dragged a chair with heavy marble seat
Towards the window where there was more light,
Took silk and scissors, measure, needle, braid,
Cut out in grief and wet her thread with tears.
Ere noon a jacket new and skirt she made;
By eve a wedding gown was all complete.
Then in the twilight, desperate, forlorn,
Out at the gate she stole to weep alone.
Then, suddenly, her sobbing died away . . .
Far off she heard a horse's anguished neigh!
Oh, that familiar neigh! Yet why so sore?
Indeed Chung-ching was riding fast that way.
The master had heard news, lost heart, asked leave.
The very steed, too, his forebodings shared.
At last, her straining eyes perceived him clear:
His presence filled her with both joy and pain.
Patting the horse, she heaved a woeful sigh.
"Chung-ching, my darling, at our parting dire
None could foresee the course events would take.
You cannot guess my abject misery,
But all we hoped is now an empty dream.
My mother you knew well. My tyrant brother,
'Twas he who schemed to wed me to another.

Now that the die is cast by fate austere,
What more can you expect of me, my dear?"

Chung-ching, heart-stricken, forced himself to say,
"May you know every happiness, Lan-chih!
The rock stands fixed, unyielding evermore,
But oh! I fear the fibres of the vine
Have lost their toughness all too easily . . .
May you be rich and live in happy state,
But as for me, why, death shall be my fate!"
That stung her to the quick, but she replied,
"Why say such cruel things to me, my dear?
We both are shipwrecked on the sea of life,
Our vessels foundered by the ruthless gale.
Life has enjoined that man and wife must sever:
Let us both die, and be one flesh for ever!"

Long hand in hand they stayed before they went
With mournful steps and slow their several ways —
Two lovers, parting, knowing all too well
That death alone could make them one again.
All roads to joy fast blocked, they did not quail,
But vowed to terminate their tragic tale.

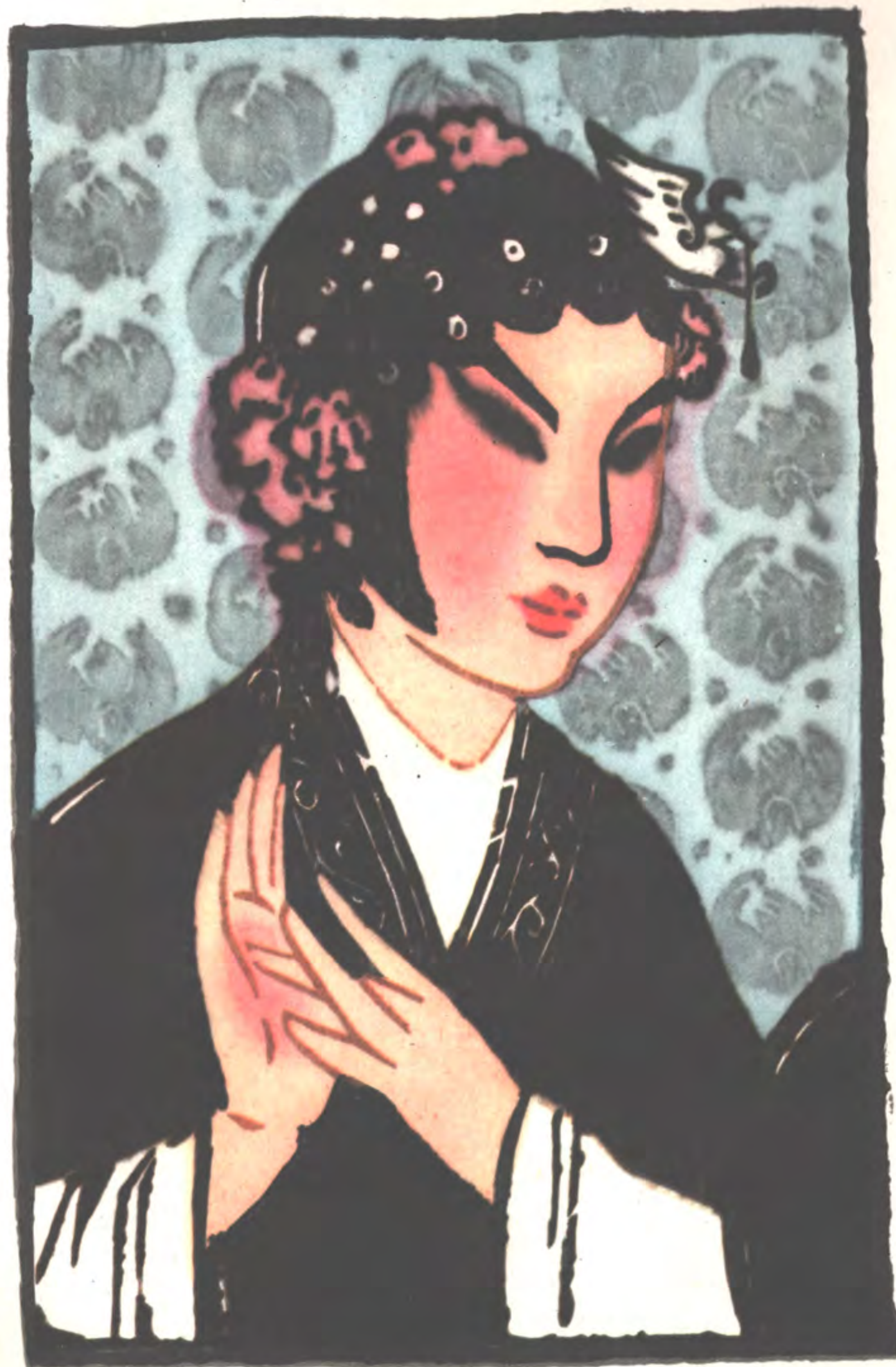
When Chung-ching, heavy-hearted, reached his home,
Straight to his mother's room he went, and bowed.
"The weather changes, mother. Bitter cold,
A terrifying wind sears leaf and tree.
The frost congeals the orchids, all the flowers,
And Chung-ching's life, too, draws unto its close.
His sole regret is leaving you alone,
But 'tis his own desire to end life so —
No ghost, no devil, mother, holds him thrall!
Your son is like the rocks of Nanshan Range,
Immutable in death, immune to change."

The mother heard these words in sore amaze,
But guessed their cause, and pitied him in tears.
"My son, sole heir of noble family,
What great and glorious prospects lie ahead!
Why for a wanton should you think to die,
One so inferior in every way?
As I have told you, in the neighbourhood
There dwells a paragon of loveliness.
Soon will I send a go-between to her,
And long and happy years be yours, my son!"

But he kept silence, bowed right low, and left,
Long, long his empty room he paced, and thought
A myriad thoughts of Lan-chih, love, and death.
Oft glanced he sadly towards his mother's room;
The world seemed shrouded in a pall of gloom!

The day for Lan-chih's splendid wedding came,
She lonelier than ever mid the throng.
She waited, waited till the night should fall.
At last the turmoil ceased, the guests thinned out.
"This is the day," she mused, "my journey's end.
My soul will wander, though my corse remain."
The pond's dark waters beckoned, cold and chill.
Barefoot she waded in, and all was still.
Though for the news Chung-ching was half-prepared,
It nowise lighter made the dreadful blow.
Beneath the courtyard trees release he sought,
Turned him southeast, and then the rope went taut. . . .

Getting Ready to Face the Foot-lights→
(29.5 cm. × 19 cm.)
Woodcut by Fu Wen-shu



Linked in a common grief, the families
Buried the lovers fond on Mount Huashan.
And all around the graveyard grow dark pines,
Through all the changing seasons ever green,
With cypress interspersed and *wutung* trees.
Like loving arms the branches intertwine,
And lovingly the leaves and sprays caress;
And in the foliage dwell two little birds,
That mate for life, whose very name is love.
They cross their bills and sing to one another
Their soft endearments all night long till dawn,
And passers-by stand spell-bound at the sound,
And lonely widows wake to hear and muse
Upon this story of a bygone day
Which shall endure till all shall pass away.

Translated by Eric Edney
and Tsao Tun
Illustrations by Wang Shu-hui

Man is easily tripped by sweet words,
Horses are likely to stumble on soft ground.

— Mongolian Proverb

ZUNUN KADYROV

Turning a New Leaf

Matiyaz had sown his rape-seed several days earlier than the other peasants in the village, so his field was ripe when the sun burned hottest on one's back. Not only was it ripe, but it was already past the right time for reaping. According to custom, peasants should harvest rape-seed when the stems are drying, but not yet quite dry, otherwise once the scythe touches the dried stems the glittering golden ears will immediately burst open and sprinkle the seeds over the ground. Matiyaz's crop was now exactly at that stage. Still, it was not too bad, for after all, he had begun to reap this very day. The harvested rape-seed lay in forty-odd small piles. Actually, if they were bound tightly they could be gathered into three or four bundles. But the work should have continued, yet for the past four hours the reaper was nowhere to be seen. Where had he gone?

A misty haze hung over the boundless field, which looked like a rippling lake from afar. The horse, tied to the tree by the stream, did not graze. It just wagged its head unceasingly. Gentle breezes carried the drowsy chirping of cicadas to Matiyaz, as he rested under the old mulberry tree, shading himself from the hot sun. The chirping, a sign of unbearable heat, annoyed him. The cicadas seemed bent on disturbing him.

Zunun Kadyrov, now in his forties, is a Uighur writer of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region. He is known chiefly for his plays and short stories.

Matiyaz was terribly thirsty. He constantly licked his parched lips. He had lived alone for a good part of his forty years, but at this moment, he longed earnestly for someone to bring him a bowl of cool tea. He often thought of marrying, but had never worked up enough courage. Now there was no one to take him a bowl of cool tea when he was thirsty, nor did he have an ox or a horse, or a plough or any other farm implements — not even a hen to lay eggs. He only had a shovel, a scythe which he had used for the first time to harvest the rape-seed, and two sacks. However, though he had no proper farm implements, he did have some tools which could not be found in other village households.

If you walked along the stream south of the village, you could see the crumbled walls by the roadside. Within the compound, where weeds grew in abundance, there were five or six bitter apricot trees and a few small peach trees, whose branches were dried up. If you looked carefully you would notice that new shoots were sprouting from the roots. Against the broken northern wall stood Matiyaz's solitary hut. Inside, a small, rusty pan could be seen on the stove. In the middle of the room, in a space big enough for only one person to sleep, a rug, the size of a horse's saddle, was spread. Perhaps this rug was once white, but dust and dirt had turned it greyish-brown. Tools for a blacksmith, a carpenter, a shoemaker and a barber were scattered all over the place. Round the stove and in the cupboard were piles of old tin boxes, rusty razors, small screws, nuts and bolts, old horseshoes and nails. On the top of the cupboard was a stack of loose, worm-eaten pages from two adventure novels. Hanging from the ceiling and the walls, which were blackened by smoke, were small saws, pliers and what not, all covered with spiders' webs. Matiyaz was a blacksmith, a carpenter, a shoemaker and a barber. When he made a pair of shoes, he made the last,

the awl and needles that he needed. When he did a barbering job he could make the razors and other tools himself.

Actually Matiyaz was originally trained to be a barber, a craft taught to him by his father. Whenever he showed any sign of slackening interest, his father would pinch his ears. He kept at this job for more than ten years. The father and son cut hair for all sorts of people, and every night they returned to the same old hut where they lived. After his industrious father died in poverty, Matiyaz lost interest in everything. He changed his trade, turning the barber shop into a stall for selling sunflower seeds and soya beans. Before long, the stall was in a shabby state. Later, in the spring, Matiyaz made some kites and opened the stall again. But there was little trade and he did not earn enough to pay the rent. The stall was taken back by its owner.

By nature careful and observant, Matiyaz learned quite a few crafts. But he did not stick to any one. He would leave off one trade and start something else. His customers had to wait patiently for him to finish a job. He was in no hurry. Once a peasant asked Matiyaz to repair a wheel for his cart. It was not finished for six months, even though the peasant came to see Matiyaz about it innumerable times and on several occasions cursed him. Matiyaz simply took it with a smile. It was quite impossible to quarrel with him. However, thanks to the repeated urging by the peasant, the wheel was finally repaired.

Sometimes Matiyaz cut hair and shaved the peasants. But if you wanted him to cut your hair, you mustn't be in a hurry; you must have patience. He would tell the man who came to have his hair cut to crouch before the big stone slab in front of the gate, then he would dry rub the man's hair for fifteen minutes. Then he would wet the man's hair and repeat the massage. He could go on like this for a long time while the water dripped all over the man's ears and eyebrows and wet his shirt. But the barber did not care a fig about it. He was telling stories from old novels, gradually forgetting that he was cutting someone's hair. Not until the man, who was still crouching before the stone slab, reminded him, "Brother Craftsman, my hair is dry already," did he pick up his scissors and start to cut the man's hair, never pausing in his story-telling:

"Prince Jimset lost everything to Larivasi, then he staked his beautiful wife Princess Telisutze as a bet. Larivasi won this heavenly princess too. Ha, ha, ha . . ." he laughed, very pleased with his own story-telling. But it was very hard to make out whether he was laughing or crying.

After the liberation, Matiyaz was allotted a piece of good land in the agrarian reform. On a spring morning, when the sun shone brightly and the breeze blew gently, he walked to and fro along his plot, enjoying the sight of the wide field. He was considering what to do with it. He did not notice that Emla had come up to him.

"Ah, Brother Craftsman, what are you going to do with this plot of land?" Emla asked smiling.

"I am thinking of making a garden of it, putting up high mountains around it. What do you think of that, Emla?" Matiyaz joked.

"So, you want to transplant all those wild flowers and idle weeds which are choking your garden to this plot!"

"As the proverb goes, 'When the plasterer takes to bee-tending, his eyes get stung.' As it is, I can't do much."

Matiyaz often talked frankly before other people about his lazy ways. Thus he used to say, "When I am making shoes, the awl often lies under the sole and sleeps."

Emla rather liked Matiyaz's frank manner, but he still urged him to do things more briskly. "You like to wait for the food to get cold before eating it, don't you?" he once remarked.

Now, looking at the tobacco in Matiyaz's palm, which should have been put into his mouth long ago, Emla said irritably, "Chew it if you're going to."

Matiyaz put the tobacco in his mouth, chewed it and spit. Then he said in a strange tone of voice, "To tell the truth, I really don't know what to do with my plot of land. If I could find a buyer, I'd like to sell it and make a big profit."

Emla's sunburnt face became grave at once, his thick, broad eyebrows above his two sheep-like eyes were tightly knit. He said, "The Communist Party has distributed land to peasants not for them to trade with, but for them to work on it."

"Yes, so it is."

"H'm! Since it is so, you should cultivate something on this plot of land. When you gather your harvest, then you will be free to do as you like, either eat it or sell it."

"I don't think I'll sell the land. It would be better to plant rape-seed on it, wouldn't it?" Matiyaz laughed heartily.

At first Emla thought he was joking. Later, he realized that Matiyaz was really thinking of planting rape-seed, so he laughed happily.

"Good! Brother Craftsman, plant rape-seed on this soil!" Emla patted Matiyaz's shoulder with a palm as heavy as cast iron. He went on, "I will help you plough the land and sow. You just prepare a bag of seed."

Emla did help him plough the land and sow the seeds. Matiyaz for his part volunteered to make a pair of shoes for Emla.

After sowing, the only field work Matiyaz did during the whole summer was to water the field three times. As Emla had dug two ditches for the field, watering was very simple. Even so, Matiyaz thought that one ditch would be enough, so he only let the water through one opening. Then too, he didn't want to water the field at night, therefore, he did all the watering during the day. The first time, the water did not obey him. It flowed over the road and ran into other people's fields, causing much trouble. Nevertheless, his rape-seed grew quite lush. Just as he disliked watering the field at night, now, when it came to harvesting, he was afraid of the heat. He lay on the ground under the mulberry tree and meditated dreamily: "I wish the ripe mulberries would fall into my mouth!"

He raised his head slowly and looked at the distant fields. He saw the fat, full wheat of the mutual-aid team glittering like gold in the sunlight. He could see a group of

people in one corner of the field. They were all members of the mutual-aid team. They had discussed the harvesting the night before and they had started working at dawn, all reaping wheat together. Matiyaz's melancholy eyes turned from the mutual-aid team to the other side of the field, and looked at the tall, dense maize with its broad green leaves, the sheds for melons, the stacks of hay beside the ditch. Just then he noticed several women walking down the narrow path. They were carrying jars and bags and big gourds. They were all members of the mutual-aid team too and were bringing butter-tea, buns and cool tea, which had been prepared the night before, to the members working in the field. At a glance Matiyaz recognized the woman walking in front of the group. She wore a red apron, a coloured scarf was bound around her forehead, a flower of some kind was stuck behind her ear. She was joking with the other women and something she said made them laugh so much that they had to gasp for breath.

More than once, Matiyaz had tasted the delicious food cooked by this bright and lively woman. She was Izatihan, Emla's younger sister. He had also drunk the butter-tea prepared by her. If only she would pour a bowl of cool tea for him from the gourd she was carrying! Though Matiyaz looked at the gourd with his mouth watering, his self-respect would not allow him to call out for Izatihan. He swallowed hard, lay down again and began to think about Izatihan. How beautiful and strong she is! Like her brother Emla, she also treated poor people kindly. He asked himself, "Why could I not have such a woman as my own?" He thought of her dark eyebrows, as perfectly curved as a bow, her long-lashed pretty eyes, her cheeks as rosy as pomegranates, and her beautiful, strong figure. He also recalled that in the spring when he had measured her feet with a fine linen thread, her thigh had touched his wrist slightly, making him burn all over. While he was making the shoes for Izatihan, even though they were not finished and had never been worn by her, he regarded them as the loveliest of all things in his household. He often held the shoes in his hands and caressed them, ex-

claiming, "Ah! This pair of shoes will be worn by her!" The uppers, made with leather from Ining, were finished in April, but the soles were not done until May. Finally, the only thing left to be done was to colour and polish them and draw out the last. Still, up to this very day, he had not done those finishing touches. He felt ashamed not to have sent the shoes to her yet. He sat up and gazed for a long, long time in the direction the women had gone.

At dusk Matiyaz left off reaping and coloured the leather shoes for Izatihan. Before he took the shoes to her, he held them up and looked at them for quite a while. See, how bright the shoes were! Once more he rubbed them with his sleeve, then he wrapped them in the black-flowered handkerchief in which he had kept them. The handkerchief smelt of human perspiration, the shoes of yellow wax.

Emla's whole family was gathered under the melon shed eating dinner, when Matiyaz came in with the leather shoes. As he stepped inside the courtyard, a smell of spiced noodle soup assailed his nostrils.

"Good! Come on, come on, please sit at the head of the table." Emla delightedly welcomed him, pointing to the seat of honour at the low table. "I say, was your horse slow? You've arrived a bit late!"

"No, no, thank you, I shall go back soon. I've brought you this." Matiyaz handed the pair of shoes to Izatihan.

With a smile, she took the shoes. Emla pulled Matiyaz over and made him sit at the table, saying, "From which direction did the sun rise today, Brother Craftsman?"

"Ah! I really thought the shoes would not be finished until flowers bloom in the desert and the camel's tail touches the ground," Izatihan remarked teasingly.

Usually Matiyaz was good at banter, but now he was very embarrassed before Izatihan. He didn't utter a word, just went on eating with a flushed face. The pair of shoes was passed from hand to hand. Everyone admired them. Suddenly, Izatihan's small son grabbed one shoe and ran away. His mother chased after him as he dashed into Matiyaz's arms.

"You brought this for me, didn't you?"

"H'm."

"Let me wear this pair of leather shoes, won't you, Uncle Maya?"

"Give them to your mother. I will make a pair of handsome red shoes for you. All right?"

"Give it to me, darling. Let me take it home."

As Izatihan bent down to snatch the shoe from her son's hands, Matiyaz felt her warm, soft breath on his face. For a moment he felt weak all over as if his body had melted into quicksilver. It was an effort to pull himself together. He wanted the moment to last a little longer, but Izatihan went into the room as soon as she got the shoe out of the child's hands.

The boy had lost his father when he was only six months old. His mother then brought him to Emla's house where he grew up wanting the love of a father. Izatihan, a widow now for four years, had kept alive the memory of her husband and had not thought much of remarrying. It was not for lack of suitors that she did not marry, but she feared her orphaned son would suffer with a stepfather. As for Matiyaz, she was aware of his honesty and simple goodness, but because she didn't like his lazy, phlegmatic ways, she had never considered him seriously as a possible husband.

As Emla stacked the dirty dishes, he asked Matiyaz, "Now Brother Craftsman, what is the matter again? Why have you stopped working on the rape-seed field?"

"It seems to me that reaping is like a craft, but I haven't mastered this craft yet."

Emla knew full well that Matiyaz talked of a craft simply because he hated to admit his laziness.

"You seem to be a straightforward person," Emla said with a sharp look at Matiyaz, "but on closer observation, I can see that you are really cunning. Why don't you just say, 'I don't like to work under the hot sun,' and be done with it."

"What you said is true, of course." Matiyaz felt very much ashamed. "But . . . er . . . I have not learned the

knack of reaping. Look!" He stretched out his hand to show Emla the many raw cuts on his palm.

Emla didn't bother to look. "Of course you have to learn to reap well. As long as you don't mind hard work and the hot sun it is not difficult to learn in a day or two. Remember though, this kind of work isn't an old shoe you can work on when you feel like it and drop when you don't. One day's slack at this time and you may spoil the fruit of several months' labour."

"Right, you are quite right. But what am I to do?"

"That's just what I'm trying to tell you. This isn't the time for you to wonder over this or that. Just tighten your belt and go to work."

Matiyaz agreed with every word Emla said and announced his determination to finish reaping the next day. He went home full of good intentions. In fact he was so set on getting up early the next morning that he gave up his usual visit to the mosque for a bit of gossip in the evening. Long before the other people in the village went to bed, Matiyaz had already turned in. However, by the time the whole village was deep in slumber, poor Matiyaz was still awake, worried about his rape-seed, which seemed to have grown just to annoy him and plagued by the memory of Izatihan's beautiful face and her warm soft breath on his cheeks. Thoughts, some bitter and some sweet, robbed him of rest and peace. He tossed and turned until the first cocks crowed.

When dawn came, Matiyaz was so sound asleep that he did not wake up to go to work. By the time he crept out of bed, the orange-red sunbeams had reached his window-sill. Without bothering to wash his face, he hurriedly boiled some tea. All the other peasants had long been working in the fields, and the knowledge of this filled him with remorse. Why did he have to be late on this first day of resolution when he meant to work as well as the others!

The pleasant, cool, early morning breeze had long since died down. The sun, now high in the sky, gave off a stifling heat. Not a single leaf stirred on the tree tops. Matiyaz,

however, was really determined today. He worked until he could hardly straighten his back. At last, parched and completely fagged out, he shuffled over to rest under the shade of the mulberry. He had only reaped a very small patch of his field.

Emla and his mutual-aid team were reaping their wheat fields. Each of them had reaped at least ten times as much as Matiyaz had done.

During the noon break, Emla went to Matiyaz's field to see how the craftsman was doing. When he rejoined his team, he proposed that since there would be a moon that night, the team should help Matiyaz with his reaping in the evening. "Yes, let's go and help him. We could do it very quickly," his team-mates agreed. There was only one man who objected because he did not like the extra work. This man always grumbled loudest over this and that. He was either saying, "Why don't you plough my field first?" or "Why don't you give me more points since my horse is strong and my cart new?" or something to this effect. He liked to criticize Emla's leadership in the team, but the others always told him off. In spite of his opposition, the team went to Matiyaz's field in the evening and working under the milky white moonlight, soon finished the reaping for the craftsman.

It was a busy season for the peasants. They worked from morning till night to separate the kernels of golden grain from weeds, stalks and dust. Emla and his mutual-aid team worked busily winnowing the wheat on the threshing ground. Wheat stalks piled higher and higher towards the sky and pearly grain rolled under the peasants' feet. All the women of the mutual-aid team were out these days. They sat plucking the maize off its stalk in the field next to the threshing ground, singing in happy chorus for all to hear.

Matiyaz, four bundles of rape-seed on his shoulder, was making his way towards the threshing ground. He kept shifting the burden on his aching shoulder, cursing the rape-seed and its binding rope which chafed his shoulder. Every now and then, he put his burden down to rest a while,

His ears were cocked for the merry laughter and singing from the maize field where Izatihan sat with the other women. He longed to join in the song. "Damn this miserable bit of rape-seed. What does it matter if I give it up. How I'd like to join the women and gossip and work with them." He had not joined the mutual-aid team because he didn't like the prospect of heavy farm work. He also knew that once in the team he could hardly sleep as late as he liked or work only when he felt like it. However, he was beginning to be more and more drawn to collective labour in the team where everyone laughed and sang with such gusto and seemed to enjoy themselves.

By the time the harvest was over Emla noticed that Matiyaz had taken an interest in collective work, so one day he invited him to join their study group. Before long, Matiyaz asked to be admitted to the mutual-aid team. Most of the members were willing to accept him, but others were critical of the craftsman. One of them said, "The man is so poor he hasn't a single animal or farm tool. Why do we want him on the team when he is such a lazy good-for-nothing?" Someone else said, "Emla is helping Matiyaz because he means to marry his widowed sister to the craftsman." For a while this gossip made some of the members doubt the integrity of their leader, Emla, but since the majority were willing to give Matiyaz a chance, he was allowed to join the mutual-aid team.

Spring had come to the village. The snow and ice on the road began to thaw under the sun. From the orchard came the fresh smell of young budding shoots.

Emla and two others were taking fertilizer to the fields in a cart. Just as they left the village, a rosy-cheeked fellow hailed them.

"Brother Emla," said Shawutichian, an earnest young district worker. "Will you come over for a chat when you have time?"

"Sure, let's have a chat," Emla replied cheerfully. "Today's a good day for it. See the earth is re-appearing under

the snow. There's not much ice left. Hop in and come to the fields with us."

Shawutichian did not object. He jumped on the cart and went with them. With his eyes on the sea of snow which was fast dwindling into slush, Shawutichian spoke up. "You reaped a good harvest last year, Emla. You should consolidate your team and work hard to be a model team this year."

"Of course, we'll try hard."

"I don't doubt you."

"Do you have doubts about anyone?"

"No, no one in particular. I just think it wasn't a good idea to have Matiyaz join your team."

"But why?" Emla was very much surprised.

"He's a useless cheat, a good-for-nothing who doesn't like work."

Emla raised his eyebrows and his face looked grave. "You've come to the wrong conclusion about Matiyaz," he said, shaking his head. "You should judge him by the way he's acting now. Anyway, he was never a cheat or else he would not have worked for people simply for an occasional word of thanks. He would have lived by cheating."

"Brother Emla, I suppose you are the only person who thinks so well of him." Shawutichian smiled ever so slightly and spoke with exaggerated politeness.

"Why do you say that?"

"We all know what happened last year."

Shawutichian was referring to Matiyaz's attempt to play truant from dyke repairing the previous autumn. It happened one morning after the harvest, when golden leaves already covered the ground. The villagers were asked to do repair work on the dyke. Matiyaz, a shovel on his shoulder, was among the first in the procession. To everyone's surprise, he walked faster and faster. When he was a good distance from the rest, he slipped off the road, went behind a low mud wall into a dense apricot grove. Huddling down like a porcupine, he hid himself among the apricot trees. Unfortunately a flap of his old lambskin coat was caught on a twig as he ducked in and turned a part of

his coat inside out. The white lambskin was a telltale mark which told people, "Look, here's Matiyaz." He was quickly discovered by the villagers and his stupid attempt became a popular joke among the dyke workers.

Old Timur, with the little goatee, was the first to point out the white lambskin amidst the trees. "Hoho, how come there's a white sheep here?" he chuckled. Immediately, a laughing crowd surrounded Matiyaz's hiding place.

"They say a lamb who leaves its flock will be bitten by wolves. This must be a lamb who has escaped from its flock. Poor little lamb, I wonder what wild beast got it."

"Hey, wait a minute. You call it a lamb, but see that shovel on its shoulder?"

"It must be a lamb who's learning to farm."

"Look, it's alive, it's stirring now."

After great trouble, Matiyaz extricated himself from the brambly twigs round him and stood up.

"This is terrible. I tried to hide myself but you people found me." He hung his head in shame.

"This isn't your fault, friend craftsman," said the man with the goatee. "It's the fault of your coat. If it hadn't

turned you into a lamb, we'd never have found you. Whatever were you doing, my dear Matiyaz?"

"Er, ah . . . to tell the truth, I was wrong," Matiyaz confessed sheepishly.

"Don't you see," said someone with a sneer. "Matiyaz was not playing a prank. He tried to get away from working on the dyke. What a sly creature."

"I don't know how this idea crept into my head; I just felt like staying away and not going to work today."

"What are we going to do with him now?" someone asked.

"I'm like a lost dog and you can do whatever you like with me," said the woebegone Matiyaz.

"All right, pick up your shovel, friend craftsman," said old Timur. "Don't go on being a lost dog or a bitten lamb. You should become a model worker in dyke repairing and so correct your mistakes."

Matiyaz, like the others, worked for ten days on the dyke. Though he did not really become a model worker, he swung his shovel with energy and did the work of a man. At the same time he learned to enjoy working with the others. He became more jolly and voluble and the people were amazed by the change in him.

But the young district worker, Shawutichian, knew nothing of the change in Matiyaz. The day after their chat Emla took him to Matiyaz's house. The craftsman's house, formerly so ramshackled, had been properly repaired. A balcony had been added to the front, which, though not quite finished, changed the whole appearance of the house in the bright spring sunlight. The owner of the house had also changed. Two years ago he spent a great deal of his time on his back sunning himself where the balcony now stood, or sat hanging his head like a lost dog. Now, all this belonged to the past.

When Emla and Shawutichian walked into the little courtyard, they saw Matiyaz astride a bench repairing a saddle. On the wall hung a new pair of reins he had just finished. Old Timur and Izatihan were busy weaving baskets. They had begun to learn the day before and were still a little inexperienced. They stopped every now and

then to ask Matiyaz, "What shall I do now, Brother Craftsman?" Matiyaz would drop his own work to help them. For him, it was a most pleasant task to teach Izatihan how to make baskets.

"Look at this, Shawutichian," said Emla, picking up a basket by old Timur's side. "In our mutual-aid team there are no idlers who spend their time sunning themselves. We are now developing subsidiary occupations in the team and we've got our craftsman to help us."

"This one seems a bit lopsided," Shawutichian said with a smile as he fingered the newly-woven basket.

"This was my first day's work, my good man," explained Timur with the goatee. "I racked my brains for a whole day and that's the only result. But take a look at this one." He stood up and handed the half-finished basket in his hands to Shawutichian.

"Uh-huh, this one is not bad at all. From whom are you learning the craft?"

"That's our teacher." Old Timur pointed to Matiyaz.

"Ah, so the craftsman is a master of weaving, too, eh?"

"This is nothing. Anyone who's watched someone do it once or twice can do it." Matiyaz was convinced there was nothing to weaving a basket or two.

"I think it's quite an accomplishment. People who haven't learned it just can't do it well," Shawutichian commented.

"Our craftsman can do a lot of things," Emla added. "We taught him how to farm and he's going to teach us other crafts. In the future we won't need to go to the shops to have our saddles or reins repaired." He picked up the saddle on the bench. "These things will become our collective property and belong to all of us."

After this visit, Shawutichian told others, "Once Matiyaz makes up his mind to work well, he can do anything."

Two joyous events marked the autumn harvest in the village that year. The mutual-aid team became a cooperative and Matiyaz married his beloved Izatihan.

The familiar low mud wall round Matiyaz's house has been repaired and whitewashed. At Izatihan's request Matiyaz planed down a poplar and made a low couch. Two white pillows lay side by side on the couch with pretty fringe hanging over the edge. A neat wooden box set in a proper place now held all the craftsman's scattered tools. Pots and dishes were arranged in the tidy cupboard and ladles and cooking spoons hung in a row on the wall. One look at this clean, orderly home and you could tell that the mistress is a clever, industrious woman.

By the mulberry, where Matiyaz, thirsty and tired, had longed for a drink that year when he was reaping the rape-seed, now stood a melon shed with beautiful flowers growing round it.

A few women, chatting and giggling, were eating a melon fresh from the vine. When Matiyaz returned from the field, Izatihan came out to welcome him, a half of a melon in one hand.

"Try this. It's very sweet."

Matiyaz took a bite. "Indeed, it's sweet as honey."

Someone giggled. "A melon cut by beloved hands is always sweet, friend craftsman." This made everyone burst into laughter.

"Why, what has made them so jolly?" asked Matiyaz, who had not heard the last remark. Izatihan knew someone was teasing them so she said, "Hush, dear, a skylark is singing." She went and sat down under the mulberry. Just then, her young son ran over with another melon in his arms. Greeting his mother and father, he joined them and the little family of three shared the sweet pink melon under the shade of the mulberry.

Translated by Chang Tang
Illustration by Fu Heng-hsueh

KASILKAN

Point of Departure

"You stinking beast!" muttered Japolak to himself. He was surveying his tent. "I wonder if the rotten egg Ashar can come looking for her again!"

Japolak had been thinking of moving away for some time.

It all began the day he met his uncle Kudiyar on the road. Japolak hadn't seen him in several years. Kudiyar owned rich pasture-land. As a child, Japolak had tended sheep for him. A few years ago, when the rule of the feudal overlords was smashed, Kudiyar had joined a bandit gang that attacked land reform teams. He was captured and sent to a correctional institution. Now, he suddenly reappeared — driving a herd of horses. The wily old rascal had gone back to his sharp trading practices.

Seeing Japolak, Kudiyar pounced on him like a hawk. After they chatted a few minutes about family affairs, Kudiyar leaned close and said softly in Japolak's ear:

"I hear that Ashar has his eye on your wife. Don't let her get involved with him, whatever you do. I haven't seen your wife, but I hear she's very beautiful. You'd better watch her carefully."

Kudiyar's voice grew louder. Feigning sympathy, he said, "After all, you're just as intelligent and just as good

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Kasilkan is a young Kazakh writer of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

a worker as Ashar. The way he praises her — he must be up to something!"

That's right, mused Japolak. Ashar is always telling the other women in our mutual-aid team they ought to be like Maliya, or asking Maliya to explain things to them. . . . And why had Maliya recently become pregnant although she had been unable to conceive in the eight years since their marriage? Was it due to the medicine the doctor had given her? No. If Allah didn't want them to have a baby, no doctor could have helped.

Kudiyar noted Japolak's depressed air. "You're my nephew," he said. "I know you're a good person. I know Ashar too. He also herded sheep for me. He's a crafty fellow. He has a dozen ways to get next to other men's wives. Our old Kazakh saying 'Clever words can make even the clouds change' is absolutely true. Ashar's tongue is as smooth as oil, and his mind is sharp as a dagger. He fooled me at first, but when I discovered his true nature, I fired him. Now he's the leader of your mutual-aid team, and you must obey him. Why did he just send you off on a three-day mission? Couldn't he have sent anyone else? You say your wife is faithful, but don't forget Ashar is only

twenty and very handsome. Our ancestors warned us: 'Never trust the horse you ride or the woman you hold in your arms.'"

The old rogue spat and, glancing at Japolak, said with a commiserating sigh, "How right they were!" After a pause, he asked, "How many animals do you have?"

"Six, including four pack animals, praise Heaven."

"I hear they confiscate a man's beasts when he joins the agricultural co-op. Is that true?"

"No. The co-op gets its income from what each man and his animals produce."

"It's a pity. With four pack oxen you could earn enough to buy four good horses. Of course you wouldn't be able to do that if you joined the co-operative. You couldn't even really call your animals your own. But I hear that if you don't want to join, no one forces you."

"If it weren't for what you've just told me about Maliya and Ashar, I'd have no objections to the co-op, uncle. I had some doubts when we first joined the mutual-aid team, but we haven't had to worry about hunger or poverty ever since. As for horses, I bought the two I own now wtih money I earned on the team."

"How can you be so gullible? Don't you know that the mutual-aid teams were just bait to lure people into the co-ops? Once you're in the co-op you won't even earn enough to buy a lamb, to say nothing of horses. Japolak, what a simpleton you are!" Kudiyar laughed scornfully.

Then, afraid that he had exposed himself too much, Kudiyar added quickly, "Naturally, I'm not against your joining the co-op. We'll all join sooner or later. But the first thing you should do is escape from Ashar. To get your wife he might even kill you. If you know any others who are thinking of joining the co-op, urge them to wait — but don't tell them I said so. Are any of your friends on bad terms with Ashar?"

"None of us know Ashar as well as you, uncle. We're all simpletons. He's pulled the wool over the eyes of every one of us."

"You haven't by any chance refused to join the co-op, have you?"

"No. What can I do? If I speak to Maliya about it, she's sure to say she'd rather die than stay outside the co-op, that we've never suffered by going along with the administration."

Kudiyar grinned. "You may suffer this time, but for her it will be a pleasure." He stroked his beard and looked at Japolak with an evil leer.

These words made Japolak feel terrible. His deep-set grey eyes seemed ready to shed tears. He flushed brick-red and gave his horse an angry cut with his riding whip.

"Curse them! I'm going to move out of here right away."

When the sun was setting behind the mountains, Kudiyar came to Japolak's tent. He greeted the younger man as if he hadn't seen him in years. In the dim light of the lamp, Kudiyar examined the dwelling carefully. Though its exterior was plain, inside, it was furnished like an urban flat.

"I thought you had gone into town for a meeting," said Japolak.

"Why would I attend any meetings?" retorted Kudiyar. "I only wanted to buy some tea and a few odds and ends." He cast a glance at Maliya who was polishing the tea kettle.

Japolak, reclining on his side and leaning on one elbow, raised his head. "Doesn't your co-operative shop sell tea?"

"Yes. But all of its items cost more than in town. I don't know whether the government wants the Kazakh people to pay more, or whether the co-op shop managers set the prices."

Although Japolak felt that Kudiyar was distorting the facts, he did not say anything. But Maliya explained evenly, "The shop has to send people into town to transport the merchandise out here. That raises the price a bit. Actually, it costs you much more if you go into town yourself. It takes all day to make the trip. You're losing a day's wages each time."

She spread a table-cloth and served tea. Kudiyar said "Praise Allah" before he drank, but his thoughts were far

from holy. He was scrutinizing Maliya's lustrous black eyes, her alabaster neck, her high bosom.

How did Japolak ever get such a beauty? He said to himself enviously. She's gorgeous!

Raising his tea bowl, he drank to her. By then the kettle was empty and Maliya took it out to refill it. Kudiyar leaned over to Japolak.

"How do the Kazakhs here get along with the Hans?" he asked softly.

"Their poor and our poor get along fine. Most of the Hans used to be hired farmhands for the landlords, or they were unemployed. We're all very good friends. I wouldn't leave them if it weren't for Ashar." Japolak sighed.

"That Ashar is always stirring up trouble," Kudiyar said quickly. "He doesn't show himself, but works through black-hearted fools and innocents like you. We've never done anything wrong, we've never disgraced the Kazakhs, but Ashar wanted to injure me, so I had to serve a term in a reformatory."

"That was because you had joined the bandits."

Kudiyar hastily changed the subject. "I sympathize with you for two reasons," he said hypocritically. "First, because Ashar is insulting you. Second, because your departed father was a devout Moslem but you're mixing in with the infidel Hans. I wouldn't tell you this if I didn't consider you one of us. You mustn't breathe a word of it to anyone!"

"You can trust me as you believe in Allah. You're so good to me. I'd never harm you. As to Ashar, I'll make him sorry, or I'm no man!" Japolak's forehead furrowed with anger.

Glancing towards the door, Kudiyar asked, "How will you get your revenge?"

"That's easy. I'll refuse to do any jobs he gives me. Later, we'll move away." Japolak raised his hands as if in prayer.

Kudiyar laughed and pulled Japolak's hands down. "You're too honest. That's why he and your wife are able to deceive you. What you ought to do is sabotage his work on the mutual-aid team. Then everyone will hate Ashar.

I've thought of a plan for you, only I'm afraid you won't be able to keep your mouth shut."

"Uncle, I swear by Allah. Didn't I just tell you?" Japolak said tensely. "I'll do anything to get revenge!" His face was red and flushed.

Kudiyar scratched an eyebrow and thought, ah, my nitwit, I've got you now. . . .

Ashar had left for the fields before dawn, but now he came hurrying home. Usually calm and steady, he was quite upset as he hastened up to Wang Li.

"We're in trouble, Comrade Wang Li!" he cried. There were tears in his eyes. "We can't plough that field of grass."

Startled, Wang Li paused with a hatchet poised in his hand.

"It's the work of some enemy out to sabotage us. What are we going to do?" Ashar sat down abruptly on Wang Li's cart. Wang Li still didn't understand. Tossing aside his hatchet, he asked:

"What's wrong?"

"Someone has stolen a wheel from our steel-bladed plough." Ashar's face was pale. "I've been ploughing that field for five days. Usually, I take the plough home, but last night I left it there. I never thought we had an enemy among us!" Ashar shook his head. "Our old wooden plough can't cut the roots of that tough grass. I've let everyone down!"

Wang Li asked quietly, "Did you see anyone who looked suspicious yesterday?"

"No. I was just out searching for clues, but whoever it was, he's wiped his footprints clean. The wicked, scheming devil!" Fretfully, Ashar pulled his thick fingers, cracking his knuckles loudly. Then he lapsed into thought. . . .

Seated in the doorway of his home, Japolak had furtively observed Ashar return with only the ox and no plough. You're out of luck, young fellow, he thought with satisfaction.

The previous night there had been no moon, and Japolak had stolen out to the field with a pair of pliers. He had

great difficulty opening the bolt, his powerful hands were trembling so. But finally he succeeded, and removed one wheel. He gazed quickly all around. No one was in sight. Japolak heaved a sigh of relief. Concealing the wheel under his coat, he followed along the stream, screened by the high grass.

This is only the first step, Ashar, he grated between clenched teeth. Next time I'll break your legs. You won't escape me. And if I ever catch you and her together, I'll skin you alive!

As he walked, Japolak prayed: Allah, don't let me lose her love. If Ashar has seduced her, she may divorce me. She's very young and has no children. If I don't act first and separate them, she's liable to divorce me, and I'll be disgraced.

But after a moment, another thought came to him. Let her go! Why keep her if she loves another? Japolak's grey eyes were blinded with tears. The thick grass tangled his feet and tripped him. Casting aside the wheel, he jumped up and ran forward a few paces, then stopped and listened. All was still except for the thumping of his heart.

Why is my heart beating so fast? he wondered as he walked back to the wheel. Is it because I've done something shameful that I'm afraid to let anyone discover? Curse you, Ashar! If you hadn't injured me, I'd never wreck the team's plough. If you hadn't wronged me, why should I hurt you?

Coming to the spot he had previously chosen, Japolak dug a hole and buried the wheel. He broke off two sprigs of the tough grass and inserted them in the ground as markers.

He hurried towards home. The vision of the lovely face of Maliya appeared before his eyes. She's pregnant, he suddenly recalled. But who the baby's father is, Allah only knows. If it's not my own child, I don't want it. I'll be able to tell if the baby's mine. His eyes will be deep-set and grey. If they're large and dark, that will confirm the worst. But little girls usually resemble their mothers. If the baby's a little girl, I may not be able to tell.

Another thought struck him. No wonder Ashar just announced that pregnant women on our mutual-aid team won't be allowed to do heavy work. Kudiyar, you're clever, and I'm the world's prize simpleton. If there were only two fools in the world, one of them would certainly be me. These grey eyes of mine never see a thing!

Furiously, Japolak rubbed his tear-filled eyes and slowly trudged home.

The day the mutual-aid team met and dissolved itself to become an agricultural co-operative, Japolak pretended to be sick and stayed away.

"Why isn't Japolak here?" Wang Li asked at the meeting. "Does he have any objections?"

"He wouldn't want to leave the masses," said Maliya. "We're both willing to join the co-op."

An old grey-beard clapped her on the shoulder. "Maliya's a member of our management committee. As long as she agrees, why bother to ask Japolak?"

Wang Li said, "Even so, he's one of us. Ashar, you go with Maliya and explain to him what's happening."

It was already dark by the time the meeting ended. Ashar and Maliya went to see Japolak. As they neared the tent, Ashar said, "You can't do any hard work this year, Maliya. You and Brother Japolak had better herd sheep, one watching during the day, the other standing guard at night. That's probably the most suitable work for you two for the time being."

Hearing this, Japolak stole out through the rear door. You even dare to make love to my wife in my own home, he raged silently. That's the extreme insult!

Ashar and Maliya entered the dimly lighted tent. Maliya turned up the wick of the lamp and sat down on her bed. "Have a seat," she said to Ashar. "Japolak will be back soon."

Brazen adulteress! cursed Japolak. You invite him to sit with you! . . . He couldn't resist peering through a small hole in the tent. He saw Ashar sitting beside Maliya.

"We'll do whatever you tell us to," Maliya said to Ashar. "You'll do what he tells you, will you?" Japolak kicked open the door and rushed at Maliya, striking her with his clenched fists. She screamed.

"How awful! Japolak has caught Maliya together with Ashar! . . ." The rumour flew from tent to tent.

In Wang Li's tent, Ashar and Wang Li sat opposite each other in heavy silence.

Wang Li took a long drag on his cigarette. "There must be something behind this problem with Japolak," he said.

"I think so too. Someone must have egged him on. He wouldn't have done it on his own. If we can find the man who provoked him, we'll solve this thing."

"Have you any idea who might be trying to set him against the co-operative?"

"He doesn't really want to leave the co-op. Someone invented the story that I'm after his wife, and he believed it. I hope he doesn't move away before we have a chance to clear this thing up." Ashar reached for one of Wang Li's cigarettes. He never smoked before.

"I spoke to Maliya about it. She's determined to stay until a thorough investigation is made. But Japolak is very angry. He may go off without her. That would break up their home. I told Maliya she'd better think it over."

Unhappy, Ashar left the tent. Shortly after, Japolak called on Wang Li. His lips were dry and trembling with anger.

". . . Why, of all the women, was my wife named a model worker? Only because Ashar likes her. Our mutual-aid team had many young fellows and women who are better workers than Maliya, but she was elected group leader, she was chosen model worker — she was even picked for the management committee. Why? It was all the work of Ashar, because he has designs on her." Japolak pulled at his sparse beard as if he wanted to tear it out by the roots.

"It wasn't Ashar who selected Maliya for these posts, Brother Japolak, it was all of us. You shouldn't suspect Ashar simply because of that. It's not fair. Please believe me. The whole community knows that Ashar has no evil intentions towards Maliya."

Japolak tugged his riding jacket straight. "Humph, you're all prejudiced in his favour. That crafty devil. Some day he'll cheat you too." Japolak bit his lips and angrily smacked his thigh.

"There's something else I wanted to talk to you about, but . . ." Japolak paused.

Wang Li looked at him. "Don't hesitate to say anything that's on your mind."

Japolak looked behind him, then stepped closer to Wang Li and said, "My wife and I have been married for nearly eight years, brother. Day and night I prayed to Allah for a son, but my prayers were in vain. Then Ashar moved into our neighbourhood, and in less than a year Maliya became pregnant. If you don't believe me, wait and see. When the baby is born, it will look like Ashar, not like me. I don't want to leave the co-operative, but I must get Maliya away from him."

Wang Li didn't know what to say. He rose and paced the floor, then sat down again. "Is anything else troubling you?" he asked. "You can tell me."

"I have no other complaints. But there's another reason why I must leave here. . . ." Japolak hesitated. Afraid of rousing Wang Li's suspicions, he said no more.

"There are no secrets between us, brother," Wang Li urged him. "Speak out, freely."

"Don't press me. The main reason I'm going is because of Ashar. I can't stay any longer. I must move. That's all I have to say!" Japolak stood up and hurried away.

Early the next morning, Japolak began dismantling his tent.

"No one's driving us away," said Maliya. "Why not at least have our breakfast tea first?"

Japolak gave her a fierce look, and continued taking down the tent. Many of his neighbours arrived. Wang Li, his coat draped over his shoulders, asked, "Are you really moving, brother?" Japolak feigned deafness. He loaded packs on to a yellow ox.

"Brother Japolak," said Ashar, "you've misunderstood. Some day you'll know it."

Japolak turned on him. "What business is it of yours what I do? You've been trying to steal my wife." He pointed at Maliya. "Maybe I'll give her to you!"

Maliya broke into sobs. "You're shameless! How can you be so shameless!" It was the first time she had ever crossed him in public.

"Ashar, you've been better than a brother to him," said an old man indignantly. "Let him go, if he insists. When he's reduced to his old beggar's robe again, he'll come pleading to be taken back into the co-op."

After he had finished loading his pack animals, Japolak mounted his horse. Ignoring the others, he said good-bye only to Wang Li and the grey-bearded old man. Then he drove his beasts forward. Maliya did not depart until she had shaken hands with everyone.

Several months later, Maliya gave birth to a little boy in their new home on the mountainside. For almost a week after the baby was born, Japolak was afraid to look at him. But finally, when Maliya went out for a while, he stealthily opened the child's blankets. What he saw made him smile broadly. The baby's eyes and nose were obviously small replicas of his own.

Japolak lovingly kissed the infant. "Thank you, Allah," he said, "for giving me a pure unsullied child!"

Not long after, Kudiyar paid them a visit. Maliya was out in the pasture, but Japolak was at home holding the baby.

"Salaam alaikum," said Kudiyar, as he entered. His hat was knocked off by the low door frame.

"Alaikum salaam, uncle. What good news do you bring?" Japolak placed the baby on the table and quickly spread a rug for his guest.

Kudiyar picked up his hat and knocked the dust off against his chest, then hung it on a wooden peg. "My good news is that I hope your son is really yours!" Kudiyar laughed and looked at Japolak meaningfully.

Coming home with the cattle, Maliya noticed the horse tied in front of the door, and she stole up to the tent and listened.

"The child is mine, uncle. Allah knows it. If you don't believe me, look for yourself!" Japolak uncovered the baby's face and brought him over to his uncle.

It irritated Kudiyar to see Japolak so happy. "Just look at his eyes. When he grows up, they'll be large and black. Your eyes are sunken, because you're over forty, but his definitely are going to protrude."

"But what about his nose?"

"Forget it. No matter who the bull was, the calf belongs to you. The child's nose is large, all right, but so is Ashar's. And it's not the least hooked—like yours."

Outside the tent, her hands clasped before her breast, Maliya listened, gnawing her lips with rage. "That fiend!" she muttered.

Japolak, who had been filled with love for the child only a moment before, suddenly grew cold. He deposited the infant on the bed.

Masking her emotions behind a pleasant expression, Maliya entered. She bowed to Kudiyar and politely asked after his health. Kudiyar returned the salutation with pompous dignity. He watched her as she emptied a water bucket into a vat. She ignored him, and soon went out again with the bucket.

Kudiyar grinned at Japolak. "We've an old saying that a stick can teach a bear to pray like a man. Maliya seems much better behaved now."

He leaned close to Japolak and said confidentially, "The agricultural co-op needs horses, but some friends and I have been collecting the best in these parts—never mind how—to sell in the city. That will make things difficult for Ashar and the co-op, and we'll earn a nice profit. Naturally, we can't be too open about it. So I've divided the herd up among a dozen or so men; each will sell one or two horses as if they were his own. I'm counting you as one of us. Are you willing to take a trip to the city?"

Maliya came in and put the kettle on the stove. She removed the kerchief from her head as if to pick a thread from it, but actually in order to hear more clearly.

Japolak appeared willing. "When are you going into the city?" he asked.

"In two or three days, if it pleases Allah. You can bring the wheel along. Don't let it get rusty."

Maliya edged nearer.

"Uncle," said Japolak, "I don't think we should be hasty. People from the co-operative are always going into the city. If they should see us, we'd get into trouble."

"There's nothing to worry about. We'll be travelling mostly at night, and you can keep the wheel in a pack. When we get to the city, you can sell it on some side street. Did you bury it near the road?"

"Not far from the road. I buried it in a thicket of grass."

How evil they are! Maliya's heart beat fast with agitation. Ashar guessed right. He said someone must be provoking Japolak. I have to get this news to the co-operative.

As Kudiyar and Japolak were mounting their horses, Kudiyar said to Japolak, "We are sure to be successful, nephew." They rode away down a small path.

By the time Japolak was emerging from Kudiyar's house, Maliya was already galloping down the highway. Her back pained her, and the baby in her bosom was crying, but fearing pursuit, she didn't dare to slow down. When at last she came in sight of her lovely native plains, she sighed, and tears filled her eyes. The place was dotted with the green young trees which had recently been planted. In the fields were her old friends and neighbours.

She was returning with proof that she had been unjustly accused. An excited flush tinged her pale face, and her heart expanded comfortably. Just before sunset, she reached the village. Young and old crowded around her.

"Our Maliya has come back!" they cried.

"We can talk inside," said Wang Li.

Maliya followed him into the office.

Late at night, three riders dismounted, tied their horses in a secluded spot, then concealed themselves beside the road. They waited a long time. At last two other horsemen rode by. The three leaped out and blocked their path.

"Who are you?" cried Japolak. Kudiyar tried to flee, but the instant he brought his crop down on his animal's flank, one of the men seized the horse's bridle. Frightened, Kudiyar demanded:

"Are you friends or enemies?"

"Never mind who we are. Get off your horses, and be quick about it!" The man dragged Kudiyar down by the collar.

Japolak slipped from his horse and tried to run. "There's no use your attempting to fly," he was advised. "We've already clipped your wings."

Despondently, Japolak squatted down on his heels. "Who are you?" he said.

"We're your neighbours. You used to be a free soaring bird. Do you want to become a thieving owl that dares to come out only at night? Just hand over that wheel you've got in your pack and everything will be all right."

Japolak's whole body felt as if it were scorched by fire. Turning, he saw that Kudiyar had already been made a prisoner by the agricultural co-operative members.

Then Maliya, carrying the baby in her arms, came running towards him from the distance. She was more beautiful than ever. "Let's go home," she urged him. "Back to our old home!"

Japolak hung his head. After a moment he raised it and smiled. With never a glance at Kudiyar, he walked with Maliya and his son down the road towards the agricultural co-operative.

Translated by George Hartman
Illustration by Fu Heng-hsueh

Reminiscences

WU HUA-TUO

Father and I

One pitch black night in the summer of 1928, our relation Lai Ho-yun suddenly arrived at our home. From then on, he and my father were always together, discussing things out of earshot of my mother.

I was only twelve at the time, and understood little of what they said, but it sounded very new and interesting — all about things called communism, revolution, uprising, winning over the landlords' armed mercenaries, getting control of the Red Spear Society. . . .*

One evening, after I had already gone to bed, my father and mother began to quarrel. "Ever since you started messing around in those Red organizations you don't care

"Reminiscence" is a form of literature which has won much popularity recently among Chinese readers. Written by ordinary people of all walks of life most of whom have no previous literary experience, the stories are sincere and simple, but strong in their reflection of exciting events in which the writers personally took part. The reminiscences also offer interesting highlights on the momentous social developments which have been unfolding in China in the past few decades. The two episodes printed here were written by veterans of the armed struggles waged during the Second Revolutionary Civil War of the twenties.

* A secret people's organization of central and north China.

about your family or your children any more," my mother complained.

"Who says I don't care?" my father retorted. "It's for our children's sake that we're overthrowing bad landlords and dividing up the land."

I crawled out of bed and asked my father what bad landlords meant. "Go back to sleep," he ordered curtly. "Children shouldn't ask so many questions."

Not long after, my father joined the Red Spear Society. It seemed lots of fun. People got together and talked and laughed so I joined in with them too. My father was one of the busiest men in the society, running around from morning till night, holding meetings, talking over problems.

The evening of the 28th of November, my father came hurrying in the door. He had been away from home for three days and three nights. My mother quickly put some food on the table, but my father pushed it aside, clapped his hat on and rushed right out again.

It seemed very strange to my mother and me, but we didn't dare ask what was wrong. All we could do was sit at home and wait. After waiting until nearly ten, with still no sign of him, my mother said to me:

"You'd better go see where your father has gone."

I ran out the door. On the street, many people, carrying spears and knives, were marching towards the local despot Wu's house.

They soon had the bully's compound surrounded. Someone scaled the wall and opened the big compound gate. Brandishing their spears and knives, the crowd surged in. A few minutes later, they took the local despot Wu out. Now a prisoner, the dirty tyrant looked very meek although occasionally he threw a furtive glance at his captors with defiance.

Everybody was talking about it. "Good," people said. "Our revolution is won. Tomorrow we can proclaim a Soviet government."

I looked all over for my father, but I couldn't find him. I began shouting his name.

Our friend Hua-kao ran up to me. "Your father will be back soon," he said. "Let's go to the temple."

The temple was jammed with people. Around midnight, my father and our relation Lai Ho-yun finally came back.

"Tomorrow we'll be a Soviet," Ho-yun said.

"What's a Soviet?" I asked him. "I thought we were Communists."

"So you want to be a Communist, do you, youngster? Like father, like son! I don't think there'll be much question about it, once you're old enough!" Ho-yun hugged me to him. "You're pretty sharp, young fellow. Do you know what Communist Party means?"

"The Communist Party overthrows the landlords," I said.

"That's right," said Ho-yun. "The Communist Party plans for the happiness of the poor. The Soviet works for them."

The next day a Soviet government was formed. A Land Reform Committee, a Women's Committee, a Children's Corps and a Youth Vanguard were also organized. The Red Spear Society became the Red Auxiliary Second Regiment. Hua-kao was appointed commander and my father was made the regiment's political commissar.

Shortly afterwards, the regiment was sent to destroy some landlords' fortresses in the east district, and I went along.

This was my first lesson in Red Army life. Young and short, I was afraid they wouldn't let me go, so I tried to act very grown-up. My father marched at the head of the column. I followed right behind him, my too-big shoes slapping rhythmically like a ballad singer's accompaniment. I tried to match my father's large strides, but I kept falling behind. Every once in a while I had to run to close the gap. My father had only to hear my rapid clippety-clop and he knew I had been lagging again. Each time he turned his head to look at me, I stared back at him innocently, as if nothing had happened.

It was all right for a while, but keeping up became more and more of an effort. At last my father said:

"Go on home. You're too small to make even a good stepping stone."

I pouted, but wouldn't go.

"I said go back and I mean it!" My father's face grew dark.

Grumbling, I turned and walked the other way. But the moment he took his eyes off me, I slipped in among the ranks. Somehow, a few minutes later, he spotted me again and unceremoniously chased me away. This time he watched me.

I was furious, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. Squatting by the side of the road, I looked on as all the men of our village, in high spirits, swung past. It nearly killed me. Luckily, someone called my father and he had to go back to the front ranks. I was able to sneak in among the others again and continue with the march.

It began to snow heavily, and the wind blew hard. Everyone burrowed his head in his shoulders. About noon, when my father walked towards the rear to make his inspection, he discovered me again. He still wanted me to go home. I said I'd freeze to death but I wouldn't leave. When he saw how stubborn I was, he took off his thin tunic and gave it to me to cover my head with. Though I insisted that I wasn't cold, my ears and face felt as if they were being slashed with knives, and I couldn't stop my teeth from chattering.

My cousin, Hua-kuan, intervened. "Leave him with me," he urged. "I'll take care of him."

My father looked at me for a couple of minutes, then returned to his position at the head of the column.

After marching all day and all night, we reached South Village of Eight *Li* District and got ready to surround the Coiled Dragon Fortress and the Li Mountain Fortress. First we marched into Li Family Village, six *li* west of the Li Mountain Fortress. It was just daybreak, and the mercenary landlord forces in the village were still fast asleep. A few shots from our old muskets and they ran like scared rabbits.

We decided to establish regimental headquarters here. Our troops went up the mountain to encircle the fortress.

Hua-kuan acted as cook; he slaughtered a pig and prepared the food. I boiled the water. In the kindling pile I noticed a leather strap. I pulled it out and found it attached to a rifle. I was overjoyed.

At noon, when Hua-kuan brought the food to our troops on the mountain, he told my father about the rifle. My father sent someone down to bring it up and let him have a look at it. I tailed along with the rifle. Our regiment's commander Hua-kao examined it and said to my father

with a smile: "Good. Now our regiment has a modern weapon."

My father said I should go back to headquarters and leave the rifle with him. I refused to part with it. Only when he threatened to smack me for disobeying orders did I scamper away.

In the spring of 1929, our regiment moved to a small village north of Yucha River, where we were to stop any landlord mercenaries from coming out of their mountain fortresses and attacking our Soviet area. By then we had captured nine rifles. Higher headquarters had also issued two automatics for the use of the regimental commander and political commissar.

Once, when they weren't home, I took one of the pistols out to play with. It was loaded but I didn't know it. The thing went off with a bang and killed an old yellow ox belonging to one of the peasants. Scared out of my wits I ran and told our Supply Chief. He was a fine fellow who was always very good to all the "young imps" in our regiment. When he saw what a state I was in, he didn't know whether to laugh or be angry.

"You young imps — what a headache!" he said. "That ox is going to cost us fourteen silver dollars." He went off to find the owner.

Shortly after, my father returned. When he learned what had happened, he was furious. He put me under arrest and wouldn't give me anything to eat. He said I absolutely had to go home.

Though I felt terrible, I didn't cry. I knew my father was a strong man who hated the sight of tears. I've certainly made a mess of things this time, I thought miserably. What will I do if he really orders someone to escort me home?

Just then, Commander Hua-kao returned. He criticized me briefly, and said from now on I simply must listen to orders, then he let me go. Was I happy! I hurried to set the cauldron on the fire. But before the water even boiled, my father came looking for me. He was still angry.

"I've told you time and again that you're too small. All you do is make trouble. I wanted you to wait a couple of years, but you just won't listen. . . ."

"I kept up with the regiment last year," I pleaded. "Surely I'll be even better this year. I didn't know your gun was loaded, or I wouldn't have touched it. I promise to be very good from now on, and listen to everything you tell me. Isn't that enough?"

At that moment, Hua-kao rolled in with a whole crowd. They all wanted me to sing. I guessed they had come to help me out. I glanced at my father, then stepped forward and sang:

The first month brings the New Year,
In our house we've neither flour nor rice,
Our clothing is tattered, we've got nothing nice,
— *Na hai yo*, our clothing is tattered, we've got nothing nice.

The rich dress warm and in style,
They've no end of fish and meat,
How delicious it smells, grilling over the hot coals,
— *Na hai yo*, how delicious it smells, grilling over the hot coals.

That song has a verse for every month and I sang them all, working up energy as I went along, adding dramatic gestures. By the time I finished the twelfth month I was panting and drenched in sweat. Everyone was laughing heartily. I noticed my father twist his head to hide a smile.

When he turned back to me, his face was stern. "Starting tomorrow, in addition to your regular duties, you're to learn to read and write two new words a day," he said. "If you make any more trouble, I'll send you home immediately."

I promised fervently that I would be good.

Half a month later we were incorporated into the Tenth Red Division. Hua-kao and the men were transferred to the Twenty-eighth Regiment. My father was assigned to Army headquarters.

Because of my age, I was put in the Youth Auxiliary. There were thirty or forty of us "young imps," who helped out doing various light odd jobs. We weren't issued guns, and except when on the march we attended literacy and political courses. We learned what was meant by classes, why the poor were poor, why the rich were rich. . . . Those basic revolutionary precepts made a deep impression on me. I was more determined than ever to go with the revolution.

A week or so later, my father came to see me. He said he had been assigned to work in the rear. He wanted me to go with him. I refused. He said if I went with him he would send me to school.

"No," I said. "Life is much more exciting here, and I'm studying every day already. No school could teach as much as I'm learning in the Red Army. It's a big school in itself."

Seeing that I couldn't be persuaded, my father didn't insist, but he made me promise to write him a letter once a month.

"You go on back, papa," I said. "I'll do my duties well. You can rely on me."

He left. But he soon returned with a pair of cloth shoes he had just bought. He put them on my feet himself. Stroking my head, he gazed at my face. "Be sure to listen to what the comrades tell you," he urged.

I said I would. For some reason I began to cry.

There were tears in my father's eyes too, but they didn't fall. He turned and said a few words to my superior officer, then he went away. That was the last time I ever saw my beloved, respected father who reared me so strictly and loved me so dearly.

In 1932 I was wounded and sent to rest in the rear. There I heard that my father was travelling west with the Red Fourth Front Army. Later, on the Long March in 1935, my unit linked up with the Red Fourth Front Army in Chinghai Province. I asked everyone about my father. Finally, some comrades told me. My father had been killed in Szechuan.

My grief was unbearable. I slipped away from the village and sat down beneath a big tree and wept aloud. My father's death reminded me that I hadn't heard a word from my mother and the rest of the family in years. The more I cried the worse I felt.

Suddenly I realized that someone was standing at my side. Turning, I saw that it was our division's Communist Party secretary. Rubbing my eyes, I tried to stand, but he held me down. Then he sat down beside me, stroking my head and speaking to me soothingly.

"Don't cry," he said to me at last. "We've got guns in our hands. We'll make the Kuomintang reactionaries pay their bloody debts!" He took my hand and pulled me to my feet. "Let's go back. Your comrades are waiting for you."

Through the dark, I returned with this kindly comrade to my unit. Our great Party loved me with a father's warmth. My father had fallen, but the Party was educating and raising me to maturity.

A few days later, along with everyone else, I again shouldered my knapsack. Setting off on the march my father, an old Communist, had been unable to finish, I strode forward!

Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustration by Tsao Chen-feng

Still Life (57.5 cm. × 64 cm.)
Painting in the traditional style
by Wang Ko-yi

HUANG HSIN-TING

Forest of Rustling Reeds

It was 1928. The July weather was warm. Around the village of Sungchia, Mienyang County, Hupeh Province, the reeds were dense as a wall, blocking out any breeze. The setting sun was blood-red. Flocks of mosquitoes buzzed irritably above the reeds like a cloud of smoke. From the distance came occasional shots. Was it the Kuomintang's "Security Corps" murdering again, or only hunters shooting wild ducks? People gathered uneasily at the western end of the village. Standing on tiptoes they peered beyond the reeds.

Since the setback the revolution had suffered the year before, the poor peasants had been living under the rule of the White Terror. Some time ago, news came that the Communists had returned to the neighbourhood. They made contacts with the impoverished, killed the despots monopolizing the fishing trade and divided up the fishing areas among the poor. This made flowers blossom in the poor people's hearts. My father became active again too. He went from door to door, every night, seeking information.

Now, also drawn to the western end of the village by the shots, he listened carefully with his head cocked. I stood beside him, glancing at his face now and then, trying to guess whether this meant good luck or calamity.

Suddenly a man ran towards us, shouting, "A Communist has arrived in Touhu Village. They're giving him a joyous welcome. I saw it with my own eyes. I've just come from there!"

Father quickly stopped him and looked around cautiously. "Stand guard at the entrance to the village," he said to Chen Shih-yuan, the girl beside him. "Warn us if you see Sung Yu-ching!" Then he asked the man to tell all the details.

"How wonderful it will be if the inspector can come to Sungchia Village!" said the people.

"Inviting him over would be easy enough," said others. "But the Kuomintang Security Corps is only seven miles away. We'd have to be prepared for anything."

"We'd have to be responsible for his safety if he came. We couldn't let anything happen to him," said Sung Yu-fa.

"We've been waiting for the Communist Party every day. Now, its representative has arrived at last. Why not ask him to come over at once?" the villagers cried.

We chose two people on the spot to go and make contact.

At sunset the next day I went to wait by the lake west of the village. Chen Shih-yuan was already there. Soon a big crowd gathered. Everyone gazed eagerly across the lake and said anxiously, "Why hasn't the inspector come yet?"

It was nearly ten at night when we heard rustling sounds among the reeds. Soon a little boat drew near. Father jumped ashore first. He was followed by a man in a long gown. The man's right hand was thrust into a pocket at his waist; in his left hand he held a white cloth bundle. I couldn't make out his features in the dark. We crowded around him as if he were a long-lost relative as he walked to the village. Several alert young men immediately started a guard patrol on the village outskirts.

A kerosene lamp illuminated the room. Around a table sat the inspector, Sung Yu-fa and Sung Pin-cheng. Men and women packed the room. All eyes were on the inspector. He looked very young in the lamplight—like an intelligent student. He couldn't have been more than twenty

or so. Someone mumbled a few words I couldn't hear, and then said, "Now let's ask the inspector to speak to us."

The inspector stood up, placed his book on the table and began. "The Communist Party is against feudal power, the reactionaries, the landed gentry and local despots. It is the Party of the poor people. We poor people should work with the Party." Then he told us what we should do and how to do it.

In conclusion, he asked us to organize ourselves. We elected some temporary administrators.

"Later, we'll form a regular Soviet government here," he told us.

Our Peasants' Association, Red Guards, Women's Committee, Children's Corps, and Youth Vanguard were all reactivated.

After the meeting we took him to his next destination in a little boat.

The work in our village started in a big way. The poor fishermen quickly went into action and divided up all the movable property of the wealthy despot, Sung Yu-ching. Membership in Red Guards and Youth Vanguard expanded every day. They posted sentries and patrols and examined strangers. We were all going strong.

One day, Sung Pin-cheng confided to me: "The Party has decided to set up a Communist Youth League in Sungchia Village. Do you want to join?"

I jumped with joy. "Of course! When can I join and how?"

He laid a restraining hand on my arm. "Don't you go babbling, you young imp. It is a secret."

I quieted down immediately, but my heart burned like fire. That night, Pin-cheng took me to the cemetery at the western end of the village. There, Chen Shih-yuan and I pledged our allegiance to the League. I found out later that Yu-fa and Pin-cheng had already joined the Communist Party not long before.

One day that winter a reactionary gang of a hundred or so men came to the village. We had been warned by the district the night before, so our administrative personnel

had all been able to get away. Since I was too young to be suspected, I was left behind to watch the enemy.

The moment they arrived in the village, the reactionaries began arresting people, pillaging and setting fire to houses. They cut off the head of a Communist whom they had arrested from another village and hung it on a little tree in the cemetery. Sungchia was turned into a hell on earth. Everywhere was tragic weeping; everywhere were ashes and embers. We buried our hatred in our hearts.

The person who led the way for the enemy was one of my distant relatives. Because he knew me and since I was young, it was easy for me to get close to the enemy. I was allowed to deliver tea and water to them in their headquarters and their living quarters, and pass their sentries. I made a mental note of everything I saw.

Next morning at daybreak, I took a basket and a sickle and pretended to cut reeds along the shore. It was the dry season. There was no water in the lake. I slipped in among the reeds, made a few turns and, when I was sure the enemy could not see me any longer, started to run. I headed for Koulanta, where the Party administrators told me to go before they left. Koulanta was the base of the district guerrillas. I ran the whole distance of several miles without pausing for breath. I told the guerrilla leader the number of enemy soldiers in our village, what arms they had and where they were staying. That night I went back to the village with a basket of reeds.

My heart pounded all next day since I knew the guerrillas would attack after dark. As soon as night fell I climbed a ladder and looked over the wall of our compound. It was dark everywhere. Wind rustled among the reeds. Not until eight or nine o'clock did the noisy enemy soldiers finally quiet down and sleep. Suddenly, from the east came a shot which made me jump. Then all the dogs in the village started to bark and the enemy soldiers began shouting and running about and shooting aimlessly. From the east and west of the village came shouts of "Charge, comrades! Kill the Security Corps! . . ." In the dark, it was impossible to tell how many men were attacking.

The reactionaries were frightened out of their wits. They ran wildly and fired at random. From my position on the wall I yelled at them and hurled stones and broken bricks which I had prepared during the day. Finally they all crammed into the three rooms which served as their headquarters and swept the road with a machine-gun. Our guerrillas advanced quietly now, throwing home-made grenades. This went on for about an hour, then all was still. We did not have enough guns to overcome the enemy's organized resistance, so our guerrillas silently withdrew.

The next morning I was wakened by a hubbub of shouting and weeping. Peeping through a crack in the door, I saw that enemy soldiers, carrying big and small bundles of loot, were forcing the villagers with whips and butts of their rifles to go with them. I hid in a stack of hay behind my house until the noise died away. I found that all of the villagers except old people and children had been taken away. The village was as lonely as an abandoned temple.

After the enemy left, our administrative personnel came back again. Soon, most of the villagers who had been taken away escaped and returned home. After this trouble, the villagers became more steadfast than ever in the revolutionary fight against the enemy. Many joined the Red Guards. Everyone asked when a Soviet government could be set up.

One day the inspector came and said, "A Soviet can be formed right now, if you really want it." We held a meeting, and elected the village Soviet government, which promptly started land reform and dividing the fishing areas.

At that time, the struggle along the borders between the White and Red areas was very cruel. The enemy often raided villages and killed innocent peasants and burned down their houses. Our side used to attack the enemy's district and township governments and remove local despots and cruel landlords in the night. In these struggles, we gradually increased our stock of guns. Our weapons originally were only small knives, red tasselled spears, swords, and home-made cannons. Later we had the blacksmiths make us shotguns and revolvers. We could put up

quite a fight with those weapons. Sometimes we took on well-equipped enemy forces which came to "encircle and annihilate" us.

During the low water season in 1929, when the enemy's Security Division of Hupeh Province moved into Fengkouchen, an enemy regiment came to Chahokou, ten miles west of our village. On orders from the county, we organized a detachment of forty or so Party and League members to harass the enemy in Chahokou. Two inspectors (we used to call all Party members sent from the higher communist organizations "inspectors") were assigned to be our leaders. Each carried a revolver, only one of which was in working order. They had three live bullets between them and one dud. The rest of us were equipped with red tasselled spears and shotguns. As leader of the district Youth Vanguard, I manned our home-made cannon.

At dusk, we boarded five boats and sailed due west. A crescent moon shone dimly through the night mist. The lake was grey. Not a breath of wind was stirring. The forest of reeds stood very still. The soft rippling at the prows made the whole atmosphere even more tranquil.

None of us was tense. We were accustomed to night raids. Most of the talk was about capturing more modern weapons. Our high spirits rather worried the inspectors. They warned us repeatedly, "Our purpose today is only to harass the enemy. You must listen to orders. We can't win a direct assault."

We went ashore after sailing about seven miles and then walked about three miles. It was past eleven when we halted near Chahokou. Two scouts were sent to find out whether there were sentries. They came back soon.

"The enemy haven't built any fortifications, and there's only one sentry at the east end of town."

"I'll take two men with me to get rid of him," said one of the inspectors. "The rest of you follow later."

We advanced a hundred or so paces quietly, carrying our cannon and gunpowder. Then we stopped and listened with bated breath. After what seemed to be a long time we heard a frightened cry. "Help! The Communists—"

The voice stopped suddenly. But the shout had roused the enemy. They fired when we rushed forward. We threw ourselves on the ground. Then our cannon was loaded with gunpowder and iron balls. Orange fire sparked and there was a crash like a collapsing building. This silenced the enemy for a moment. Then they rained shells all around us. "Withdraw!" shouted the inspector. We moved back along the dyke about a third of a mile and watched the fun.

The enemy fired furiously for more than an hour, without daring to come out. When they seemed to begin relaxing a little, the inspectors ordered us to give them another blast of our cannon. This provoked a stream of enemy bullets like water pouring through a breach in a dyke. We didn't let the enemy have a bit of rest that night.

Gradually the sky turned light. From the town the sound of men and horses was heard. Fengkouchen was in a turmoil. At sunrise, a small detachment of enemy soldiers emerged. They came towards us timidly, shooting all the way. We withdrew, in good order. They kept a fixed distance between us. If we slowed down, they did the same. After a couple of miles they quietly turned back. We stopped and presented them with another blast from our cannon, and ran after them, shouting. They immediately fled towards Fengkouchen much faster than they had come, with us following in hot pursuit. There was no sign of them when we reached Fengkouchen.

"They must have run along the river. After them!" ordered the inspectors.

We ran about a mile when we saw a fleet of boats on the river. "The enemy! Get them!" we shouted. We ran quicker than the boats could sail, and they were soon within range. I rammed the cannon with as much gunpowder and iron balls as possible. The explosion caused a whirlwind and threw up waves three feet high, making the boats weave like drunkards. Enemy soldiers who were hit screamed and wailed.

"Fire at the bank," howled the enemy officers. The last boat in the convoy was suddenly cast adrift; the others sailed even faster with the help of all the poles and oars on board.

When the enemy fleet was far away the inspectors ordered us to stop. Next, we secured the drifting boat. There was no one on board but it was laden with packages of all sizes. The enemy had abandoned their loot to save their lives at the last moment. We took the boat to Chahokou and returned the things to their owners.

Forty of us had driven away a whole regiment! Our morale soared. After that, we often attacked the enemy in the night, and captured many weapons. At Yangshuihu alone, we won more than twenty modern rifles.

Our guerrilla forces expanded. We set up a district guerrilla battalion and a county guerrilla regiment. Gradually, our county and other Soviets linked up to form one large area.

Translated by Yu Fan-chin
Illustration by Tsao Chen-feng

A bent branch is often laden with fruit, a tame peacock often has a beautiful tail, a gentle horse is often a fast runner and a simple person is often a learned scholar.

— Tibetan Proverb

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 ruled by FENG LAN-CHIH, landlord, usurer and village head. Feng tyrannizes over the local people and hates 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.

In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek betrays the revolution and the Kuomintang attacks the Communist Party. Yun-tao is

arrested and imprisoned. News of this kills his grandmother, and Yen, falling ill, sells his best fields to enable Chiang-tao and Chu Chung to go to see Yun-tao. They find him sentenced to life imprisonment.

Despite the White Terror, the revolutionaries work on. One of Chia's pupils, CHANG CHIA-CHING, leads the peasants in his area in a harvest uprising. Chiang-tao works for the Party and falls in love with YEN PING, daughter of a teacher and distant relative in Paoting. Then he is sent back to Soching to organize resistance to a new tax imposed by the reactionary authorities.

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Chiang-tao came back from town with shoes caked in mud. Before going home, he went to look for his father. Yen was not with the Carter, nor was he by the pear clamp. Chiang-tao went home and found him sitting smoking in silence. This was a weakness Yen had. If there was anything on his mind, he would hang his head and smoke for hours at a stretch. Now he glanced at Chiang-tao and asked: "What brings you home so early this year? Have you urgent business?"

"There is something," Chiang-tao told him. "It's said the people want to start resisting taxes and levies. What do you think, dad?"

Yen stared straight ahead for some time. "Resist taxes and levies, eh? H'm, we should have done that long ago. How is a man to live in times like these? Fighting every other day, taxes on everything. Since we lost our Treasure Trove, the few *mou* of sandy soil we have left don't produce enough to pay the grain tax. If not for my trowel, we'd have been eaten by dogs. How is a man to live?"

Chiang-tao thought: "Mr. Chia was right!" He said: "Our people say we should start by resisting the pig tax."

"What tax is that?" asked Yen.

"They take a dollar seventy cents for each pig killed, as well as its bristles, tail and guts."

"Just opposing that won't get us very far," said Yen. "What good will it do?"

"It's only a beginning. Once folk get going, they'll oppose taxes and levies, rent and high rates of interest — all that will follow."

"Ah, the main thing is to fight rents and high interest. There's hardly a soul in this village who doesn't rent Feng Lan-chih's land or owe him money. Fix that, and we'll all make shift somehow."

"The first step is to rouse everyone. Once they're roused, there's nothing we can't do."

Yen was infected by his enthusiasm. "Count me in!" he cried. "I used to be sorry I hadn't gone to the north. I saw us all starving next year. They say that in Changkang, south of the river, the peasants raided the fields during the autumn harvest and shared out the grain of the rich. They were led by a Party member called Chang Fei."

"We are led by the Communist Party too," said Chiang-tao.

His father asked: "If we have a revolution, can we get back our Treasure Trove?"

"Sure! The fight against taxes, rent and usury is an economic struggle, but from that we'll turn to the political struggle. We'll arm the workers and peasants to seize power. When that time comes, we'll get back our Treasure Trove."

Yen could almost visualize that day.

While they were talking in the inner room, Mrs. Yen in the hall on the other side of the curtain caught the word "revolution." This expression was by no means new to her: it had been constantly on Yun-tao's lips and since then Chiang-tao had often used it. She started trembling and burst into the room.

"Don't talk like that!" she cried. "Can't we have a few days of peace?"

"What's the matter, mum?" asked Chiang-tao.

"Just learn to pocket your pride! What can folk like us do, we who've lived in a small way for generations? You must swallow your pride!"

"I've swallowed my pride all my life," objected Yen. "But what good has it done me? Yun-tao. . . ." His voice broke. "Yun-tao's been shut up in prison by the diehards and we've lost our Treasure Trove! How are we to live? If the King of Hell decides you're to die at midnight, who dares spare you till dawn?"

Mrs. Yen shed tears and beat with both hands on her knees. "Don't say that! Don't talk like that! What can we do against fate?"

Yen sighed. "I nearly died of illness. For a paltry sum Feng Lan-chih bought the land that cost us a lifetime of sweat and blood. He's seized our grain, he's choking the life out of us! . . ." He ground his teeth savagely. "We must get our Treasure Trove back!" After Yun-tao's imprisonment and the loss of their precious land, Yen had fallen seriously ill. Even today the thought of these disasters set him shuddering as if a rat were gnawing at his vitals. The mention was enough to fan his smouldering resentment into fierce flame. He could not contain himself.

Seeing his father in this mood, Chiang-tao urged: "Let's make trouble for him! Let's have it out with the dog!"

But Yen faltered, thinking: "Because of the revolution, Yun-tao is shut up for life where he can't see the sun. Now Chiang-tao wants to join the revolution too. . . ." In silence he made up his mind not to risk his neck in any movement.

Mrs. Yen was muttering in the hall: "Have it out with him? How can you? Why not go about your work quietly till you've graduated from the normal school and are a teacher too?" She raised the curtain to see if Chiang-tao was listening, then dropped it to go on: "They say teachers are quite well paid. When that time comes, we'll find you a wife. I'm longing to hold a plump grandson in my arms!"

To Yen, there was sense in what his wife was saying. "Pocket your pride!" he advised his son. "Let's live like peasants without troubling our heads about such things. Even if there's hope, how long will we have to wait?" He turned and went out to the clamp to see to his pears.

When Chiang-tao found his father unreceptive, he put on the coarse jacket his mother had sewn for him and the cloth shoes and white socks. As he started out, she turned to ask: "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to see Uncle Chung."

He went down the path behind the house trudging through drifts of snow to Chu's house in Soching. In the yard he found a man in a grey army uniform crouching by the sty feeding the pig. He was wondering who it could be when he recognized Ta-kuei. With a smile he went up to him.

Ta-kuei was twenty-five or six at this time. Serving as a soldier ever since Feng Lan-chih had him conscripted, he had grown into a tall strong fellow. He had sturdy limbs, wide-set eyes, a bare upper lip. His grey padded uniform was shabby

and tattered, and he had knotted a blue towel round his head. When he saw Chiang-tao he put down the swill and stared for some minutes. Then he clapped his hands. "In all these years, brother, you've grown!" His voice was gruff.

Chiang-tao laughed. "So have you. Have you asked leave to come home for New Year?"

"Not I. I'm a deserter from the front!"

"Why should you desert? Aren't you a corporal?"

"What's the use of being a corporal all your life? Why should I kill myself for them? Much better come home and be my own master. Why should I fight all the warlords' battles for them?"

"You're right there, brother. I was hoping you'd come back. What's it been like all these years in the army?"

"Not so bad. You get plenty of exercise. . . ." Ta-kuei's jaw tightened, he clenched his fists, stood astride and whirled round so that his bones cracked. "Apart from learning to drill and read a little, I've learned to use a machine-gun. That ought to come in useful. . . ."

Chu Chung, who had heard Chiang-tao's voice, came out now stroking his beard. He stood on the steps and smiled. "So Chiang-tao is back! Come and have a seat inside. I want to talk to you." He came down the steps and led Chiang-tao in, then swept the *kang* and made him sit down. "Tell me first," he said, "what Chu Teh and Mao Tse-tung are doing. What's happening in the Chingkang Mountains?" On their way back from Tsinan, Chiang-tao had told him about the progress of the revolution in the country as a whole, and he had forgotten nothing.

"The Red Army is going strong," said Chiang-tao. "Last year Chu Teh and Mao Tse-tung led the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army to Kiangsi. They occupied Juikin and set up a central Soviet and revolutionary base there. Their guerrillas are fighting in Kiangsi and Fukien. The spark will soon burst into flame!"

"Splendid!" cried Chu. "I haven't heard such good news for a long time, not since Yun-tao was put in prison. I've been eating my heart out, I can tell you! The hotter that flame, the better, I say. When will it reach us here?"

"There's not a chance," said Ta-kuei gloomily. "Not with the Yangtse and Yellow River between."

"The Yangtse and Yellow River can't stop this," said his father. "This is something in men's hearts."

"That's absolutely true, uncle," agreed Chiang-tao. "Will Ta-kuei be staying at home now?"

"I've been worried ever since Yun-tao was put in gaol," said Chu. "So I sent a letter telling him to come home. He was spending all his time on the battlefield, and bullets don't have eyes." Chu had a booming voice like a bronze bell. Though old now, he was still strong and ruddy-faced, with a brownish tufted beard. His small round eyes were very bright.

Chiang-tao changed the subject. "That's a fat pig you've got there, uncle."

"Not it. We haven't enough to fill our own bellies, let alone fatten a pig. But never mind that. When the festival comes and everyone's eating pork, if we have meat too, that's good enough for us. But if our kids can only look on with watering mouths while others eat, that's no good."

"They say this year there's a tax on killing pigs," Chiang-tao told him. "You can't slaughter pigs at home."

"Is that right?" Chu looked taken aback. "Is that official? From south to north, from Peking to the northeast, I never heard of a tax on killing pigs at New Year."

Chiang-tao took two steps towards him and leaned forward to whisper: "Feng Lan-chih has bought the rights to the tax for this district. It's one dollar seventy cents for every pig, not to mention the pig's bristles, tail and guts."

Chu was silent with a set face for some minutes. At last he raised his head slowly and hissed: "So . . . Feng. . . ."

Chiang-tao stamped. "Yes! Feng!"

Ta-kuei smashed his hands together. "So now we can't even kill pigs for New Year!"

Chu had learned to slaughter pigs in the north, and had his own hook, club and other tackle. When the country folk had any wedding, funeral or festivity, they did not have to go to a butcher. He had brought these instruments back to Soching and taught Ta-kuei his skill. Indeed Ta-kuei had been looking forward to this when he heard that killing pigs was forbidden. This was a blow. Chu sighed. "That bastard again. . . ." The mere sound of Feng Lan-chih's name sickened him.

"To hell with the consequences!" cried Chiang-tao. "I'm going home to tell my dad that we must kill a pig. It's not the money I'm thinking of, nor the pork; but we've got to stick up for our rights!"

Chu smote his fists together. "Nephew, you're right! If that's the case, come on! We'll go and talk it over with your Uncle Ming."

Chu strode ahead, followed by Chiang-tao and Ta-kuei. They went to the pine-clad graveyard north of the village, in front of which stood a three-roomed cottage with a row of tall poplars before it. The north wind was wailing through the branches. They found Chu Ming with closed eyes when they went in, twisting cord for the reed mats he made. Sitting down on the doorstep, Chu Chung told him about the pig tax. Chu Ming's face had grown long and lean. After overtaxing his strength for many years, he was nothing but skin and bones. He lowered his head and screwed up his sightless eyes. "Let me think this over," he muttered. "We should do something, but what?" Since they lost their lawsuit, he had felt it essential to be patient and cautious in everything. The impulse of a moment could deprive a man of land and home. It could mean not merely a miscalculation, but a life of bitterness.

"I say, do it!" urged Chu Chung. "We can't let Feng Lan-chih spit in our faces."

Ta-kuei put one foot on the *kang*, rolled up his sleeves and brandished a small pipe. "He can't do anything worse to us than he has done. You take the lead, Chiang-tao, and I'll follow you."

Chu Chung blinked and said: "All right! But we need more people. We had twenty-eight families to fight that lawsuit, but still we lost."

"We can't win lawsuits," said Chiang-tao, who was so pleased that Chu Chung and Ta-kuei were willing to join in that his face was beaded with sweat. He went on rapidly, scarcely pausing for breath. "How about this? Suppose one tells two, and those two another three, till we're in touch with all the poor households who keep pigs. Word will spread from village to village, from market-town to market-town. There's strength in numbers. We'll move into action so fast that he has no time to stop us. A fat lot of taxes he'll collect!"

This made good sense to Chu Ming. He threw back his head and blinked his sightless eyes thoughtfully.

Ta-kuei asked: "Can we pull it off?"

Standing astride, erect, Chiang-tao raised both fists and declared emphatically: "One man can't stop a tiger, but five men can kill the beast. Ten men can't hide the sun, but a crowd

can shut out the sky. We'll rise and scatter with such a hullabaloo that he won't be able to catch the ringleaders. What can he do?"

Chu Chung could not help chuckling at the attitude Chiang-tao had struck. Red in the face, he said: "Aha, that's fine! That's a clever way you've thought up, nephew. You need money to fight a lawsuit, but not for this. After striking we'll scatter, and he won't know who was behind it. I can see study makes a man wide-awake and more sharp-witted than others. We stupid clodhoppers have acted like fools. If you'd been with us we could have beaten Feng in the courts."

Chu Ming was smiling. "Feng Lan-chih is poison," he said. "If he stands at the cross-roads, everyone on the street trembles. No one dares utter a sound. Ah, we were fools to spend good money for nothing. Let's take Chiang-tao's advice, I say. We'll see how things go."

"See how things go?" Chiang-tao chuckled. "Take my word for it, we'll go from victory to victory!"

For years Chu Ming had been unable to express all the bitterness in his heart. For half a year after they lost the lawsuit, he had not stepped out of the house. He had no one to whom to tell his wrongs, and finally rage had blinded him. His wife had died of anger, his brother had gone to the northwest, he had not been able to keep his daughters at home. So now he was all alone. Since losing his land his only way to fill his belly was by making mats and selling sesame cakes. All day long, screwing up his eyes, he stood fumbling at his mat frame. Winter and summer alike, late at night he took his greasy box to the cross-roads to cry his wares. His long-drawn-out cries carried through the night for seven or eight *li* across the plain. Passers-by were often bewitched by the melancholy sound, and sat down to smoke a pipe before going on. Before long their mouths started watering. They simply had to buy his cakes. As time went by, his voice came to serve as a landmark in the night.

He was asked: "Why must you sell in this freezing weather? How much money can you make?"

He raised his head and stared blindly at the sky. In those long black watches, he was not so set on doing business as eager to escape from loneliness. At home he would lie awake or mutter in his dreams: "Is there no end to the night?"

In those bitter years in Soching, a fire was blazing in the hearts of the destitute and wretched. Since the loss of the lawsuit, Chu Ming had lived in this cottage. In the room on the west were stacked reeds and hemp brought from Paiyangtien. The room on the east with its earthen *kang* was his bedroom, and outside the gate were graves hundreds of years old. Every summer the grass in the graveyard grew waist high, and countless insects chirped in the undergrowth.

At night he would lie on the *kang*, listening to the soughing of the wind through the poplars. At dawn, throwing off his quilt, he would hear birds chirping in the trees. In winter he heard the howling of the north wind. It often struck him that, if not for the trees at his gate, he would be unutterably lonely.

Chiang-tao pitied the blind old man with all his heart. Chu Ming had struggled all his life, but because he lacked the leadership of the Party and had not organized or aroused the masses, he had been worsted. Now he had not an inch of land of his own.

When Chu Ming heard this new plan to oppose Feng Lan-chih and remembered the ruin he had brought on himself by crossing the landlord, he started to shudder. But in this struggle, it seemed, they would not use force as Chu Kung had done, nor yet go to court or spend money: they would simply organize and arouse the people. He gritted his teeth and said fiercely: "Count me in! I don't care if it kills me! I may be old, but I'll go along with you."

Since Chu Ming was beginning to be convinced, Chiang-tao explained the position further, after which he asked Ta-kuei to go out with him. When their footsteps had died away, Chu Ming said to Chu Chung: "Brother, you've travelled widely. What do you think of Chiang-tao's scheme?"

"To my mind, Chiang-tao is an honest lad," said Chu Chung. "The Communist Party has deep roots and has spread far. . . ."

"Where are its roots?" Chu Ming interrupted to ask.

"Down south, in the Chingkang Mountains."

Chu Ming smacked his lips. "Can roots reach all the way here from the Chingkang Mountains?"

"The distance doesn't matter. It's like sweet potatoes or marrows. Their creepers are long and strike root wherever they go. Just think: Yun-tao joined the Communist Party, Chiang-tao has joined the Communist Party, many other people must have joined it too."

"They're supposed to be a good lot. But I'd like to ask to make sure."

"It's no use asking him. He wouldn't say. When we came back from Tsinan, I sounded him out several times in a roundabout way; but all he did was tell me some of the principles of revolution. He didn't say where their base was. Anyway, what they're doing is for us, for the poor."

Sunning themselves in the doorway, they talked frankly for some time, discussing the pig tax. Then Chu Chung dusted his clothes and made ready to leave. Chu Ming with his stick accompanied him. On the road Chu Ming said: "It's good that Ta-kuei is back. He's learned some sense and is a good talker. I heard his mother say you're thinking of finding him a wife."

"He's the right age," said Chu Chung. "Can you suggest any girl?"

"What about Chun-lan?"

Chu Chung threw back his head and said nothing. He was thinking of Yun-tao there in prison, that haggard face behind the iron bars and those great eyes filled with tears. He sighed. "Because of Yun-tao, I wouldn't want Ta-kuei to have Chun-lan."

Having said this, he was silent. Both felt sick at heart and close to tears. They were grieving for Yun-tao and for Chun-lan too. Chu Ming clamped his lips together and blinked thoughtfully. Two big tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Well," he said, "if Yun-tao is in gaol for life, what's to become of Chun-lan? What will she do if he never comes back? It's a difficult decision for us old folk. I don't think we should make Chun-lan wait any longer. Marry her to Ta-kuei!"

Chu Chung saw the truth of what he said. Chun-lan could not go on waiting for Yun-tao for ever.

28

When Chiang-tao and Ta-kuei left Chu Ming's house, the sun, like an orange, was shining through rifts in the clouds. The snow on the roofs was melting, to slither and flop from the eaves. The muddy footprints thawing on the road seemed black or grey freckles on the clear white snow.

Deep in conversation, they walked to Chu Hsing's house. After their defeat in the courts, Chu Hsing had sold his old house and moved into two small west rooms by Feng Hsi's threshing-floor. A small door in the east wall of this yard led to the outer courtyard of Feng Hsi's house, which had a large square gatehouse opening on to the road. To reach the threshing-floor, however, you passed not through the main gate but a wicket on the south made of willows surmounted with date thorns. Four mud walls surrounded this yard, and outside the western wall was the marsh where reeds grew in abundance.

Passing through the wicket-gate, Chiang-tao and Ta-kuei found Chu Hsing and his son, Ching, working at the stone roller. They had swept up all the drifted snow in the yard and piled grain stalks by the roller. Their faces were lathered with sweat.

"What are you doing?" asked Chiang-tao, surprised.

"Yes, what are you up to here?" said Ta-kuei.

Chu Hsing went on with his work. Turning the roller step by step, he smiled through narrowed eyes. "You'd never guess." Ching strained forward to tug without a word. He was a dark-faced boy of twelve or thirteen, as skinny as a monkey.

Chiang-tao looked up thoughtfully. "This is beyond me."

Chu Hsing stopped and took his pipe from his wallet, blowing it to see whether it was blocked or not. He filled it, struck a light and started to smoke.

"What are you trying to do, uncle?" asked Chiang-tao.

"In the autumn we collected this pile of stalks for cooking and heating the *kang* this winter. We left them stacked in the yard, and now they're a regular mess after dogs and cats have been on them and hens have roosted there. But I know what to do. I'm going to grind them soft, then mix them with mud and press them flat between boards. When they're dry, we'll build them into a wall. When we need fuel, we'll take one slab down and burn it. We'll have a wall and fuel at the same time, killing two birds with one stone. We've tried already, and when you use the bellows it burns quite well."

Chiang-tao pressed his lips together to hide a smile. He could hardly imagine anything more futile. Fancy grinding good stalks to pieces, mixing them with mud to make a wall, and then taking the wall down to burn! Why not simply burn

the stalks and have done with it? He asked: "Why don't you rest in the winter, uncle?"

Chu Hsing answered: "I have my reasons. On a clear day like this, how can I simply eat and loaf? I must get some work done. Besides, in winter the rich have stoves and their rooms are warm. But poor folk can't afford a fire, and stopping indoors you get cold. Take a turn of work and you feel as warm as fire. That's much better than sitting by the stove."

As he spoke, his thick lips did not seem to move. Only his short beard twitched. His almond-shaped eyes gleamed.

"Why don't you just pile these stalks neatly in the yard?" asked Chiang-tao. "Then you can take them to burn whenever you want."

"My way is better," protested Chu Hsing.

"But wouldn't it waste less energy?"

"Energy is meant for use. It's like a fountain-head. If you want it, it gushes out. If you don't, it doesn't. Look at Ta-kuei after a few years in the army. See how solid he is after all that drill and exercise! His arms are regular cross-beams."

"I believe you!" said Ta-kuei.

"Yes," said Chu Hsing. "It's not good for us poor folk to be soldiers, but it builds a man up."

"I've learned to use a machine-gun too," said Ta-kuei.

Chu Hsing smiled. "Yes. Just now machine-guns don't get us poor folk anywhere. When a girl cuts out nappies she has no use for them, but there they are ready when she wants them. A time may come when we need guns, and then you'll be prepared. To come back to what we were saying: In the snowy winter, a man could sit on the *kang* and smoke, taking it easy. But that's not as good as fixing up these stalks."

Chiang-tao said: "Although you work so hard, uncle, I don't see that it helps you have a better life."

Chu Hsing said: "You were born in the country, the son of a peasant, but anyone can see you're a student. You don't understand how peasants live."

Ta-kuei muttered: "An ox may be bigger than a camel, but it pulls carts all its life and ends up in the pot. It can never be a horse."

Chu Hsing missed the point of this remark. He said: "You're so seldom at home that you don't understand me. A peasant has different tasks in different seasons. Do I slack one day out of three hundred and sixty-five? As long as a man eats, he

must work. Only wastrels loaf. A wastrel doesn't live by the sweat of his brow: all he cares for is eating, dressing well, taking life easy. The more a man does this, the lazier he grows. Once an iron loom rusts, you can't weave on it any more."

Chu Hsing could keep himself busy from one end of the year to the other. His motto was: Never idle! He often said: "It's not providing food or clothes that makes a man poor, but not being able to devise ways and means." He spent his whole time devising ways and means. For instance, when his family still had twenty to thirty *mou* of land, his one thought was how to acquire sixty or seventy. According to him, a man with seventy or eighty *mou* was rich, and he racked his brains for a means of becoming rich. He had an ox, but because he meant to be rich he bought a cart which needed four oxen to haul it. His reason was that, if he bought a small cart, when he was rich and had plenty of draught animals he would have to buy a bigger cart and this small one would be useless. When he had nearly killed the ox by harnessing it to the heavy vehicle, he tied a thick rope to the cart and bent double to act as its yokefellow. When his ox was almost worn out, he was forced to sell the big cart and buy a small one. He was such a fool that he nearly killed himself too. He grew weak and haggard and his family lived a desolate life. After their unsuccessful lawsuit, he sold his house and some land. As he could no longer keep an ox, he sold the small cart too. To his mind, it was better to sell his house than his land, for the house could not produce crops while his fields could. But unfortunately these were bad years for farmers, and taxes were heavy. His crops were not sufficient to pay the grain tax. After thinking the matter over again and again, this winter he had sold his last few *mou* so as not to have to pay the tax on them.

Chiang-tao said: "I can't understand you, uncle. How could anyone so frugal and hard-working fight a lawsuit with Feng Lan-chih for three whole years?"

Chu Hsing drew himself up and said: "Each man has his different nature. Even an old sow grunts when squeezed against the wall. I wouldn't have done it for anyone else, but to get the better of Feng Lan-chih I'd sell my own son and daughter!"

"I just can't see it," said Chiang-tao.

"We farming folk have our own sense of justice. The year that Yun-tao was put into gaol, I heard that Chih-ho had sold his Treasure Trove and you wouldn't be able to go on with your schooling. I'd just made a dollar or so doing some odd jobs, and without going home for a meal I took the money straight to your father so that you could stay at school. Each man has his different nature."

Chiang-tao felt very touched. Mr. Chia had told him that it was the duty of Party members to help those who were oppressed to become class-conscious.

Chu Hsing took Chiang-tao and Ta-kuei inside, lifting the thick straw matting over the door. It was black as night inside. For in winter, to keep out the cold, Chu Hsing pasted several sheets of paper over the window, making the whole room murky. His wife on the *kang* was mending his padded gown.

"Is a gown as ragged as this worth mending?" asked Chiang-tao.

"It may be ragged, but it's an heirloom," said Chu Hsing. "It belonged to my father before me. At his death, he left it to me. My old man and I have worn it for a good forty years, and every year it is mended. I don't like to throw away the least scrap of cloth. Even if it's red or green I have it sewn on. Each extra layer of cloth means extra warmth." Indeed, with all its thicknesses, this gown weighed several dozen pounds.

In winter unless you work you feel the cold. Chu Hsing put on his padded gown and sat down on the *kang* with them to talk.

Chiang-tao said: "Uncle, I've heard that this year there's a tax on killing pigs."

"A tax on killing pigs? How much is it?"

"One dollar seventy cents, plus the pig's bristles, tail and guts."

Chu Hsing counted on his fingers. "A dollar seventy cents; the bristles are worth two dollars, and the tail and guts, reckoned as one pound of meat, can fetch twenty to thirty cents." He puffed out his thick lips and nodded. "No laughing matter!"

Chiang-tao drew closer to ask: "Do you know who's collecting this tax?"

"No. Who?"

"Our old enemy."

Chu Hsing stared. "Who's that?"

"Who do you think is our old enemy?"

Chu Hsing looked staggered. "You mean Feng Lan-chih?"

"Yes! I've just been talking it over with Uncle Chung. We're going to fight this tax and Feng Lan-chih — what do you say?"

Chu Hsing's wife had been listening quietly behind them. Now she glared and put in: "What? What's that you're going to do? Fight another lawsuit? You lost your pants in the last, but now you want to fight another." She reached out and jabbed her husband's forehead.

Ta-kuei gave a bellow of laughter.

Chu Hsing chuckled too. "That's the sort of woman she is! If the least thing crosses her, she starts to squawk. Can't you keep your voice down?"

"You make me so angry! You fool! You'd better keep your head down! You want to be tough, eh? You want to fight this and that. You won't get anywhere. You'll only end in trouble!"

"Never mind," muttered Chu. "In the end we shall settle old scores."

"I agree with you, uncle," said Chiang-tao. "As Uncle Chung says: He laughs best who laughs last. The Chus may always have been poor, but we've stood up all these generations for what's right."

Chu Hsing rose to his feet and said: "Those dogs have insulted us for generations, but we won't take it lying down." After a moment he asked: "But who'll give the lead?"

Ta-kuei pointed. "Chiang-tao here."

Chu Hsing nodded. "All right, we'll follow. We'll follow your lead."

From Chu Hsing's house Chiang-tao and Ta-kuei went to find Wu Pa, to ask him how the autumn harvest movement had started south of the river. Leaving East Street, they climbed Thousand *Li* Dyke. The weather was clear, with not a cloud in the sky nor a breath of wind. Crows were pecking at the snow-bound poplars, but flew off, cawing, when snow flopped to the ground. The young men walked east along the dyke.

Wu Pa's family had once lived south of the river. When the Huto changed its course, their house was flooded and crumbled. And when the Huto veered south, the site emerged to its north on what was then Thousand *Li* Dyke. His father had rebuilt their two-roomed mud cottage on the dyke. Now

the peach and pear trees around it had grown into an orchard, and the trunks of the poplars were several feet in circumference. Around the yard he had planted elms and willows, whose branches made a wall with a wicket-gate between. As Chiang-tao and Ta-kuei pushed open the gate, a dog ran out at them, barking. Ta-kuei hastily silenced it.

When Wu Pa heard voices, he did not stop to put down his tools but came straight out with an axe in his right hand and a chisel in his left. At his heels came his two sons: Hsiao-hsun, aged seventeen, and Hsiao-tun, aged twelve or thirteen. Hsiao-tun strolled across and caught the dog's neck between his knees.

"Who is it?" called Wu Pa.

"You'll know as soon as you see him," replied Ta-kuei. "This is Yun-tao's brother, Chiang-tao."

Wu Pa gave a start and looked him carefully over, chuckling. "So it's Chiang-tao. In the few years since last I saw you, you've grown up. I remember you as a boy, all over mud. Now that you're a young man there's not a speck of dust on you."

Chiang-tao laughed and asked: "Are you home for New Year, uncle?"

"Jobs like ours keep us busy from one end of the year to the other. We've only New Year to look forward to."

As they were speaking, Wu led them into his workshop. Clapping his hands, he cried: "Aha! So Chiang-tao is studying at a foreign-style school. You're the phoenix among crows. Come here and sit down." He made Chiang-tao and Ta-kuei sit on his work bench, and sent Hsiao-tun to fetch a pot of water.

Chiang-tao looked at his carpenter's tools and asked: "What are you making?"

"Don't talk about what I'm making! Since we lost the lawsuit that year, I've been working in the south. I sold all my land to live as a carpenter. I've just come home, and I'm knocking together a few sticks of furniture to raise money for the festival. We must make shift somehow!"

"That lawsuit was a terrible business," said Chiang-tao.

"It went on for three whole years! And from town to district I followed it." He raised his head to glance at Ta-kuei, then flushed a little and laughed.

Chiang-tao looked at the stick which Hsiao-hsun was planing, and asked: "What are you making?"

"He has nothing to do all day," said Wu Pa. "A lad in his teens who can't afford a schooling, he's learning carpentry from me, so that he'll be able to make a living. Hsiao-tun is going to farm. I was just showing him how to make a toy sword out of a willow branch. When we've painted it red and green it will sell for a few coppers."

Just then Hsiao-tun came in with a pot and some black bowls, and poured them a drink. It was a golden liquid and had a sweet earthy tang. Chiang-tao asked:

"What tea is this?"

"It's not tea," replied Wu Pa. "Their grandmother's had a headache and fever for the last few days, and I sent Hsiao-tun to the marsh behind the River God Temple to cut a few reed roots and make a brew for her. Just as he was there, Feng Lan-chih looked over the wall. He swore at the boy, and made his guards drive him away. Mother's! Those bastards with money — we can't afford to offend them!"

Ta-kuei smacked his lips as he drank. "This is good and cooling."

"We can't afford tea," said Wu. "We make do with this." He started chiselling a small piece of wood, hammering at it viciously.

"What are you doing?" asked Chiang-tao.

"I'm making a trap for weasels." Wu sketched a gesture. "There'll be a groove here and a stick there. Add a broken chopper and a plank, and there you are! If you put this at the mouth of a weasel's hole, when it comes out it springs the trap by treading here. This doesn't take much wood but it fetches a good price. All the village youngsters like to buy one, and this is the right time. After November, a weasel skin is worth money. Ah, I can't do a proper job without capital."

Ta-kuei said: "You seem to like making this rubbish. If it's not a weasel trap it's a weasel hole. Why don't you make coffins and things?"

"A poor man can't help himself!" protested Wu. Then he chuckled and showed them how he would make a weasel hole, how the weasel would walk into the trap, tread on the board and knock down the brick so that it was caught. When he had finished he laughed. "In times like these, when everyone's starving, what can you do?"

Ta-kuei said: "Uncle, they all call you an optimist, and that's what you are. No matter what trouble you're in, you're always laughing. You look as if you hadn't a care in the world."

Wu Pa chuckled and said: "When you're covered with lice, you don't itch. When you're up to your ears in debt, you stop worrying. However poor a man is, he's poor and that's all. You can't be more than that. Nowadays I've nothing to worry about, except that we can't pull down Feng Lan-chih." Wu, who sounded so cheerful, had a lean face with high cheekbones, a prominent nose and large eyes. He had never been fat. No matter how desperate the straits he was in, he strode forward steadily, step by step, on his long legs. He never lost his head.

Chiang-tao asked how the harvest movement south of the Huto had started. Wu told him: "I know all about movements now. Our master's son is a Communist, and he led the autumn harvest movement. We call him Chang Fei."

He told them some of Chang Chia-ching's exploits. "That fellow is young, but he's won a name for himself," he concluded. "If you speak of the harvest rising or Chang Fei, there's nobody on either bank of the Huto that doesn't know him."

"I find that hard to believe," put in Ta-kuei. "How can the son of a rich man work for the poor?"

"I tell you, I saw it with my own eyes," answered Wu.

"Then he must have been under the spell of communism!"

"Quite right. If you don't believe me, you follow the Communist Party too."

Chiang-tao felt the moment had come to tell Wu Pa their plan to resist the pig tax. The carpenter slapped his thigh. "Right! That's the way. We must organize a Peasants' Association. We'll fight this pig tax and topple Feng Lan-chih over. If you hadn't told me, I'd have come to you anyway."

Chiang-tao was very pleased that Wu Pa agreed with him. "Well, come to my home for a discussion this evening," he suggested. "We'll decide our best plan of action."

That evening, Chu Chung, Chu Ming, Chu Hsing, Wu Pa and Ta-kuei gathered in Chiang-tao's home and sat talking till late at night on Yen's warm *kang*. They agreed to fight the pig tax, and to stick together to avenge the lost lawsuit. They would organize in secret before starting open propaganda. The very next day, they decided, carrying dung crates they

would call on relatives, who would spread the word to other relatives. One friend would tell another. They would see that the news was known throughout Greater Yen Village, Lesser Yen Village, Greater Liu Village, Lesser Liu Village.... When a stone is dropped into an ancient pond, the ripples spread in ever-widening circles. Each day they would reach more people and their influence would grow.

29

That night, after coming home from the meeting in Yen Chih-ho's house, Chu Ming tossed and turned on his *kang*, unable to sleep. This had been the case with him for the last year. The mention of Yun-tao's name upset him for days. He grieved for Chun-lan too, now past the age for marriage yet living at home. Her mother was a weak woman, her father a fool: they would never settle this burning question for her. The next day, having had a bite to eat, he went to Chu Chung's house but found him out. He told Mrs. Chu: "I've something on my mind. I'd like a word with you."

"What is it, brother?"

"I've been thinking. Our Ta-kuei is over twenty now after all those years outside. Now he's back but he hasn't a room or *kang* of his own. I've heard that you're thinking of finding him a wife?"

Mrs. Chu waited, round-eyed, till he had finished speaking. Then she answered with a smile: "That's right. This has been on my mind and I see you've been worrying about our Ta-kuei too!" She chuckled.

Chu Ming murmured: "When a young man reaches that age and you don't find him a wife, he may hold it against you."

"I'll find him one, brother. Which of the village girls do you think would be best?"

"Chun-lan is a good girl."

Mrs. Chu said nothing. She knew all that had passed between Chun-lan and Yun-tao. Now that Yun-tao was in gaol, Chun-lan was dearer to Mrs. Yen than her own daughter.

Chu Ming waited a long time for an answer. When Mrs. Chu remained silent, he went on: "Don't listen to gossip. I'm sure Chun-lan is a good girl."

"Gossip is snatching at shadows. Who knows whether it's true or false?"

"It's idle talk, that's all."

"I'm afraid, though, Ta-kuei wouldn't have it."

"I should think he'd jump at the chance."

"Because Chun-lan is pretty, you mean?"

"She's pretty, she's got a good head, she'd be handy. Besides, a family like ours doesn't have much choice. If the girl's parents are better off, they aren't willing. If they're not as well off and the girl isn't good-looking, Ta-kuei wouldn't have her. Chun-lan would be a good match for him."

Mrs. Chu looked up hesitantly for some time. "Well, why not?" she said at last. "We can think it over."

"I'd like to be go-between," said Chu Ming. "I'll go and see what Mrs. Yen thinks. If they have any pity for the girl, she should agree at once."

"You'd better speak to her," agreed Mrs. Chu. "If you don't, she'll be flabbergasted when Chun-lan comes here."

Chu Ming rose and turned his sightless eyes towards the sky, sighing heavily. "Ah, we worry so much over the children!"

From there he walked north towards his home. Suddenly, however, he decided to see Yen Chih-ho, and tapped his way to Lesser Yen Village. He entered Yen's courtyard and called: "Is Chih-ho at home?"

Mrs. Yen peered through the small window pane. "So it's Uncle Ming! He's not in."

Chu Ming decided not to go in, but groped his way to the window. "Where has he gone?"

"He must be busy on that business of yours. Father and son, they've no time for anything else."

Standing outside, choosing his words with care and approaching the subject slowly and indirectly, Chu Ming told Mrs. Yen his plan for Ta-kuei and Chun-lan.

Mrs. Yen said with a smile: "It's high time Ta-kuei married." But it was Yun-tao she was thinking of, Yun-tao still in prison. She felt she ought to give her consent, but was afraid of letting her son down. If she didn't consent, though, how long could they make Chun-lan wait? She hesitated for some time. Then, with tears gushing from her eyes, she said: "All right. Ta-kuei's the age."

Sensing her indecision and afraid of hurting her feelings, Chu Ming did not like to speak too strongly. But Chun-lan

was no longer young and it was time some husband was found for her, if not Ta-kuei then another. "It's only a suggestion," he said. "Yun-tao is still in prison. How can we give his sweetheart to someone else? If he knew, he would hate me for a foolish old man."

Mrs. Yen bent her head in thought for many minutes. The rims of her eyes grew red and she shed tears. "Ten years . . . ten years in prison. How can I ask Chun-lan to wait all that time?" Ever since Yun-tao's imprisonment, they had told her that he was sentenced for ten years. She still did not know that he was in for life. She said tearfully: "Poor Chun-lan! She's only a child, but what she's had to put up with!"

Chu Ming was also thinking: "Why should she be singled out for so much unhappiness?"

After they had talked and sighed for some time, Mrs. Yen wiped her eyes and raised her head. "I won't stand in Chun-lan's way," she said. "Yun-tao's in prison, and wishing won't get him out. Why should Chun-lan have to wait at home day after day?"

In point of fact, whether Chun-lan married or not did not depend entirely on Yun-tao. When the Donkey Man heard of Yun-tao's arrest, he thought the matter over. If he found someone less than Yun-tao's equal, even Chun-lan's mother would be upset, let alone the girl herself. But there was no young man to equal Yun-tao for a hundred *li* around. The Donkey Man could not forget that he and his wife were getting on in years and depended on Chun-lan. He wanted a son-in-law who would live with them, but that was not easy to find. Chun-lan had made up her mind to wait for Yun-tao. Love meant everything to her. If she gave her heart to a man, she would stick to him through thick and thin. If she had no liking for him she would not marry him, not if he had a hundred thousand *mou* of orchards and a million *mou* of land. The whole village knew this. Even that old reprobate Feng Lan-chih had given up his designs upon her. No one, including her own father and mother, dared broach the question of marriage to Chun-lan.

Chu Ming said: "I'm told she's grown quite pale and thin."

Mrs. Yen started weeping again. She was thinking of Yun-tao, but she loved Chun-lan too. Though they belonged to different clans, Chun-lan had almost grown up in their home. Mrs. Yen had watched them grow. She had seen Chun-lan blossom

into a pretty girl. Ever since their decision to make Chun-lan their daughter-in-law, she had been longing for Yun-tao's return so that soon she could dandle a grandson in her arms. But Yun-tao was in prison for years and by the time he came out Chun-lan might be old. He might never again see her dusky, rosy cheeks, nor she his great eyes sparkling with youth.

When Mrs. Yen was silent, Chu Ming thought: "Poor creature! She still fancies her son is in for ten years. She doesn't know she may never see him again, Chun-lan may never see him again. One day she will have to know, and that will surely break her heart. If she had any sense, though, she would understand that she mustn't just think of Yun-tao but of Chun-lan as well. She ought to let Ta-kuei have Chun-lan. If ever Yun-tao comes out, she can find another wife for him. Ah, it's the devil!" He picked up his stick and prepared to leave, saying with a sigh: "You've enough to worry you, sister!"

"Are you going?" asked Mrs. Yen. "Won't you come in and sit by the fire?"

"No. I reckon it will soon be dark. I must go home and cook my meal."

Chu Ming set off towards his home. But on the road he thought: "Why don't I go to see the Donkey Man?" He made his way to Chun-lan's house and called from the gateway: "Is the Donkey Man in?"

As he entered the second courtyard, the Donkey Man lifted the door curtain and peered out, bending forward. "Chu Ming!" he cried with a smile. "Come on in!"

Inside, Chun-lan hastily dusted the *kang* and invited him to sit down. She sat with her back to them, sewing.

"Well, Brother Ming, it's not often you pay us a visit," said the Donkey Man.

"I'm bleary-eyed and shabby, I don't like to trouble you."

"Rubbish. You know you're a cut above the old Donkey Man."

"I've come today with a good proposal for you. If you like the idea, I'll do what I can. If not, don't take offence."

The Donkey Man's teeth flashed. "What is it? We can talk frankly as brothers."

"Our Ta-kuei has come home and I've promised to find him a wife. I've been thinking it over, and I thought of your family. . . ."

Chu Ming did not know that Chun-lan was sitting on the end of the *kang*, listening to him as she sewed. When she realized what was in question, her heart started pounding. She had cloth in one hand and needle and thread in the other, but both hands were trembling too much to sew a stitch.

Chu Ming went on: "I've been thinking this over carefully, and your families are well matched. Brother Chung hasn't too much land and neither have you. . . ."

Flushing as if her cheeks were rouged, Chun-lan sprang to her feet and in three bounds was out of the room. Her mother followed her.

The Donkey Man laughed. "I've nothing against it. If Chu and I were related, I'd have someone to back me up and stop them bullying me. But that child and Yun-tao . . . Yun-tao's still in prison."

"You mustn't just think of Yun-tao. Think of Chun-lan too. Talk it over with your daughter. If she agrees, the thing's as good as settled."

"You see she's our only child. If she marries, what shall we do if we fall ill, without anyone even to cook for us? And the house would be dull without her."

"Surely you don't mean to keep her at home all her life?"

"I want a son-in-law who'll come and live here, who'll be my son as well as my son-in-law." The Donkey Man chuckled for some moments. "If you can persuade old Chung to give me Ta-kuei, we'll have a son and daughter in the house. Old and young, we'll look like a proper family. Erh-kuei will be able to see to the two of them."

"Yes, then you'd have a son and a daughter with you in your old age. That's not a bad idea. Your neighbours wouldn't have to worry about you. But Ta-kuei may not be willing."

"Sound him out. As neighbours, we know all about each other. There's no need to send to another village to find out. If Chung and Ta-kuei agree, they'll have a part in these few rooms of mine and my few *mou* of land."

Chun-lan's mother lifted the curtain and came in. "Brother Ming!" she cried. "Do you think old Chung will be willing? His son's such a big young fellow!"

"Well, it's got to be one thing or the other," said Chu Ming. "If Ta-kuei won't come to you, Chun-lan can go there."

They all laughed together, and finally Chu Ming left.

Chun-lan was preparing supper in the kitchen. Everything was clear to her now. But her thoughts centred not on Ta-kuei but on Yun-tao. His great bright eyes seemed to be gazing at her. She could never forget his kindly, honest face. Her thoughts raced and whirled like a spring tide. Her heart contracted with pain till she could not contain herself. When she had heated up the food, instead of sitting down at table she went to the bedroom. Without lighting the lamp, she flung herself down on the *kang*, buried her head in her arms and sobbed.

The Donkey Man and his wife ate their gruel in the dark. Missing his daughter, the Donkey Man asked: "Is Chun-lan not eating again?"

"No, she's crying again," said her mother.

Since Yun-tao's imprisonment, Chun-lan often went without supper and spent half the night sobbing. But what could her mother do?

When the Donkey Man had finished his meal, he groped his way to the bedroom and sat down in the dark on a bench. "Listen, child!" he said. "You're not young any more. You've no elder or younger brothers. Whom can I discuss your marriage with except you? You played with Ta-kuei as a child, and he's come back from the army a proper young man. What do you say to him?"

Chun-lan started sobbing as if her heart would break. The Donkey Man slapped his thigh. "I was only asking you. Why carry on like that?"

"You grudge me my keep!" sobbed Chun-lan. "You grudge me the rice I eat. I'll take a date bough and a broken gourd and go out to beg my food. I won't stay here. . . ."

The Donkey Man lost his temper. "You're my only child. Who says I grudge you your rice?"

"You, you, you!" she screamed. "You wanted to sell me to old Feng!"

Her mother interrupted: "Suppose Yun-tao doesn't come back for ten years?"

"I'll wait for ten years!"

"Suppose he never comes back?"

"I'll never marry!"

Chun-lan's raking up of old grievances was more than the Donkey Man could stand. "Are you raving?" He thumped his

chest. "I've been poor all my life, but I'm honest. I'm not the man to sell my children!"

Father and daughter were trembling with rage. Since Yun-tao went to gaol, Chun-lan had shed many tears and longed for him daily. She could not cry openly, though, only in secret. Today all her pent-up indignation found vent like the Yellow River bursting its banks, and she wailed at the top of her voice. As she screamed, the thought of Yun-tao nearly broke her heart. Without warning she sprang up and rushed out, crying: "I'll not live another day!" She darted towards the gate.

Her mother raced after her, to stop her from jumping into the well. At the gate, Chun-lan bumped into a shadowy figure, who cried: "Who's that? Who is it? Where are you running?" It was Chu Chung's voice. Chun-lan stopped.

Her mother, panting, told Chu what had happened. When he learned that Chun-lan had meant to jump into the well, his heart contracted with pain. "What are you thinking of?" He stamped his foot. "Why are you tormenting her again? Come back in, Chun-lan."

Chun-lan went meekly in, no longer crying. Chu entered too, and told the Donkey Man: "This girl is yours, but I love her better than my own. I won't have you bullying her!"

"Heaven!" protested the Donkey Man. "Who's been bullying her? Doesn't every girl have to marry?"

"If Chun-lan wants to wait for Yun-tao, that's up to her," said Chu. "If Ta-kuei wants a wife, he can find someone else. Sneaking in like this while Yun-tao is away! I'll take a stick to him when I get home!"

"Hey! Don't go blaming Ta-kuei!" cried Chun-lan's mother. "This has nothing to do with him. There's no call to beat him!"

Chun-lan felt uncomfortable too, to hear Ta-kuei blamed for no fault of his own.

"All right," said the Donkey Man. "If she doesn't want to marry, she can be an old maid all her life. It's not my business."

"Of course it's your business," retorted Chu. "She's a young woman now, not a child. We can't have her in tears all the time."

When Chu saw that Chun-lan's parents had nothing to say and she had stopped crying, he left. He had more important

business. He must see Yen Chih-ho about organizing a propaganda team.

Though her marriage was so important to Chun-lan, it aroused little interest in the village. At the moment, in every household, road and lane they were discussing the movement to resist the pig tax.

Soching had a market on every day in the month ending with a five, seven or nought. Each market-day, loads of cotton and grain were taken there in carts or crates suspended from shoulder-poles. There went vendors of fuel, garlic, leeks and other vegetables. There you could find wooden utensils and hardware, farming implements, reed mats or whatever you needed.

That morning, while still in bed, the Donkey Man called to his daughter: "Chun-lan! Chun-lan! I want you to come to the market with me today."

Chun-lan raised her head from the quilt to ask: "What for, dad?"

"I'm going to sell some vegetables so that we can buy a few things for New Year." He put an arm out of bed, but pulled it back finding it cold and curled up again. Then he decided to put on his jacket and get up; but a gust of icy air blowing through a crack in the window made him pull the jacket over his head for warmth. Finally he slipped into the sleeves and lit his pipe. He puffed away till he had smoked two pipes, but still his jacket felt chilly. Once more he crossed his legs and closed his eyes. Now that he was old, he felt the cold. He shivered through every winter.

His wife peered round the curtain. "Hurry up and get up! Aren't you going to market?"

"Is this a big market or a small one?" he asked.

"A big one."

After his meal the Donkey Man fetched two crates and picked some leeks, garlic and cabbages. He made Chun-lan carry the crates, while he walked behind her with the scales over one shoulder. When they passed the marsh, they could hear the noise of the fair. There was quite a crowd there already.

As Chun-lan carried her load to the village, she noticed that the previous day communist slogans and announcements made by the Peasants' Association had been posted up on the door of Chun Yuan Shop. After stopping for a look, she put

her crates down opposite and managed to find room for their stall. Soon many people had gathered in front of the shop to look at the posters.

When Chu Chuan-fu had seen them, he squeezed back out of the crowd. Twirling his moustache, he exclaimed: "My! Another tax!"

The Donkey Man hurried up to him. "What's that? Another tax?"

"A pig tax."

"What's a pig tax?"

Chu Chuan-fu explained it to him.

The dollar seventy cents did not alarm him, but he saw that all the extras added up. "What are those red and green notices there?" he asked.

Chu Chuan-fu said: "Those have been put out by the Peasants' Association and the Communist Party to oppose this pig tax."

The Donkey man nodded and went back to his place, muttering: "So! They want money for the New Year pigs!" He took Chun-lan's scales and started serving customers.

Usually he went alone to market. But there was such a crowd at New Year that he could not manage single-handed and needed Chun-lan's help. In the time it takes to smoke a pipe, Chu Hsing came up. Short and heavily bearded, with almond eyes, he paced slowly over. When he heard complaints about the new tax, he said: "To rent land you need a certificate, rice is going up in price. . . . Now they want money for the pigs we kill at New Year. Will there never be any end?"

Wu Pa swung up on his long legs, looking oddly like a heron. At the top of his voice he shouted: "Now as if the soldiery didn't make enough trouble, they want to tax our pigs! They might as well put a tax on eating dumplings or a tax on having babies! This is unheard of!"

There was a general murmur of discontent. This tax was thoroughly unpopular. Just at that moment Chu Chung joined the crowd. "In town they've formed a Peasants' Association," he cried. "It's going to fight this tax. Feng Lan-chih's bought the right to tax this county, Liu Erh-mao and Li Teh-tsai the tax rights for this village. They've got an authorization from the *yamen*. Here are the proofs! . . ." He undid his jacket

as he spoke and produced more red and green leaflets which he flourished in front of the crowd before putting them back.

Chun-lan suddenly caught sight of a young man in the crowd. With his tousled hair and big eyes, he looked the image of Yun-tao. Was it possible? He was just a fraction shorter. Her heart thumped and her face burned. Looking more closely, she said to herself: "It's Chiang-tao!"

Chiang-tao was watching, grinning from time to time. His small propaganda team was not doing badly. The Party slogans had taken root in men's hearts and were starting to bear fruit. He felt a glow of satisfaction. Then without warning a familiar face appeared in the crowd. At first he thought his eyes were deceiving him; but, no, it was Yen Ping! She was wearing a green silk gown and bright felt slippers, carrying a bamboo shopping basket. Chiang-tao smiled broadly as he walked over to her and caught hold of the basket.

"So you're back too!" he said.

Ping halted. "I'm back. You came home before I did." She pouted and lowered her head, looking away.

Chiang-tao flushed, rather taken aback.

She told him: "At the beginning of the twelfth month, granny sent a message asking me to come home for New Year. Daddy said as granny's old and misses her grandchildren, I ought to come. I looked for you several times, and Old Hsia said you were ill in Ssu Lo Hospital. I went all that way to see you, but you weren't there. Then they told me you'd gone to Peking or Tientsin. . . . Goodness knows where you really were! Recently you've behaved so mysteriously." Her cheeks were red with anger.

Chiang-tao carried her basket and helped her buy liver, pork, leeks, dry beancurd and sausage. Chun-lan followed them. When they reached the end of the street, she seemed to wake from a dream and halted suddenly. She smiled to herself. "How lucky they are!" And she could not help shedding tears. Seeing them reminded her of herself and Yun-tao. . . .

The sun was so warm that the snow in the ditches was melting. The white drifts of snow in the fields were bright and gleaming. The countryside slept peacefully in the sunshine. Yen Ping took off her scarf and asked, blinking: "What's happening today? Everybody's talking about opposing the

pig tax." She raised her head and stared at Chiang-tao, as if to say: "I'm sure *you* know!"

Chiang-tao hesitated for a moment, realizing that he could not keep her in the dark any longer. "Yes," he said. "We're going to start a movement among the peasants. . . ." He explained the economic situation in the villages, the different forms of exploitation. "The peasants are too heavily burdened," he concluded. "They just can't live. They're rising of their own accord."

"They're too poor in the villages," Ping sighed. "Life's too hard! But what's the real reason for that?"

"Civil war between the warlords, and too many taxes and levies. Industrial products are expensive, but farming produce is cheap. When grain is cheap, the peasants suffer. The rural economy is on the verge of bankruptcy."

"You're right," said Ping. "But if you'd told me this last year, I wouldn't have understood. Now I can understand. After living so long in the city, I'd forgotten how hard life was in the villages. It's a bitter existence the peasants have! Half starved, with no proper clothes!" She walked with bent head, staring at the tips of her gay shoes sprinkled with dust.

Chun-lan stood at the end of the street to watch Chiang-tao and Yen Ping till they were out of sight. "How lucky they are!" she thought, wiping her eyes. "I seem to be living in a different world." When she returned to their stall her father asked:

"What are all these people doing?"

Chun-lan said: "They're against this pig tax."

The Donkey Man muttered: "Pig tax indeed! They even want money for the New Year pig! What is the world coming to?"

He had paid scant attention to what Chu Chuan-fu said. But the general uproar and clamour against the tax had roused him. The previous year he had bought a sucking-pig, no bigger than a cat when it left its sow. He went hungry himself to make sure that it had enough. At night, when it squealed with cold, he got up and put on his padded jacket to lift it on to the warm *kang*. Not until it was larger did he let it eat grass, rotten pumpkin skins and other refuse. This winter he had fed it several sacks of sweet potatoes so that now it was

fat and nearly ripe for slaughter. . . . He was not so much set on tasting pork again as eager to eat the tripe and lights and sell the meat for good money. Not quite sure what this tax involved, he grew more and more worried. After selling several pounds of cabbage and leeks, he told Chun-lan to pack up and start home.

The first thing the Donkey Man did when they were back was to go to his sty. The pig was sound asleep. He poked it with a willow twig till it waddled to the trough, grunting to show that it was hungry. When he reached out and patted its back, the pig, supposing he was going to catch its lice, lay down on its back with all four legs in the air. He felt its hair, three to four inches long, and its bristles, a good two inches, which were as bright and glossy as black brocade. The pig looked up, expecting to have its back scratched. Disappointed in this, it started rubbing itself against the trough.

The Donkey Man drummed with his feet and clicked his tongue. He could not bear to give up those handsome bristles. He kneaded the firm flesh on the pig's back — yes, it was ready for the knife.

Going inside, he said to Chun-lan: "Work out how much grain this pig tax comes to."

Chun-lan rolled her eyes thoughtfully. "Two to three measures," she told him.

"It's cost me several sacks of sweet potatoes. I can't part with two to three measures of grain for nothing."

"What can you do about it? They mean to have it."

The Donkey Man's face fell, his moustache bristled. He could hardly bring himself to part with this pig. During the last year he had grown fond of it. And even less could he bear to part with its bristles. Deep in thought, he went to find the Carter. When he came to the Carter's door, he raised the matting curtain and saw his friend sitting by the fire. "Come in, brother," said the Carter. "Come and get warm."

"You've a Buddhist paradise here," said the Donkey Man. "In winter you have no work and can toast yourself by the fire."

The Carter sighed. "It's freezing. I don't even like to go out for an armful of fuel."

"In mid-winter beggars are no better off than horses. There's something worrying me. I'd like your advice."

"Go ahead. We see eye to eye, we've the same turn of mind."

It was true that they had been good friends since boyhood.

"The whole village is talking of the new pig tax," said the Donkey Man. "If you kill a pig you have to pay one dollar seventy cents, besides giving up the hair, bristles, tail and guts. I've fed that pig of mine two sacks of potatoes: it's fat and the hair on its back is black and silky, three or four inches long. They can't do this to me!"

"I've heard about this," said the Carter. "But it's no use saying you don't like it. The law is merciless! We'll have to let them have their way."

"But the tax on one pig comes to two or three measures of grain. If I had that, and added a few husks or vegetables, it would feed my family for the winter. Now for no reason they're taking it away. No, this is daylight robbery! They want to steal two or three measures of grain from me!" He was beside himself. His nose was running, tears were trickling down his cheeks.

"Yes, of course," said the Carter sympathetically. "But what can you do in times like these?"

The Donkey Man shook both fists and banged them together. "I just won't let them have it! Not even if they cut off my head and use it as a football!"

"Can you get away with that? Remember they're officials. Wouldn't you be breaking the law?"

"I don't care if I do. I can't let them steal three measures of grain!"

With arms crossed and his head bent, he made his way home, where without a word he picked up the chopper from the table and started whetting it, testing the blade from time to time with his thumb. When it was sharp, he called: "Chun-lan! Chun-lan!"

"What is it, dad?"

"Come here. Tie up the pig!"

"Are you taking it to market?"

"No! I'm killing it!"

"Don't they say you can't kill pigs at home this year?"

"I don't care what they say! . . ." The Donkey Man jerked his head angrily. "Never mind!" Picking up a rope, he marched straight to the sty.

Chun-lan hurried over to whisper in his ear: "They'll hear the pig squeal and stop you!"

The Donkey Man knew she was right. He looked at her, thinking: "Of course, the pig will squeal. What makes more noise than a stuck pig?" He fetched a tattered cotton quilt from the house and signed to his daughter. "Tie its head up in this. How about that?"

Chun-lan whispered back: "Why not stuff it into its mouth?"

The Donkey Man grinned. "Come on!" He jumped into the sty and scratched the pig's back. The pig flopped down with its four legs outstretched, closing its eyes and grunting ecstatically. Chun-lan jumped in as well. The Donkey Man scratched the pig's belly as well as its back, till it put its four legs together and gave itself up to enjoyment. Then he flung the quilt round it, knelt hard on its neck, and closed his hands round its snout.

All the pig could do was grunt: it could not scream. It kicked out violently.

"Hurry up, Chun-lan!" cried her father. "Tie it up!"

Chun-lan had long, capable hands. But the pig lashed out at her and sent her flying.

"Hurry up!" shouted her father desperately when she hung back. "Tie it up!"

Following his example, she knelt on the pig's back and caught hold of its legs. With trembling hands she forced them together and tied them up, roping first the hind legs, then the front ones. The furious pig struggled savagely. Chun-lan panted, completely out of breath.

"What shall we do now?" asked the Donkey Man.

"Why?"

"It's going to squeal."

Chun-lan rushed inside, brought out a pile of dirty cotton and stuffed this between the pig's teeth. She rammed it down with a stick till the pig's mouth was full and tied a rope round its snout. When the Donkey Man let go, the pig struggled and grunted desperately but could not squeal.

The Donkey Man raised the quilt in both hands and shook it. When he saw that the pig had torn it in several places so that the stuffing was coming out, he frowned anxiously and shook his head several times.

No sooner had they tied up the pig than they heard knocking. Chun-lan peeped through a crack in the gate. It was the Carter. She opened the gate and let him in, inviting him to sit on the *kang*.

The day was cold and the Carter was rubbing his hands. He was wearing a tattered fur cap and had hunched his shoulders. "I wondered if you were thinking of dodging this pig tax," he said.

"I'm going to kill my pig in secret," the Donkey Man told him. "I won't let them know."

"That's what I was afraid of. That's why I came. We gathered firewood and dung together as boys. We worked at the same jobs, we've been friends of years. I can speak to you frankly. The law is a fiery furnace — no man can withstand it. We peasants had better abide by the law. Don't do this unlawful thing!"

"No! I can't let two or three measures of grain fly away."

"I've heard that it's Feng Lan-chih who's bought the tax rights for this district. Liu Erh-mao and Li Teh-tsai have the rights for this village. They're Feng's bullies. You can't afford to offend them."

The Donkey Man kept his mouth shut, thinking hard.

"Take my advice," said the Carter. "Make the best of a bad business. It's only two or three measures of grain. If you're sent to prison, it'll cost you twenty or thirty."

The Donkey Man wrung his hands, nodding. "But it wasn't easy to fatten up this pig. I had to feed it several sacks of potatoes. Other men keep pigs because they like eating pork. I was going to sell it to tide us over the spring. And now they want to take one whole ham away. . . ."

The Carter frowned, fully sympathizing with him. "How about this," he suggested. "Chu Chung, Chu Ming and some others in our village are fighting this pig tax and making a big thing of it. If they get away with it, we'll follow their lead. If they don't, we'll turn it in quickly. You don't want to get left behind."

The Donkey Man burst out laughing. "That's it. We'll wait and see."

They did not kill their pig, but every day squeals could be heard. In the early morning, the peasants put their pigs in carts and drove round their yards, making as much noise as possible, while old men and women stood at their doors

remarking that their pigs had been taken to market and frightened the mules by their squeals. These pigs were concealed and later killed in secret.

As New Year drew near, the festive spirit increased. Each household hulled rice and milled flour, cleaned the house and made beancurd. Chun-lan and her mother were chopping up dried vegetables to make dumplings when a gonging was heard in the street. They suspected that it might be something to do with the pig tax. "Mum!" said Chun-lan. "I'll just go out and see what that means."

"This dirty pig has caused so much trouble," grumbled her mother. "Go on!"

When Chun-lan reached the street, Liu Erh-mao was sounding a gong at the cross-roads. Red in the face, he was shouting: "I've bought the pig tax rights for this village. You're not to kill pigs at home! If you want a pig killed, bring it to me. I'll make a fine, clean job of it. All I ask is one dollar seventy cents, plus the hair, bristles, tail and guts. . . ."

After taking a quick look, Chun-lan ran home.

"What was it?" asked her mother.

"Liu Erh-mao is out there shouting. Thank goodness we didn't kill the pig! We can't afford to offend him, he's like a demon! They say he's set up a big cauldron at home, with a hook and fork beside it. But nobody's taken a pig there."

While Liu Erh-mao was sounding his gong, Yen Chih-ho, Wu Pa and Chu Hsing went round Greater Yen Village, Lesser Yen Village, Greater Liu Village and Lesser Liu Village, telling all those who were against the tax: "Now is the time to set up your cauldrons."

The next morning, Ta-kuei fixed up a cauldron at their gate.

Chu Ming with his stick went from house to house, from door to door. "If you have a pig to kill, go to Ta-kuei," he said. "He doesn't want a dollar seventy, he doesn't want hair, bristles, tail or guts. All he wants is two bundles of faggots to heat the water." Soon the whole village had been notified.

At the Donkey Man's gate Chu Ming met Chun-lan. "Child, take your pig to Ta-kuei," he told her. "He'll kill it for you. You don't even need to supply fuel."

"Oh!" cried Chun-lan. "I must go and see!" She ran down the lane, and saw the cauldron set up under the locust tree by Ta-kuei's house. Chu Chung was heating water and Ta-kuei

wielding the knife, while Wu Pa and Chu Hsing were standing by.

The annual slaughter of pigs and sheep was always a great event. Erh-kuei, Wu Hsun and Ching were lending a hand, and troops of children were playing and shouting near by.

Ta-kuei was wearing a close-fitting jacket with a girdle bound tightly round his waist and his sleeves rolled up above his elbows. When he had hoisted the pig on to the table, he killed it with a swift movement.

Wu Pa grinned all over his face. "Now, carve up Feng Lan-chih's belly!"

Ta-kuei flourished the knife. "First let's open the bastard's heart!"

Wu Pa cried: "Let's see if his heart is black or red!"

"Ha!" Ta-kuei shouted. "It's black!"

Wu Pa laughed. "I knew the bastard had a black heart. A miserly money-lender, who asks high rent, he just isn't human."

Chu Hsing strode over, chuckling. "That's a fact. I heard that in the Ching dynasty, it was forbidden by law to ask more than three per cent interest. But nowadays they pay no attention to that. They've scraped us down to the bone and still want to pull out our sinews."

"Never mind that," said Wu Pa. "Take out his liver, and see whether there's any bezoar or not."

Chu Hsing snorted with laughter. "Go on! The bezoar is in the pig's bladder. It's a valuable medicine."

Next, Ta-kuei removed the liver, then the entrails.

Wu Pa said: "Here! He won't leave us in peace. Let's wring his guts and see how he likes that."

A roar of laughter went up.

As Ta-kuei tied the guts, liver and other organs to the wall, Wu Pa chuckled. "See how well Ta-kuei works for the poor!"

Presently Chiang-tao came up with a crate for dung on his back. He had been to each village to inspect the work. By the time he reached Ta-kuei's cauldron he was in high spirits. He patted Ta-kuei on the back and said: "Brother, that's the way! Do the best you can for the poor!"

Ta-kuei's black eyes widened with pleasure and he looked down his nose. Sticking up one thumb he said: "As long as you'll lead the way, I'll follow with what little skill and strength I have."

A crowd of girls was watching from the top of the lane. Chun-lan, who was standing with them, looked at Ta-kuei. From his back, you could see he was a strapping fellow. He had big eyes, ruddy cheeks, broad shoulders and a slender waist. He seemed made of steel. Standing astride, swinging his arms, he was one mass of energy. The respect that all had for him impressed her too.

When Wu Pa noticed the girls standing some way off, chattering and laughing among themselves, he picked up a stalk and speared a clot of blood from the basin. Running over with this, he cried: "Come on, girls! Which of you wants a big pomegranate flower for New Year?" He tried to fix this flower in the hair of tall, dusky Chun-lan. The girls ran off, screaming with laughter.

Chun-lan ran home laughing too, and bumped into her father. "Dad!" she said. "Let's take our pig to Ta-kuei to be killed."

"Well. . . . Are the others taking theirs?"

"There are ever so many pigs there. He's been working for one day and one night and still hasn't finished."

"All right," said the Donkey Man. "Come on."

They tied the pig up again and found a pole on which to hang it.

Once out of the gate, the Donkey Man remembered that a marriage might take place between Ta-kuei and Chun-lan. Though nothing had been settled, a match had been proposed. If it did come off, Ta-kuei would be his son-in-law. If they took the pig there, Ta-kuei and Chun-lan would meet; in fact the two of them might be together for hours. He recalled Chun-lan's feelings for Yun-tao, and decided it would not do.

"No," he said. "We won't take it to Ta-kuei."

"Where shall we take it then?"

"To Liu Erh-mao."

"No, dad! Liu Erh-mao wants the bristles and a dollar seventy. Besides, everybody's against him. . . ."

"Go home then. We'll take it back first."

They carried the pig back.

"Aren't you going to kill it after all?" asked Chun-lan.

"Yes, I am. But I must think of the best way to do it."

He paced up and down the yard for a long time. "I've got it. I'll kill it secretly this evening."

"How can we kill a pig?" demanded Chun-lan. "You haven't the right sort of knife."

"A pig can be killed with a chopper. Or even with a club."

Chun-lan chuckled inwardly at her father's obstinacy, but did not say anything.

Once more the Donkey Man went to find the Carter, who shook his head for some time before consenting to help kill the pig on the sly.

That evening after supper, the Donkey Man made Chun-lan boil a pan of water, and when the Carter arrived he set a bench in the hall. The bench was so narrow that someone had to hold the pig to prevent it from rolling off.

Taking the chopper between his teeth, with his left foot the Donkey Man clamped one of the pig's ears to the bench, while with his left hand he held its snout. Then, taking the chopper in his right hand he said: "Good! Hold on tight. I'm ready now."

The Carter had his right foot on the pig's tail and was pulling on its front and hind legs as hard as he could. "Go ahead!" he cried. But when he saw the Donkey Man's chopper, he asked dubiously: "Will that do the job?"

"Sure!"

Since the Donkey Man spoke so confidently, the Carter said no more. The Donkey Man held the chopper over the pig's throat. He had never seen a pig killed, only sheep or oxen. Remembering how the blood gushed out when their throats were cut, he hacked hard at the pig's neck. The sharp pain made the pig heave with all four feet, till it wriggled loose from its captors. It bounded up into the Donkey Man's face, crashing into his nose which started to bleed profusely, and hurled him backwards with a thud to the ground. The Carter grabbed at it, but with its hind legs the pig knocked him sidewise. Then it leaped into the air, came down into the tub and splashed scalding water all over the room, spattering Chun-lan too. In a flash it jumped out of the tub with a frenzied squealing and rushed round the room, upsetting everything in its way, smashing crockery, pots and pans. Finally it bounded on to the *kang*, terrifying Chun-lan's mother who flopped down with a shriek. It hurled itself at the window, crashed through the bars and leaped outside. They heard it stampeding up and down the yard.

With blood flowing down his face, the Donkey Man helped the Carter to his feet, and the two of them gave chase. The pig, red-eyed and bleeding from its wound, glared at the Donkey

Man. It understood that never again would its master carry it to the *kang*, feed it with sweet potatoes, comb its hair or catch its lice — he had taken a knife to kill it! At the sight of a man it charged with teeth bared to bite. When the Donkey Man and the Carter caught up with it, it shot between the Donkey Man's legs, and he fell flat on the ground. The Carter lunged this way and that, but could not seize it. The pig rushed for the gate, left slightly ajar, and with a tremendous clatter knocked the whole door down. Then it shot out like a bird escaped from a cage, and tore howling down the street. The Donkey Man and the Carter rushed after it as fast as their legs would carry them. But they were old and their joints were stiff. They could not overtake the pig.

They searched the marsh, the cesspools and all the graves round the village, but in vain. The Carter went home for supper, while the Donkey Man hobbled around searching till late at night.

"Chun-lan! Chun-lan!" he cried when he came back, limping. "What's to be done? I can't find our pig anywhere."

"I told you to take it to Ta-kuei. But you would insist on killing it yourself. Since when have you been able to kill pigs?"

"It's too late to think of that now. We must find some way out." He sat panting on the *kang*, unable to speak.

As the pig had smashed the window, his wife had piled old clothes there to keep out the draught. But the winter wind which blew in through the gaps made the room icy cold. The Donkey Man shivered.

"What can we do?" said Chun-lan. "Go and find a man with some sense and ask for advice. The Carter's no use in a crisis."

"Whom can I ask?"

"Go and talk to Uncle Chung. He's travelled, he has sense, he'll know what to do."

Each family was preparing now for the approaching New Year. If the Donkey Man failed to find his pig, they would have no money for the festival. Early the next morning Chun-lan, pouting, said sarcastically: "You can't kill pigs, but you had to do it yourself. Your fingers are as clumsy as poles, yet you thought you could kill a pig. . . ." The Donkey Man sat on the *kang* with folded arms, closing his eyes and listening in silence to her taunts. When he could stand it no longer, he retorted:

"All right, that's enough. If you think Chu Chung is the man, go and see him yourself."

At that Chun-lan smiled. She washed her face and hands, put on a clean jacket and was off. At Ta-kuei's door, she met Chu.

"What brings you here, child?" he asked.

"My dad's pig has run away. We want to ask you to help us get it back."

When they went inside and Mrs. Chu saw Chun-lan, she smiled all over her face. "Chun-lan! What good wind blew *you* here?"

Chun-lan blushed and told them laughingly how the Donkey Man and the Carter had tried to kill the pig and lost it. Chu Chung and his wife doubled up with laughter.

"Why didn't you tell us earlier?" asked Mrs. Chu. "After one night the pig may have left the village and been eaten. What then?"

Chun-lan stamped in desperation. "Is there nothing we can do?"

"Poor folk!" Chu chuckled. "We'll help you out."

He found a man to write some notices on red paper:

"Lost: A pig with a gashed throat! A reward is offered for any information regarding its whereabouts."

He sent Erh-kuei, Wu Hsun, Ching and Ta-kuei to post these notices up in the nearby villages. But though they searched all day, no trace could they find. Ta-kuei did not come home till evening, sore-footed after hunting through several villages.

His mother crowed with laughter. "Even if you're footsore, son, it's well worth it!"

Ta-kuei stared. "What do you mean, mum?"

"You'll know some day."

"Fine!" cried Chu. "If Ta-kuei agrees, when we've defeated the pig tax, we'll celebrate New Year and bring a bride to the house. Three happy events!"

Guessing that Chun-lan was meant, Ta-kuei smiled all over his face, feeling hot as fire.

"We've only these three mud rooms," he said. "Where would we put a bride?"

"Don't worry about that," said his father. "As soon as spring comes we'll build two small rooms on the west."

But when they suggested that he might live with the Donkey Man's family, Ta-kuei would not hear of it.

"I've nothing against Chun-lan, but I'm not going to be anyone's adopted son!" he declared. "I hear you have to sign a document saying that you're good for nothing and promising to take your wife's surname. Nothing doing! Not even if she were a goddess, or had all the land in the world!"

"That's too bad!" Erh-kuei laughed. "That stops my mouth. If ever I praise Chun-lan, it'll look as if I want to get my brother out of the house."

"It's all very well to joke among ourselves," said Chu. "Yun-tao is still in gaol. How can we consider this marriage seriously?" He raised his head and was silent in thought for some time. "That poor lad has been in prison for over a year." He shed tears again at the thought of that life sentence.

The whole room was silent. All four of them were thinking of Yun-tao. They all knew Yun-tao, knew his sterling character. It cut them to the heart to think of him spending his whole life in a dark gaol.

Ta-kuei had been exposed to hardships since his childhood, and as a raw recruit in the army he had gone through a very rough time. Though he was over twenty, he had never dared think of marrying. If he came face to face with a girl on the road, he looked at the sky or walked past with averted eyes. Because of their poverty, he hardly liked to dream of love. He was afraid to watch girls' graceful steps, their faces lovely as flowers, or their bright eyes. It seemed as if his heart were buried in the ground.

But today, when they mentioned Chun-lan, his heart refused to remain buried any longer. Like the first thunder in March, something was clamouring for his attention. He felt restless, as if a voice were ringing in his ear: "Get up! Don't sleep any more!"

That evening when Ta-kuei laid his head on the pillow, though he turned from side to side he could not sleep. The year that he was conscripted he had told Yun-tao at parting: "I hope I shall find you here when I come back." But now he was back and Yun-tao was in prison. He would never see his friend again. The thought of Yun-tao reminded him of Chun-lan and all that she had suffered. For Yun-tao's sake he ought to find her pig for her. If he failed, her family would not be able to celebrate the festival, and Chun-lan would be

wretched. The more he thought of it, the more restless he felt. While the others were sleeping soundly, he put on his clothes and slipped out, closing the gate of the house softly behind him.

It was dark when he left home. He turned south, crossing the willow copse, and by the time he came to Thousand *Li* Dyke the moon was gleaming through rifts in the clouds. Its silver shafts rained down to make everything bright. Since he had already searched all the neighbourhood of the village except the river banks, he climbed down the dyke through the crunching snow and continued south till he came to the white river bank. A high wind had blown the snow into dunes, so that here there were clearings, there deep drifts. As Ta-kuei trudged forward he sank in up to his thighs, and extricated himself with difficulty. But he floundered on, hot and sweating. He halted for a time on the river bank, bright as day under the moonlight. Taking out his pipe, he lit up and started smoking, his thoughts still with Yun-tao and Chun-lan.

After one pipe he stood up to go out on the ice. But as he strode across the flat between the bank and the frozen river, he saw something black. It looked like a wolf but was moving very slowly. It was probably a dog. He squatted down, meaning to frighten it when it passed. As the creature came near, it grunted and rooted in the snow as if in search of food. It was a pig. Surely it must be Chun-lan's! He smote his chest for joy, and his heart pounded. When the pig drew near, he leaped up and lunged at it. The pig glared at this pursuer with bloodshot eyes. It twitched its ears, swung its tail and bared its great teeth, standing there motionless, panting. Afraid of frightening it away, Ta-kuei dared not grab at it. He was creeping forward when the pig charged and knocked him over backward. He sprang up at once and gave chase.

Since the fight against the pig tax started, to evade the tax many peasants had hidden their pigs in the sties or under heaps of firewood. But a considerable number had run away by night. There were quite a few ownerless pigs roaming over the snow. As the Donkey Man's pig had gone hungry and lost weight, it was now more nimble than ever and could run like a dog. It dashed off in front, with Ta-kuei at its heels. Perhaps it had experience in being chased, for it proved very wily. Each time they came to a snow drift it leaped over, leaving Ta-kuei to flounder after it. But it could not leave him more than five paces behind.

For the time it takes for a meal, Ta-kuei and this pig raced up and down the bank, from east to west, from north to south. Ta-kuei wondered breathlessly how long he could keep this up. Summoning up all his strength, he put on a spurt and lunged out—but the pig eluded him. He tried again, and caught hold of its tail. The pig started squealing loudly. Ta-kuei strained forward and grabbed one of its hind legs, whereupon the pig kicked so hard it seemed it might fly into the air. Ta-kuei pressed on till they came to a patch of ice. There he stood firm, picked up the pig and smashed it down twice on the ice—that stopped it kicking. When he felt its throat he found a cut—it was Chun-lan's pig all right! He laughed to himself and thought: "Now I've found the pig, Chun-lan can have a good New Year after all."

After a short rest to recover his breath, he hoisted the pig on his shoulders and went to Chun-lan's house. He knocked twice at the gate, his heart thudding violently; but for some reason his voice when he called out was soft. He heard Chun-lan's door open, and she came slowly to the gate.

"Who's there?" she asked.

"It's me."

With a start Chun-lan recognized Ta-kuei's gruff voice. She asked anxiously: "Who is it? Is it Ta-kuei?" At a loss and rather frightened, she added timidly: "What have you come for, so late at night?"

"Open up!"

"Not unless you tell me why you're here."

"Open up and you'll know."

"No, I won't. What would the neighbours say?" She stopped.

Ta-kuei laughed out loud. "Chun-lan! I've found your pig."

At that, Chun-lan made haste to open the gate. "Oh my! I don't know how to thank you!"

Ta-kuei held the pig out to her. But when she tried to take it, it was too heavy.

"I can't!" she cried.

Ta-kuei put the pig on the ground and dusted his clothes. "I'll leave you to carry it in."

"If you want to help, go the whole hog!" Chun-lan smiled. "If you see someone off, see him home. Won't you bring it in for me?"

"Not in the middle of the night." Ta-kuei turned to go.

Chun-lan ran forward and caught his arm. "My father and mother are old: they couldn't lift it. It weighs a hundred and eighty catties."

"All right," said Ta-kuei after a second. He shouldered the pig once more and tramped heavily in.

Chun-lan went ahead of him to light a lamp. "Ta-kuei has found our pig!" she cried.

The Donkey Man sat up. "What's that?" He stuck a shaggy head out of the quilt. When he saw Ta-kuei carry in the pig and dump it on the chest, he crowed with laughter.

"Did Ta-kuei find it?" asked his wife.

"I was fated not to lose money," said the Donkey Man. "But I've put you to a lot of trouble." He threw on his padded jacket and said to Ta-kuei: "I'm all for this fight you're putting up against the pig tax!"

"Of course we must fight them," said Ta-kuei. "They make enough on rent, yet they want to tax our pigs. They eat meat but grudge us even a drop of gravy."

"Don't I know it!" said the Donkey Man. "Look at Feng Lan-chih. He eats pork dumplings every day, and steeps even his salted vegetables in half a bowl of sesame oil."

"It's late," said Ta-kuei. "You must sleep." He strode to the gate.

"Chun-lan!" called the Donkey Man. "See Ta-kuei out!"

Chun-lan saw Ta-kuei to the gate and looked out after him. "Are you off? We can't thank you properly."

Ta-kuei turned back with a smile. "Who wants thanks? We're not strangers, are we?"

Chun-lan chuckled and said: "No, we're not." Just then she saw a shadowy figure standing by the wall in front. "Ta-kuei!" she cried. "Do you see that man?"

"It does look like someone." Ta-kuei turned round. "Chun-lan, you'd better go in."

"It's dark," said Chun-lan. "Be careful."

"Thanks. I will."

(to be concluded)

Translated by Gladys Yang

Poems

CHANG CHANG

Hulling Rice

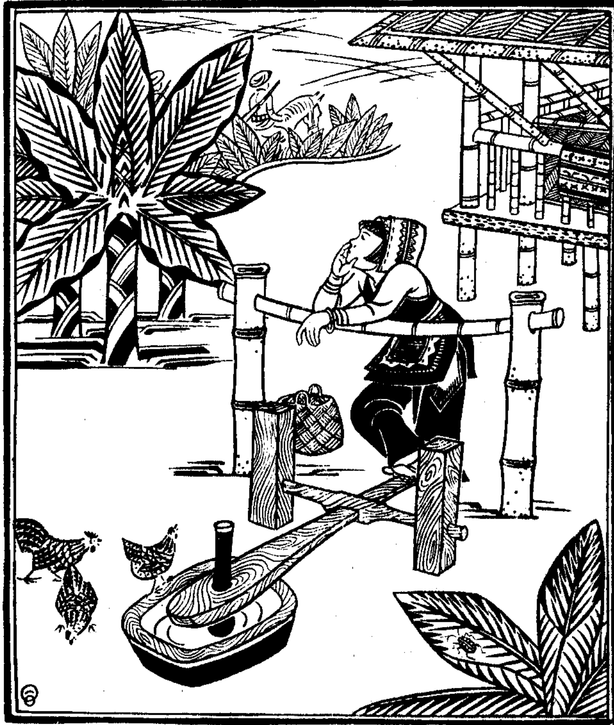
When from the village smoke curls up at dusk,
Each household hulls its evening rice again;
A girl comes stepping lightly down the stairs,
Upon her arm a crate of golden grain.

Upon her arm a crate of golden grain,
And to the pestle now she makes her way:
Some mounted guardsmen gallop past the fence,
Their clattering hooves grow faint and fade away.

Their clattering hooves grow faint and fade away,
She lingers by the pestle for a while;
Once more she sees that golden twilight hour,
Once more she sees the youthful guardsman's smile.

Once more she sees the youthful guardsman's smile,
As when he helped her at the mortar there;
How awkwardly he flexed and bent his knees,
One foot on earth, the other in the air!

Chang Chang is a young writer of the Tai nationality, Yunnan.



One foot on earth, the other in the air!
She nearly died of laughing at the clown:
And mischievously copying his tread,
She sends the pestle pounding up and down

She sends the pestle pounding up and down,
While out beyond the fence her fancies roam:
Which highway brought him to our village here?
I wonder where he lives and where his home?

I wonder where he lives and where his home?
Perhaps he never hulled this rice before;
He may not live in bamboo huts like these,
He can't be used to sticky rice, that's sure.

He can't be used to sticky rice, that's sure,
And yet he speaks our language fast and clear,
He sings like one who's drunk our native stream,
He shoots like one well used to hunting deer.

He shoots like one well used to hunting deer;
He must be one of our own folk, I'd swear;
They must have pestles too before their doors,
They must grow sticky rice as well out there.

They must grow sticky rice as well out there,
Just two of them, a mother and her son;
They have no nimble girl to hull their rice,
To wash and sew and do what must be done.

To wash and sew and do what must be done . . .
The girl's soft cheeks have suddenly flamed red;
As deep in thought, still pounding in the dusk,
Her feet upon the wooden pestle tread.

Her feet upon the wooden pestle tread;
No rice is hulled, though many minutes pass;
Her mother loses patience in the end
And creeps downstairs to see what ails the lass.

She creeps downstairs to see what ails the lass,
And cries in great amazement at her daughter:
"Oh! Gracious heaven! What is this I see?
You're hulling with no rice inside the mortar!"

Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustration by Hsia Tung-kuang

Notes on Literature and Art

WANG YUN-HSI

The *Yueh-fu* Songs of Ancient China

Yueh-fu was originally the name of the state conservatory of music which trained musicians and collected folk songs to set to music. Later these songs themselves came to be known as *yueh-fu*.

This office began to collect folk songs in the reign of Emperor Wu (140-86 B.C.) of the Han dynasty. This was a prosperous age when the empire was extremely powerful, and the ambitious emperor introduced many innovations. He abolished the existing office for the preservation of ancient music and set up this conservatory, ordering such famous scholars as Ssuma Hsiang-ju to write songs and such noted musicians as Li Yen-nien to compose music. So many of these *yueh-fu* came into being. At the same time Emperor Wu had folk songs collected from all over the country and set to music. This practice was continued in almost every successive dynasty until more and more *yueh-fu* had appeared. Many scholars later wrote verses modelled on these songs, but not all these poems were given a musical accompaniment. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, from the sixth to the ninth century, radical changes took place in Chinese classical music for much that was new was introduced from abroad. The songs set to this new music were different in form and are known as *tzu* or *san-chu*; but we shall not consider these here. By *yueh-fu* we mean the songs of the period from Han dynasty to the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). Though there were many subsequent imitations of this type of poetry, most of the later work was derivative and lacking in literary value.

Yueh-fu may be divided into two groups: those written by court poets and genuine folk songs. Quite a number of the first category were written at the order of the court for use in imperial sacrifices; they contain fulsome praise of the rulers, and the language is monotonous and insipid. The finest *yueh-fu* are the folk songs, which are a penetrating reflection of the life of the time and the hopes and dreams of ordinary men and women. Inspired by these lively and beautiful folk songs, some scholars also wrote songs with a good content and high artistic value, which established the fine tradition of this school of poetry. Indeed, after the ancient *Book of Songs* and the *chu tzu* — Chu poems, the *yueh-fu* mark the third important stage in the development of Chinese poetry.

The *yueh-fu* of the Han dynasty can be divided according to their form into sacrificial songs, festive songs accompanied by drums and flutes, choruses and other folk songs. The sacrificial songs written by court poets for specific occasions can hardly rank as literature; the drum and flute songs used in feasts and ceremonies were based on popular folk songs, the rest were folk songs selected by the court or verses written under the influence of folk poetry. The best *yueh-fu* belong to these two last groups, of which the genuine folk poems are the more outstanding.

About sixty Han dynasty *yueh-fu* have come down to us, and they give us a picture of many aspects of life. Thus *The Roadside Mulberry* and *When We Two Met* reveal the dissolute habits of the ruling class; *The East Gate* and *The Sick Wife* show us the hard lot of the common people; *Fighting South of the City* and *Joining the Army at Fifteen* describe the horrors of war; *The Song of the Orphan* and *Shangliu Field* deal with the unhappy lot of orphans; *Till Our Hair Is White* and *Going up the Hill to Pick Herbs* reflect the wretchedness of forsaken wives; while *Shang-ya* and *The Bride of Chiao Chung-ching* sing the steadfastness and sorrows of lovers. Taken together, these songs paint a broad panorama of Han dynasty society, with all the evils of the feudal system and its rulers and the fine and noble qualities of the people. We see how these men who groaned under oppression over a thousand years ago re-volted or dreamed with passion of a better life.

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Artistically these songs are superb. Many of them are narrative poems which within a very short space give a brilliant description of the drama and conflict of some chosen facet of life. There is no flatness or sameness in the characterization, and the characters tell the story themselves through their own words and actions, so that the result is lively and dramatic. Many folk songs in the *Book of Songs* also reflect the life of that time with a high degree of realism; but whereas these were mainly lyrics, Han dynasty *yueh-fu* were a new type of narrative poetry and still serve as good models of this verse form. The language is simple, forceful and concise, having the best qualities of folk literature. Most of the songs have five characters to a line, a rhythm adopted by later poets. *The Roadside Mulberry, The Song of the Orphan* and *The Bride of Chiao Chung-ching* are good examples of these poems.

The Roadside Mulberry describes how beautiful Lo-fu is picking mulberry leaves south of the city when she meets a noble lord who asks her to marry him. But she rejects his advances, retorting proudly that she has a husband who is a high official too. This poem, written in a light-hearted vein to praise the young woman's loyalty, actually gives us a glimpse of the vicious ways of the ruling class. Many nobles in feudal society, who had wives and concubines, tried to take any beautiful girl who took their fancy. In fact Han dynasty nobles often forcibly abducted women. For example, the *Later Han History* relates that when the powerful official Tsao Po-shih was struck by the beauty of the wife of one of his subordinates and asked to have her; her husband dared not refuse but she killed herself rather than leave him.

The Song of the Orphan is the sad story of an orphaned lad living with his brother and sister-in-law who treat him like a slave. Though he works hard all the year round, he goes hungry and cold. This sheds light on another aspect of the Chinese feudal system: the elder son became the head of the family after his parents' death, with full authority over his younger brothers whom he could treat as he pleased. Since another Han dynasty *yueh-fu, Shangliu Field,* also deals with a lad's harsh treatment at his elder brother's hands, it seems that abuses of this kind were fairly common. From the elder brother's point of view, the younger brother constituted a serious threat to his economic interests, for when he grew up

he could demand a share of the family property. So in many cases the much-vaunted brotherly love in the old society was a sham.

The Bride of Chiao Chung-ching is a masterpiece of ancient narrative poetry. The story dates from the Chien An period (196-219) of the Later Han dynasty, and the folk song was probably made soon after this but later rewritten by scholars who gave it its present form. It is a romantic tragedy. Chiao Chung-ching and his wife Lan-chih love each other, but Chiao's mother and brother-in-law persecute them until finally husband and wife take their own lives. The clear theme boldly exposes the evils of the feudal family system and feudal morality, revealing the sufferings of the young — especially of women. At the same time it brings out the noble qualities of the young lovers, indicating approval of their revolt against feudal conventions for the sake of love.

The mother and elder brother, who are the heads of their two respective houses, represent the feudal forces which kill the lovers. The mother conceives an unreasonable dislike for hard-working, sweet-tempered Lan-chih, and forces her to go back to her own home. According to feudal morality, a wife could be divorced for seven reasons: if she had no son, committed adultery, was jealous, had an incurable disease, was too talkative, stole, or disobeyed her parents. Indeed the *Book of Ceremony* states that if a son's excessive attachment to his wife displeases his parents, the wife should be sent away. Since Lan-chih is accused of disobeying her mother-in-law, passionately as Chiao loves her he has to let her go. After her return home her avaricious elder brother insists that she marry again. So true love turns to tragedy.

The young couple are completely loyal to each other. Though forced to part, Chiao swears never to marry again, and Lan-chih declares that their love will be as enduring as the rocks and resistant as the vine. Unfortunately her brother is determined to make her remarry, and her only choice is to submit or die. Under these circumstances their suicide is not an act of cowardice but shows splendid courage, expressing their revolt against feudal morality. The general public admired and sympathized with this revolt. The beautiful and romantic conclusion of the poem shows the popular longing for freedom in marriage. No tyranny or oppression could conquer such steadfast love.

The Bride of Chiao Chung-ching is the highest artistic achievement of the *yueh-fu* poems. The story is elaborately yet convincingly told, moreover the characters are thoroughly life-like and all possess definite personalities. Thus Lan-chih is steadfast, Chiao kind and honest, his mother a tyrant, and his brother-in-law a snob. Their words and actions make them seem completely alive. The language is vivid and simple, and all speak in character.

Most of the finest Han dynasty *yueh-fu* are folk poems, for as yet very few scholars wrote under the influence of this verse form. By the end of the dynasty and at the beginning of the Wei dynasty, however, the situation had changed. Many writers of the ruling class studied folk poetry and modelled their work upon it. This was an age of great confusion and disorder, a time of many peasant revolts and fighting between warlords, when millions perished of war pestilence and famine. The poets suffered such hardships themselves that they could understand the wretchedness of others, and writing of their own experiences or what they had seen and heard, they produced many *yueh-fu* remarkable for their realism. Some of the most outstanding songs of this period were Tsao Tsao's *Bitter Cold,* Wang Tsan's *Seven Laments* and Chen Lin's *Watering the Horse by the Great Wall.* In the middle of the Tang dynasty the early *yueh-fu* again exercised a great influence on scholar-poets. After the rebellion of An Lu-shan and Shih Ssu-ming and the fighting between rival generals had enfeebled the empire and made life even harder for the people, poets like Tu Fu, Po Chu-yi, Yuan Chen and Chang Chieh wrote in the *yueh-fu* style. They did not imitate old forms and themes mechanically but adopted the realist tradition of the *yueh-fu* folk songs, learning from their narrative style and lively forms of expression. In order to distinguish them from other poems which were merely imitations, Po Chu-yi and Yuan Chen called their poems "New *Yueh-fu.*" These poems were not set to music, for at this time a new type of song, the *tzu,* had already appeared; but we shall not discuss this here.

From the third to the sixth century, when China was divided between the Southern and Northern Dynasties, south of the Yangtse there appeared a new kind of folk poetry which was adapted by poets as *yueh-fu.* These new folk songs persisted throughout the southern dynasties of Sung, Chi, Liang and

Chen. In northern China the Topa branch of the Hsien Pei people founded the Northern Wei dynasty, which split up into Northern Chi and Northern Chou. Since the north was dominated by these nomadic people who settled down in the Yellow River Valley, their customs and feelings were reflected in literature and the *yueh-fu* of this period changed in style. The songs of this time also include many sacrificial eulogies of little interest as literature. Once again the best songs were the folk songs. The southern folk songs included songs of Wu and songs of the west. The northern songs were accompanied by drums, bugle and flutes.

The songs of Wu originated in the lower Yangtse Valley, in what is now southern Kiangsu, while the songs of the west came from the upper Yangtse Valley and the Han River delta. The music of these two groups differed, though the general style was more or less the same.

There are more than four hundred of these southern *yueh-fu* extant. They are all short lyrics, most of which deal with love and longing, joy at meeting and sorrow at parting. They are passionate and youthful in tone. Since the feudal morality of the time enforced all manner of taboos and young people could not satisfy their longings, these beautiful love songs strike a progressive note by defying feudal restrictions, singing boldly of freedom in marriage and demanding that matches should be based on love.

A legend of Wu, embodied in *The Huashan Songs,* is a tragic love story. A young man near Mount Huashan falls in love with a girl but cannot approach her, and so he dies of longing. When his hearse is passing Huashan and reaches the girl's door, the bulls pulling it cannot draw it forward. Then the girl comes out to sing:

Since you have died for me,
Why should I live on alone?
If you care for me,
Open your coffin!

Then the coffin bursts open and she leaps in and dies. This story with its supernatural flavour shows how many tragedies there must have been in that age when men and women had no proper means of meeting and no freedom in love.

A number of the southern *yueh-fu* also describe how men deceive girls and prove faithless, breaking the women's hearts.

In feudal society women were the lowest of the low, the most oppressed and downtrodden. These poems express their longing for a happier life.

Most of the southern songs came from the prosperous towns along the Yangtse where there was much trading; and some southern *yueh-fu* describe a merchant's life, especially the feelings of the wives or sweethearts who cannot accompany the men on their travels. There are more such poems among the songs from the upper Yangtse Valley.

Each southern *yueh-fu* comprises several songs. For example, there are twenty-five verses in *The Huashan Songs*. Most of these consist of four lines only with five words to a line, not unlike the later Tang dynasty short poems. Sometimes a man and a woman sang alternate verses — another evidence of the folk origin.

Court poets in the Southern Dynasties paid so much attention to embellishment, rhetoric, and the choice of unusual epithets that their work is rather lifeless. These southern *yueh-fu*, however, all came from the country; their language is sincere and unaffected and there is nothing artificial about them. The most popular rhetorical device is the use of puns or words with double meanings. Thus in *Tzu-yeh's Song* we read:

> *When I first met you*
> *I longed for our hearts to be one;*
> *Silk threads that are woven together*
> *Are sure to match.*

The word "match" in the last line has a double meaning. This device, very common in Chinese vernacular literature, occurs frequently in these southern songs.

The best of the northern *yueh-fu* are the drum, bugle and flute songs. These are army songs, vigorous and martial, most of which were composed by the northern tribesmen. Some were probably translated into Chinese from a different dialect. They are thus early examples of the literature of our national minorities.

Prague Painting in the traditional style→
by Fu Pao-shih

Little over sixty such songs have come down to us, but they deal with many aspects of life, unlike the southern *yueh-fu* which treat almost exclusively of love. The northern tribesmen were nomads who had only just adopted an agrarian mode of life. Their living conditions were hard, and there were many wars among different tribes. Their austere way of life and fighting traditions gave their culture distinctive characteristics; they were spirited and brave, resolute and strong with a profound respect for heroes and heroic exploits, all of which are clearly reflected in their songs. Some of their *yueh-fu* deal with love too, but their approach is strong and passionate instead of tender and plaintive.

In form the northern *yueh-fu* are also short lyrics, each containing a number of verses with four lines to a verse. There are usually five characters to a line, occasionally seven. The language is simple and forceful. This heroic style had a great influence on Tang dynasty poetry, which absorbed the elegance and sweetness of the southern *yueh-fu* as well as the vigour and heroism of the northern poets. This is most evident in the Tang lyrics.

The Song of Mu-lan is one of the most outstanding of the northern *yueh-fu*. It is a fairly long narrative poem. The heroine, Mu-lan, disguises herself as a man in order to take her father's place in the army and comes back in triumph after many years. The poem describes her sterling qualities and the life of the time. Not a few women in north China were trained in the arts of war, but it was unusual for a girl to remain long in the army. The poem gives a convincing description of her concern for her father, her homesickness, and how she perseveres till victory. Her conflicting feelings and courage are well depicted. And the conclusion is most dramatic when she comes home and changes back into women's dress to the amazement of the other soldiers. The poem ends with her joy and the general jubilation.

Though this is a narrative poem, its many lyrical passages with the haunting repetition and other devices used increase its musical quality and make it a work which readers cannot forget. *The Song of Mu-lan* and *The Bride of Chiao Chung-ching* are justly considered the two masterpieces of classical narrative poetry.

Rambling Notes on Literature *(cont'd)*

V. THE IDEAL AND THE REAL

As I mentioned earlier, some historians of literature have tried to explain the rise and fall of various trends in the history of literature as an eternal cycle of "the ideal" and "the real." Let us look further into this problem.

First let us consider whether contrasting the ideal with the real is the same as contrasting realism with anti-realism as we did earlier. The answer is "No."

It has been argued that since the beginning of literature there existed two opposing elements: the ideal and the real. This theory was put forward by Western scholars, who naturally took as an example the two great epics of ancient Greece. According to them, the *Iliad* is realistic because it deals with the real life of the Greeks at the time (although including many myths): but the *Odyssey* is idealistic because it deals with fairy islands, giants and sirens, which were clearly not part of the real life of the Greeks. This basic difference in these epics led to two different styles: that of the *Iliad* is magnificent, that of the *Odyssey* beautiful. The former is exciting, swift-moving and full of vigour; the latter quiet and leisurely, taking its readers into a world of fantasy. Thus it was the "father of European literature" who started the two schools. Judging by this, the ideal means something imaginary and fanciful; hence we can consider romantic literature as belonging to this category, for it describes strange characters, strange incidents and strange circumstances. The modernists can also be classed in this category, because they pursue the fantastic and bizarre. And since the real is the opposite of the ideal, this implies literature about the ordinary people and happenings of daily life.

However, these terms, the ideal and the real, have a deeper connotation.

If a writer describes life (including human beings, naturally) according to his subjective judgement — his standards of good and evil, right and wrong and what he thinks ought to be — his work belongs to the category of idealistic. On the other hand, if instead of insisting on his own opinions he describes life faithfully as it is, his work belongs to the category of realistic.

According to this view, all classicist literature by and large can rank as idealistic; for in classicist literature (tragedy especially, but also comedy) characters are depicted according to the writer's rational judgement, and idealized to suit his views of what they should be. Again, according to his view of what ought to be, an ideal social system is proposed, an idealized bourgeois society, the "realm of reason." Because the classicists believed in rationalism, their ideal characters had to be strong-minded, subordinating their emotions to their reason, which sometimes made them appear cold and unfeeling. The characters in romantic literature are just the reverse: passionate and emotional. But like the characters in classicist literature, they conform to what the writer thinks they should be — imaginary, unusual people. So both classicist and romantic works deal with men and women who come and go in isolation, supermen who fight alone, not the sort of people we meet in real life.

I must add this, however. Hitherto all my references to romanticism in this section have been to positive romanticism. The characters in passive romanticism, on the other hand, are escapists, dreamers or hermits, the reverse of the figures in classicist literature. The characters in classicist literature oppose the medieval feudal system, whereas those in passive romanticism do not oppose the Middle Ages but long for a return to them. They handed down this tradition to the modernists. This shows that when men are alarmed by the rising tide of revolution, they often try to find comfort in dreams of a purely imaginary past.

The romantics also wrote of their hopes for a future society and suggested the form it should take. In this regard, the positive romanticists were influenced by the ideas of Utopian socialism current at the time and looked ahead, while the passive romanticists were induced by reactionary ideas then prev-

alent to idealize the Middle Ages and look backwards. Since Utopian socialism is not scientific socialism, the dream and fantasies to which it gave rise naturally did not accord with the laws of social development, thus it could not serve to guide the working people in their struggle for liberation. At least, however, it made them look ahead, encouraging them to grope their way forward. Though the passive romanticists were also disillusioned with the "realm of reason," the idealized bourgeois society so cried up during the age of enlightenment, their attitude was different from that of the positive romanticists. They painted idyllic pictures of the Middle Ages before the coming of capitalism, as if the old feudal system were superior to the capitalist. Since they wanted to put the clock back, it is no exaggeration to call them reactionary. Yet some literary historians have classified such writers as these as "idealists," taking the ideal to mean freedom from the restrictions of the real world. We cannot accept this view.

Let us pass on, however, to the writing classed as "realist." Of course, this included all that we count as realist literature today, as well as the seventeenth century fiction and drama dealing with real life and society and the eighteenth century novels of sentiment and tales of urban life, i.e. dealing with the Third Estate including the bourgeoisie — a host of romances and novels about family life. In short, the theme of "realist" literature, as opposed to "idealist" literature, was real life in society. The characters might be cheats, rogues, hypocrites, political adventurers or the newly rich, but there was not a single superman; and the writers exposed the evils of society without any vision of the future.

Judging by common sense, the "idealist" were too unworldly; their beautiful fancies burst like bubbles in any storm. But the "realists" were too earth-bound, for all their exposures merely aroused vain indignation or despair, without suggesting any remedy. This common-sense view explains why "sensible" historians felt there was something lacking in the two categories they had created, and tried to discover a third category comprising both the real and the ideal. Apparently they never succeeded in finding an author to suit their requirements, but had to be contented with works like Goethe's *Faust* and Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe.*

The efforts of these well-meaning gentlemen have already passed into history. Today the situation is very clear. On the one side we have subjective idealism, irrationalism and abstract formalism; on the other Marxism-Leninism and socialist realism. Between these two opposite camps stand the critical realist writers and their works. The critical realists today do not describe a society of the future, but today the masses have seen in actual life the goal they are fighting for: the strength and prosperity of the socialist countries has pointed out a bright path for all the peoples of the world. At the same time, the method of writing for which those well-meaning gentlemen searched so hard fifty years ago, a method reflecting reality as well as expressing an ideal, has today become the main stream of literature — the method of socialist realism.

It seems, then, that this division of literature into two categories, the ideal and the real, has something to be said for it. However, since the men who proposed it did not study it correctly, they reached incorrect conclusions. The path taken by our predecessors holds a useful lesson for us, and it would perhaps be as well to pursue it a little further.

We are all familiar with the saying: Literature reflects the ideas of the society. But this is done by means of its special method, characterization. As this is achieved by creating typical characters, the problem of how to depict characters is a most crucial one in the method of writing. Since Engels made his famous remark about "typical characters in typical circumstances," some pedants have used this as a criterion for all works to determine the method of writing employed. But this mode of classification frequently gives rise to difficulties. If we do not take Engels' dictum too dogmatically, however, we can see that behind it lies the problem of how a writer can create typical characters in typical circumstances; and many statements made by Marx and Engels regarding the laws of knowing reality have given us valuable clues. In brief, the problem of how to create typical characters (typical characters in typical circumstances) is fundamentally the problem of how to recognize reality; and this is a problem which no writer since ancient times has been able to avoid in practice.

The root of the difference between the ideal and the real lies in different methods of recognizing reality.

I want now to examine the differences in characterization in classicist and positive romanticist literature in order to ascertain their method of recognizing reality.

As noted before, although the classicist tragedy of France drew its themes from ancient Greek and Roman history and legend, the spiritual world of these historical characters reflected the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie in the seventeenth century. In this respect the characterization in classicist tragedies is anti-historical. But instead of discussing this point, let us see whether these characters in ancient costume but with modern ideas have any personality or not, or whether they are typical. This question reminds us of Lessing, who found the characters in classicist tragedy overdone, and complained that they were not individuals with personalities of their own so much as personifications of types. If we condemn all classicist writers, including Corneille and Racine or even Molière, in the terms used by Lessing, that is going too far. By personifications of types, Lessing meant characters created out of certain moral ideas or human qualities in the abstract. Thus frugality is a moral concept; if we start from such a concept to depict an ideal character, he may look very dignified and imposing, yet instead of a flesh-and-blood figure he will just be a type. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an example of this treatment. But to my mind, the characters created by Corneille and Racine are not quite like this, let alone those of Molière. Obviously, we must not go to the other extreme, declaring that Corneille and the others have never failed in characterization or produced mere types. But are Lessing's characters basically different from those of the classicist masters? If we compare his *Emilia Galotti* with Racine's *Andromaque*, we shall see that the differences are negligible while many similarities leap to the eye. In both cases the characters are fixed from the start, and the incidents which take place have no effect on them. That is to say, neither writer in his character-drawing believed that changes in circumstances could affect men's minds or had any idea of evolution and change. So although the characters created have personalities and are not untypical, they are untouched by circumstance.

Not only is this the case with Racine and Lessing. I use Lessing as an example because he was an eighteenth century writer with realist leanings who opposed classicism, and a

typical figure. This is virtually true of all the positive characters in works of positive romanticism. We may say that they remain unchanged in all circumstances. If we study the works of Victor Hugo, we are drawn to this conclusion: All his powerfully romantic, superhuman heroes are idealized unchanging characters, though subordinate figures may develop and change according to different circumstances. Other romantic writers of a lesser stature than Hugo usually created the first type only, while in their method of writing they were not so flexible. In the case of great writers, the method of writing is not so simple. This is because their understanding of reality was not immutable but constantly changing, especially if they lived during a high tide of revolution. The romantic and the realist trends which are clearly apparent at the same time in Hugo's work can be explained in this way. This also solves the long-standing problem of why in one and the same writer we see a tussle between "the ideal" and "the real."

But let us first discuss this problem: Since the classicists and the romanticists (not including the pseudo-classicists of the eighteenth century or the passive romanticists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) belonged to two different schools with different methods of writing, why should their character-drawing be so similar?

I think this is because they both had the idealist conception of history.

It may prove rewarding to spend some time here examining the relationship between the idealist conception of history and writing.

Men like myself, who have absorbed certain scientific knowledge since childhood, do not believe that the world was created by an omnipotent deity, but consider existence as primary and thinking as secondary. But just like the materialist philosophers of eighteenth century Europe, we believed that as far as social phenomena were concerned, "history was made by heroes," and the progress of history determined by the decisions of a few heroes. This is the view of social development known as the idealist conception of history. All materialist philosophers before Marx, when attempting to explain social development, were unable to extricate themselves from the quagmire of idealism. They were not fatalists: neither were they willing to consider history as a series of ac-

cidents; so starting from abstract reason they regarded the will and wishes of certain historical figures as the force that moved the universe. Such views naturally affected literature too. If we call the ancient Greek writers of tragedy fatalists, the classicist and romanticist writers considered the role of the individual — the will, desire or ability of some superhuman hero — as the basic reason for changes in history. The romanticists in particular laid stress on the heroes' ability to conquer circumstances, and considered this as something born not made. Both the romanticists and the classicists described men's character as fixed at birth, not moulded by circumstances (family background, education or the like). They based this view on the idealist interpretation of history.

But it is one thing for a man of letters to know that the idealist interpretation is wrong and to write an essay expounding the need for a writer to have a materialist interpretation of history, as I am doing here. It is quite another thing for him in his observation of life and accumulation of material to act in accordance with the materialist standpoint, uninfluenced by idealist views. We often hear a work criticized for over-emphasizing the role of the individual and failing to bring out the strength of the masses, which means that the writer still has an idealist conception of history, even though in theoretical argument he may be the sharpest critic of idealist views.

At the same time we must admit that one and a half centuries ago the works written and the characters created from this standpoint played a progressive role, whereas today works which over-emphasize the role of the individual and ignore the strength of the masses should be criticized. To deny the progressive role at that time of works praising individual heroes would be just as wrong as to praise the over-emphasis on the individual's role today.

Because the heroes created by the classicists and romanticists were personifications of the progressive ideas of that time, they reflect men's desire to destroy the old and introduce something new. The old which the classicists wanted to destroy were the church, clericalism, the feudal monarchy and so forth. In the case of the romanticists, they were the remnants of feudalism, the bourgeoisie which by then had exposed its mercenary and selfish class nature, and the capitalist system which was turning men into a new type of slaves. The new things advocated

were the classicists' dream of the "realm of reason" and the romanticists' Utopian society with its freedom and equality. Their idealized characters and vision of the future succeeded in arousing readers' enthusiasm and constituted a spirit to impel them forward. So although these characters and their ideals were products of the idealist interpretation of history and could not point out the correct road to liberation or the true laws of social development, when we read such works today we are still stirred by them. Works of positive romanticism, in particular, continue to make good reading for us today.

Here perhaps the question may be asked: "Then is there some connection between realism and the idealist interpretation of history? Or must realist writers be historical materialists too?"

If we give a simplified answer to this question, we shall be guilty of dogmatism. We cannot simply answer "Yes," or "No," nor try to avoid the issue by replying "Basically" or "Fundamentally." We must make a detailed analysis of actual works, to discover both the common features and the individual characteristics in the works of different writers in different periods. Here we should pay heed to the saying: "Full attention must be given to the special characteristics of art and literature."

We have noted that the realist method of writing was evolved by the labouring people who were oppressed in class society, who longed for liberation and who impelled society forward. It developed with the social economy and class struggle. Each stage of the historical development of the social economy and class struggle has its corresponding realist literature with increasingly rich content and form and new characteristics, till realism reached its zenith with the critical realism of the nineteenth century. That is to say, critical realism can be considered as the highest stage of the realist method of writing. All those stages including critical realism, we can call old realism. After the publication of Gorky's *Mother* we come to a new stage, that of socialist realism. Now why do we use a new term, socialist realism, instead of speaking of realism of the socialist period? We shall come back to this later. Here, I simply wish to make the point that since the realist method of writing has a long history of development, we should admit

that there are different stages of realism which possess common features as well as different individual characteristics.

What are the common features? We usually say that works of realism faithfully reflect natural and social phenomena and man's inner life. Or to use a different formula: Through characterization and artistic generalization, realist works faithfully depict men's struggle for production and the class struggle and the reflection of these in their minds. Here we should pay attention to the word "reflection." The crux of the realist method of writing is to carry out artistic creation according to the theory of reflecting reality, in the conviction that it is possible to know the real world. This is the common feature of different stages of realism since ancient times. Perhaps someone will ask: "Since the theory of reflection is the materialist theory of knowledge developed and laid down by Marxism, is it not rather strange to say that realist writers before Marx were writing according to this theory?" This is the fact, however. The writers before the appearance of Marxism, including those anonymous folk artists who created the realist method, though they had never heard of the "theory of reflection," grasped its truth in their participation in production and the class struggle and used it in their work. If we ignore this fact and think that writers could use this theory only after the spread of Marxism, we shall be guilty of dogmatism. On the other hand, if anyone thinks that because he has studied the theory of reflection and can expound it, whatever he writes will be in accordance with Marxism, and therefore pays no attention to practice or does not attempt to make good his lack of experience of life, he will become a revisionist. What I have said leads us to this conclusion: The philosophical basis of realism is materialism; its social basis is the productive struggle and the class struggle and the revolutionary force in these which impelled society forward; different stages of realist literature all have this common basis which forms their common feature.

This common feature is fairly clear in character-drawing. Unlike classicist and romanticist literature, realist literature places its characters in social circumstances, and studies their feelings under these circumstances as well as the effect of these circumstances on their thoughts and feelings. The classicists, however, used circumstances merely as the setting in which their characters functioned; while the romanticists described

the relationship between men and circumstances only when they wanted their heroes to engage in a mortal struggle against overwhelming odds. Neither the classicists nor the romanticists depicted the relationship between men and circumstances with a view to the development of character. The realist writers not only dealt with subjects which the others ignored, but emphasized that human character was determined by circumstance and social relationships. In other words, when a realist writer draws his characters, his problem is not how to determine a certain individual's character according to a definite ethical or political viewpoint, but how to demonstrate with facts why the man had to have this character and no other. The realist shows us not only typical characters in our own times, but also the special circumstances under which such characters are formed. That is to say, such a character has his own individuality. Since each (each with individual character, not just anyone of that type) belongs to a type in a specific society in a specific period, and since this typical character is the product of circumstances, naturally the circumstances which the writer depicts must be typical as well. In other words, they must express the basic spirit and main features of the period.

Precisely because these are the features of realist characterization, it is best fitted to reflect the social ideas of a particular period. And because the characters in realist literature are created in this way, the writer must "discover" them in real life instead of basing them on pure reasoning, fancy or passion.

Clearly, the idealist view of history cannot help the writer to achieve this.

So it is with reason that we say: When philosophers could use idealism only to explain social phenomena, the great realist writers of the same period were unconsciously expressing a materialist view of history in their work, though to varying degrees.

This realist method of creating characters was not achieved all at once, but developed step by step over a long period. This is why we said that the realism of different historical stages has its distinctive features as well as its common characteristics. The characters in Renaissance literature are for the most part lofty, proud, ambitious men with ideals, impressing us with

their dignity and humanity. The salient features of those characters, as some critics have justly said, were a continuation of Greek and Roman traditions and prepared the way for the characterization in the classicist literature of the seventeenth century. (The classicists would not agree to this, for they took Greek and Roman literature as their models, and considered themselves the direct followers of the classical tradition. Some other critics will doubtless not agree either, because they believe that the Renaissance method of writing marks the beginning and founding of realism. I agree to some extent with this estimate, though I am positive that the method of writing of Dante, Shakespeare, Rabelais and Cervantes was totally different from that of classicism.) The eighteenth century realist writers of the age of enlightenment used a new technique in their character-drawing, grasping the contradiction between the individual characters and the social environment and directly expressing their own political views through the adventures of their characters (the result of their struggles against "fate") or through the characters' lips. Another feature of the characterization of eighteenth century literature is that most of the heroes and heroines are ordinary men and women, not members of a privileged class. This was a new departure. The accounts of these ordinary people's daily life, their partings and encounters, sorrows and joys, may not be so colourful and dramatic as the works of the Renaissance, but they are more moving. Though these common folk are less dignified and noble, they are better able to arouse the reader's sympathy. We shed tears over their sorrows and laugh or are stirred by their optimism, wit and vitality. Still, the realists of the age of enlightenment could not properly integrate the fate of ordinary individuals with the revolutionary movements of their period; thus whenever they deal with events outside the framework of the joys and sorrows of ordinary men and women, touching upon the revolutionary aspirations of that age, the characters whom they describe as dedicated to the lofty ideals of liberty and equality become mere types, who keep moralizing to express their ideas. In other words, the authors lapse into the old method of creating abstract and idealized characters.

This being so, if we say the characters of Renaissance realism have more of the ideal than of the real, then the characters of

the age of enlightenment are more realistic than idealistic. Both cases show that the problem of integrating the ideal and the real in art had not yet been solved.

Nevertheless, the realist method of writing moved a step forward, and this provided the conditions for the emergence in the nineteenth century of critical realism.

In critical realism the individual's struggle against "fate" is organically linked with the writer's criticism and exposure of the existing social order. The writer consciously starts from the premise that the social system decides man's fate, describing life with its complexities and changes and the changes in the character of people in such a life through meticulously drawn and truthful images. Through the activities of these characters, the literature of critical realism gives us a full picture of the development of capitalism with all its blood and horror, a vivid and powerful picture exposing the deep inner conflicts of capitalist society, a record of all the storm and stress of class struggle. In this way the literature of critical realism gives us good examples of typical characters in typical circumstances.

Since the beginning of realism, there have never been such depth and scope in the reflection of reality, such boldness and bitterness in exposing social abuses, such variety of characters from the lowest strata of society, as in critical realism. The great writers of this school did not recognize the laws guiding social development, however. In other words, although freed in varying degrees from the fetters of the idealist conception of history, they did not hold a clear and thoroughly materialist view of history; they did not realize that the proletariat was the decisive force to overthrow the iniquitous old society and build a bright and happy new life. Thus whereas they criticized the vicious capitalist system which they detested, they could not bring forward an inspiring ideal to point the way ahead according to the laws of social development. Sometimes we catch glimpses of ideals in their writings, but these are merely longings for some distant future which may afford readers a little encouragement but cannot show the way out of the maze.

From this point of view, the critical realism of the nineteenth century can only be considered as semi-realist; for it reflects the fact that there is no future for the bourgeoisie and that the capitalist system must be changed, but not the growing

strength of the working class, the grave-diggers of capitalism, which must write a new page in history. We may say that Balzac in his *Comedie Humaine* gave a more or less complete reflection of the reality of his time, but those critical realist writers ten years after him were less successful. They could not give an equally complete and profound picture of their age because at that time (the last quarter of the nineteenth century) new conditions had appeared — capitalism had developed to the stage of imperialism and the working class had emerged as the decisive force in the international political arena; moreover, the sharp and complex class struggle had exercised a deep influence on the social economy, politics and men's minds in different countries. These new conditions were so important as to constitute the main aspect of reality; thus any writings failing to reflect this main aspect could neither give a fairly complete reflection of reality nor a penetrating reflection of even half of it. The result was sometimes a distortion of reality, even if this was not what the writer wished or intended.

We usually describe such lack of vision on the part of the earlier realist writers as their historical limitation. Since at that time the proletariat had not yet appeared on the stage of human history as a decisive force, it is no wonder that those realist writers could not see the great vision. In other words, though they were able to perceive the iniquities of the capitalist system and the fact that the bourgeoisie was no longer a force to impel society forward, but was impeding its progress, they could not see through the outward phenomena of contradictions to grasp the essence and draw a scientific conclusion. And they had this limitation because they were born a hundred or fifty years too early. Although this explanation may be applicable to writers of critical realism in the nineteenth century (who were most active during the second half of the century), we cannot say this of critical realist writers of the twentieth century (from the start of the century till the present day). We know that when Count Leo Tolstoy wanted to understand the industrial workers who had just appeared in tsarist Russia, and with whom he was unfamiliar, he bought a house in the industrial quarter of Moscow (now the Tolstoy Museum). By this time Tolstoy had achieved world fame and the characters in his works included men and women of every walk of life except the industrial workers. The reason is easy to understand, and Tolstoy himself was keenly aware of this lack; hence

he settled down in a part of town which his noble friends despised. To speak of historical limitations in connection with Tolstoy would be apt, but not in connection with the writers who followed him, especially those after the October Revolution.

While the critical realist writers of the twentieth century, especially those of the last forty years that is since the October Revolution, are of course more progressive than the modernists, they fall short of their predecessors in the nineteenth century. That is to say, they lag even further behind the needs of the age. This is due to new developments during their time: the new chapter in human history ushered in by the October Revolution; the widespread and profound crises of capitalism after the First World War; the decline in the strength of imperialism since the Second World War and the appearance of socialist countries in Eastern Europe; the victory of the Chinese people's revolution and socialist revolution; the general awakening of the Asian and African peoples and the upsurge of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle; the new era of the east wind prevailing over the west wind in the international political, economic and military situation. These new conditions amply demonstrate a great turning-point in human history now that the beautiful and lofty ideals which men the world over sought for centuries have been turned into reality. This means that the contemporary literature of critical realism which has as its sole content the exposure of capitalist society lags far behind the times. Although we should not deny that the literature of critical realism in capitalist countries today still has its progressive side, it is an irrefutable fact that critical realism is no longer able to meet the needs of the age. The outstanding writers of critical realism in modern times who recognize this fact have been able to take a step forward and accept socialist realism, as in the case of Romain Rolland and Theodore Dreiser; but there are even more good writers of this school who have remained at a standstill. They are unable to follow the example of Rolland or Dreiser not on account of any historical limitations but owing to their class and individual limitations. In other words, they have been unable to discard the prejudices of their class or to change their way of living and their world outlook.

We also know that among the great writers of critical realism today in Europe and America quite a few are anti-communist, some to an extreme degree. They are the antithesis of those artists who are politically progressive but in their method of writing cannot shake off abstract formalism. The revisionists therefore use them as examples to prove that an artist's political stand cannot affect his work. But here the revisionists have seen one part only of the truth. They are right to realize that the relationship between the two is extremely complex and that the political stand cannot be considered as equivalent to the method of writing — this they know and emphasize. But because they emphasize this point, they are unwilling to admit or consider the fact that a writer chooses one method of writing rather than another for some reason connected with his experience of life over long years. This is the crucial point. The revisionists, arguing as subjective idealists, deny that the writer's experience is a basic factor in his writing. Sometimes they use this term for effect, but distort it to mean finding material in life. It is our firm contention, however, that only by experiencing life can a writer understand reality. Failing this, he cannot grasp reality correctly, or faithfully reflect what is typical in reality. ("Experiencing life" means taking an active part in production and the class struggle, as explained earlier.)

Here we can use the term "the special characteristics of art." A writer or artist may adopt a progressive stand on certain political questions either because of his sense of justice and humanitarianism, his social and economic position, or his love of his country and people; but he cannot rely on this progressive stand and those factors which make him adopt it to reflect social reality as an artist. This is one reason for the contradictions between the artistic method and the progressive political stand of certain writers and artists. Again, an artist's understanding of reality and attitude towards it are not always consistent. This is true of some of the great writers of critical realism in the capitalist countries of Europe and America. Thus the English novelist Galsworthy describes a bourgeois family and comes to the conclusion, as he unfolds their story, that the class to which they belong has no future. This is Galsworthy's understanding of reality, and it is correct. But this correct understanding does not help him in the attitude he adopts towards reality, his political stand. He does not change his political stand, his antagonism to the working class and socialism, because he recognizes that the bourgeoisie has no future. This may seem inexplicable, yet it is easily explained. It is the result of his class stand. As a sober realist, he must, in his novels, reflect the fact that the bourgeoisie has no future; but since he belongs to a class he must either be for the proletariat or the bourgeoisie, and he chooses to stand by the bourgeoisie. Galsworthy's case illustrates the fact that the progressive method of a writer or artist does not necessarily give him a progressive political stand. Similarly, a reactionary political stand does not necessarily stop a writer or artist from using a progressive method. In the past attempts have been made to solve this problem by saying that the method of writing (realism) can overcome a writer's political bias. Thus politically Balzac was a royalist, but because he was a great realist his method of writing triumphed over his political prejudice, and therefore in his novels he had to point out that the aristocracy was doomed and to give high praise to democratic, republican heroes. There are still people today who hold this view. However, this explanation is unsatisfactory, because a realist like Galsworthy did not create democratic, republican heroes.

At this point someone may protest: "First you said that the world outlook affects the method of writing; now you say that a reactionary political stand does not necessarily prevent a writer from adopting a progressive method of writing. Isn't this contradictory?"

As argued above, the effect of the world outlook on the method of writing is beyond doubt. But during its development a school of writing with a long tradition like realism accumulates experience till it forms a systematic body of laws governing its art, and comes to possess a certain independent nature. This is also undeniable. This set of laws is naturally one side only of this method of writing, relating solely to its form and determined by the content; but bourgeois writers often consider this as the whole method of writing, and accept it in this sense. Many bourgeois realist writers have accepted the method of realism in this way, not realizing that realism is a method of recognizing reality. However, since the laws of writing include the method of recognizing reality, those writers who accept the realist theory of art also learn unconsciously how to understand reality and produce works of realism. The works so produced are naturally affected by the conflicting

elements in the author's world outlook; hence they can reflect only half or less than half of reality, or may even distort reality. This often happens in different works by one and the same writer. We see great inconsistency in the earlier and later books of men like Ernest Hemmingway and J. B. Priestley, showing that the nature of the conflict in their world outlook and attitude towards reality is constantly changing too. But their method of writing remains basically unchanged.

We also find writers with a world reputation who are firmly on the progressive side both in their politics and their method of writing, yet who cannot shake off the influence of idealism in the realm of literary and artistic ideas. They still hanker after such idealist terms as abstract "human nature," "freedom in literature and art" or "the artist's conscience." This shows that the contradictions in the realist writer's world outlook are extremely complex. Those in capitalist countries we can call the reflection of social contradictions in the writer's mind, those in socialist countries the "birthmarks" left by capitalism in men's minds. We are carrying out ideological remoulding in order to wipe out all idealist ideas and do away with all vestiges of bourgeois thought. This is also one stage in the method of writing as it advances from realism to socialist realism, for a socialist realist writer cannot have any contradictions between his method of writing and his world outlook.

The critical realists, starting from the relationship between man and his environment, used artistic generalization to show the laws of social development. This was the result of the spread of Marxism in the later half of the nineteenth century and the upsurge of the class struggle in Europe, which influenced realist writers. But one aspect of the ideological struggle which is part of the class struggle is the reflection in writers' minds of reactionary ideas like empiricism (this and naturalism in philosophy supplied the ideological basis for naturalism in literature and art) and economic determinism (the vulgarized view of history which poses as historical materialism and exercised pernicious influence on some realists at the end of the nineteenth century). So in literature we find the concept of men's destinies being controlled in an almost fatalistic manner by social and economic laws. Those realist writers who were influenced by empiricism and economic determinism went to the other extreme of classicist and romanticist writers. According to them, social laws were omnipotent; everything was determined in advance; men were powerless to prevent something fated to come and powerless to bring about something not so fated; nor could they expedite or delay events. The implication is that the revolutionary struggle of the people plays no positive role in changing the course of history; the work of revolutionary parties is pointless; men might as well sit down and wait for the working out of social laws; revolutionary theories and great men who organize revolutionary activities can have no effect on history. Such a concept of men as higher animals completely at the mercy of their environment and lacking in all initiative must naturally have a serious negative effect and cause great dissatisfaction among the people as a whole.

"Too much of the real, too little of the ideal." Such was the protest of certain critics. Of course, we should remember that these well-meaning critics had their own definition of "the real" and "the ideal." If we judge these gloomy works according to our understanding of "the real" and "the ideal," we say it was precisely because they could not interpret the laws of social development in terms of historical materialism that they could not give a truthful reflection of reality or hold out any positive ideals.

To combine the real with the ideal or, to use a clearer expression in common use, through reality to point out the ideal vista (glimpsing tomorrow from the standpoint of today) is a task which socialist realism alone can achieve. For socialist realist writers are armed with dialectical materialism and historical materialism. That is to say, their world outlook is completely different from that of all the realists of the past.

One reason why the great masterpieces of the past have not lost their splendour even today is because they depicted men's ideal of a beautiful and noble life, creating idealized heroes who showed themselves dauntless in their search for a magnificent ideal. That is why even today works of positive romanticism still inspire us. The heroes themselves, however, are unrealistic. They are supermen and the ideal life which they risk death to discover is woven of fancies and illusions. So although these works can move us, they are no use as actual guides.

The heroes that socialist realism wants to create are men who are willing to sacrifice themselves for high ideals and yet

are real human beings. They are not individualists but heroes with a strong collective spirit, born of the people and remaining part of the people, not supermen descended from the skies. The great ideal for which they are willing to sacrifice themselves is not idle fancy either, but communist society — the highest stage of human development confirmed by the practice of the socialist revolution and socialist construction in the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism. Heroes with such a lofty ideal should be splendid yet human, always ahead of the masses yet not separated from them, aspiring yet never subjective or fanciful. They are naturally different from the heroes of positive romanticism, for the latter are not real men whereas the heroes of socialist realism are real men living among us. However, a writer who wants to depict such characters successfully, in addition to realism, needs to grasp the spirit of revolutionary romanticism. To use a stock phrase, revolutionary romanticism is a part of socialist realism.

Regarding the story, which arises out of the activities of the characters, and the circumstances, the setting of the story, positive romanticism seeks for something splendid and out of the common run — strange happenings in strange surroundings. Naturally the fanciful elements outnumber the realistic. It is often said that life in the old society was grey and humdrum. Socialist realism alone can penetrate beneath the surface of what is usually considered humdrum, to lay bare what is extraordinary in reality and express it with fiery and stirring images. Are not the lowest walks of life in great cities and in the countryside, the activities of an underground Party, the highly complex and varied forms of the struggle more real and remarkable than heroes in medieval castles or the gallantry of ancient brigands? As for the new society, it comprises even more remarkable incidents. Surely the great and small happenings of the last few years which we have experienced ourselves are entirely without precedent. Our forbears with their rich imagination described many exciting adventures and marvels, but these are nothing compared with daily happenings in our present life. The adventures and marvels of the real world, whether of socialist transformation or socialist construction, are so splendid, colourful and stupendous that our writers must draw on the spirit and style of revolutionary romanticism to express them. In the forty years since the October Revolution, the work of revolutionary writers in the Soviet Union and elsewhere has proved conclusively that the method of socialist realism is a combination of the ideal and the real, a combination of revolutionary romanticism and realism. This is possible because the ideological basis of socialist realism is dialectical materialism and historical materialism. It is for this reason that, although socialist realism inherits the traditions of the old realism, it is a completely new method of writing, because it has its own clear class nature and political principles.

YANG YU

Dough Figures

One of the best friends of Chinese children is the folk artist who makes figures out of dough. This is as true today as in the past. When a small gong sounds from the street corner, children fly out from every house to surround the dough-moulder. He opens his compact wooden case to disclose dough of different colours, and with his deft, artist's hands proceeds to knead these into various forms: plump dolls dear to the hearts of little girls, historical figures familiar from story-books, fairies, birds and animals.... In no time at all the children are confronted with a wonderful world of toys. These can be bought for a song and long enjoyed.

The coloured dough usually contains certain chemicals, which enable it to keep for as long as ten years. Since the dough is soft and easy to knead, most figures are meticulously portrayed, but the facial expressions are usually exaggerated for dramatic effect, and vivid, strongly contrasted colours are used — red, yellow, green, blue, black and white. From these basic colours

an experienced dough-moulder can produce more than fifty different shades. He kneads these together and manipulates them to create the effect of a moistly flushed human skin or the most elaborate costumes. This is a special feature of this art.

The tools of this trade are simple in the extreme: one trowel, a tiny pair of scissors, a pocket knife, pincers, a diminutive comb and some bamboo sticks. When the artist has moulded whatever figures he fancies with the appropriate posture, expression and costume, he finishes it with his tools. A master at this art can convey the whole gamut of human emotions in these figures less than three inches high. And this art is such a decorative one that grown-ups enjoy it too.

In Chinese villages many festivals are celebrated every year. At these times clever housewives, making cakes and bread, often knead the dough into human or animal shapes and colour them to please the children. Perhaps this is how the art of making dough figures started. They say that forty years ago the dough figures made in Peking were sometimes as much as five or six inches high. Tang Tzu-po, an old artist who still moulds dough today, was one of the first to make figures only two or three inches high and put several of these together to create a scene in a story. Later Chao Kuo-ming and Lang Shao-an developed distinctive styles of their own, which become so well known that they have earned the artists such familiar and affectionate names as Dough-moulder Tang, Dough-moulder Chao and Dough-moulder Lang.

These three artists knew many ups and downs in their life and often went hungry or cold. With their showmen's boxes on their shoulders, they trudged through many towns and villages, moulding figures or giving displays. Often they had to spend the night in some ancient temple in the mountains, where they gazed at the Buddhist statues made by earlier artists, studying their form and the folds of the sculptured garments. These years enabled them to meet men of all sorts and conditions in every part of the country, and the experience thus gained helped them to create beautiful and fresh groups of figures. What their vagabond life failed to give them, however, was the security necessary for the full development of their gifts. After liberation, when their livelihood was assured, they were able to concentrate upon their art. Today these three men are respected artists.

A dough figure

Dough-moulder Tang at work

A typical scene created by Tang Tzu-po is taken from the story of how the monk Tripitaka went in search of Buddhist canons, a story based on the famous sixteenth century novel *Pilgrimage to the West* by Wu Cheng-en. In a glass case five or six inches high we see a towering mountain. The monk's first disciple, clever Monkey, is high among the clouds gazing into the distance; his second disciple, Pigsy, is clumsily raking brambles out of their path; pious Tripitaka himself is sitting with hands folded in prayer on horseback, followed by his third disciple, Sandy, who is striding after him carrying the baggage. This episode in their travels is most realistically depicted. Chao Kuo-ming is noted for his scenes of children at play, and the vivid, realistic expressions and movements of these children. Lang Shao-an has based one of his scenes on his own experience: it shows how in the past he wandered from street to street with his children, his show box on his back; and how today he teaches in Peking in the Institute of Folk Art. This work makes clear the vast difference between the old life of dough-moulders and the new.

Like other forms of folk art, dough moulding is neither monotonous nor naturalistic. Realistic, bold and highly decorative, it reveals certain patterns of our people's life and customs. In it we can see the influence of such traditional arts as folk opera and painting, linked with a fresh, original approach. Since this is a folk art which comes from the people, the artists have a rich experience of life and are thoroughly familiar with their subjects. Lang Shao-an told us: "Before starting work on a figure, I close my eyes to see in my mind's eye its exact position and costume." Tang Tzu-po said: "The main thing in moulding dough figures is to make them lifelike. They must look alive, not dead."

Dough-moulders work at such speed that this art is one which is able to reflect the new in life very quickly. In the past, these artists had to mould rapidly in order to make a living; hence they limited their subjects in the main to the stereotyped historical figures, fairies or Buddhas. In recent years they have introduced many new characters from stories ancient and modern and from films. Not long ago the old artist, Tang Tzu-po, made a Moon Goddess and Soviet sputnik in dough. This scene has a strong romantic flavour, for the goddess, catching sight of the sputnik soaring heavenward,

leaves her palace and flies towards it through the coloured clouds.

This traditional art has won much greater respect and popularity than ever before; and whereas in the past dough-moulders lived like vagabonds, today most of them have positions in art institutions — a new situation which enables them to produce more and finer works.

A modest man learns ten things and takes credit for one,
A complacent man learns one and takes credit for ten.

— Han Proverb

A poor drinker's head is turned by two cups,
A conceited man loses his balance with a little praise.

— Han Proverb

Books

MONHEBOIN

"Beacon on the Steppes"

Most of us over thirty remember clearly the calamities brought upon the Mongolian people by the Japanese invasion of China's northeast and their reign of terror on the Kolchin Steppes. In those days the flames of war spread far and wide, happy homes were broken up and people driven from their ruined houses; yet the local rulers led a life of shameless luxury, ignoring the people's suffering and using both force and guile to prevent them from fighting for freedom and liberation. The people were not to be crushed, though. In their search for liberty they found the champion of all Chinese nationalities — the Chinese Communist Party. The Party awoke slaves from their long slumber and smashed their heavy fetters; under its leadership they carried on an indomitable fight against the invaders and Prince Darhan. *Beacon on the Steppes,* published in 1958, deals with the period when the Mongolian and Han peoples fought together against the Japanese invaders and the feudal power. This is the first novel of the young Mongolian writer Ulanbagan. It gives us graphic descriptions of Inner Mongolia and the lives, thoughts and feelings of the people there. It succeeds admirably in conveying the author's deep sympathy for the slaves and exultation over their awakening and rising.

The two main threads in this novel are the awakening of the slaves, of whom Batjargal is the central figure, and the underground struggle of the Mongolian people led by the Party member Li Ta-nien. These two strands give a complex picture of the struggle in the steppes.

The state of mind of the slaves is brilliantly depicted. Batjargal's father was killed by the reactionaries for his part in the revolt against Prince Darhan and the local warlords; so his son becomes the prince's slave. With deep insight and skill, the author presents the slave boy's feelings, conveying to readers through his mental conflict the vileness of that oppressive feudal regime. Because Prince Darhan tells him that his father was a criminal, young Batjargal obeys his rule and has a sense of guilt, for which he seeks in various ways to atone. When the prince's steward, Wanchin, informs him that his parents were murdered by the Hans, he believes him and thirsts for revenge. He takes a whip and pistol from Wanchin and nearly commits a crime. When the prince's trick is disclosed, Batjargal feels he has woken from an evil dream, and finally he joins the anti-Japanese forces together with the Hans participating and led by the Chinese Communist Party. His character is most successfully drawn, especially the description of his gradual awakening.

There are other moving characters in this novel, like Oyunchichig, the daughter of a poor herdsman. This good-hearted girl loves Batjargal dearly, and longs for freedom and happiness, which she wins in the end. Then there is Li Ta-nien's younger sister, Hsiao-lan, a slave in the prince's household. This pure, innocent girl has great courage, and some of the most stirring passages in the book describe her hidden grief and how she sacrifices her own life so that Batjargal and Oyunchichig may escape. The bad characters are truthfully presented, too. From the portraits of the Japanese fascist Kanagawa, decadent Prince Darhan, his flattering steward Wanchin and the merchant Tu Fu-kuei, we can see how Japanese fascism allied with the feudal rulers and big merchants to grind down the Mongolian people. Against this background the changes that take place in the slave's mind appear natural and convincing.

This century has seen great storms on the Mongolian steppes, and the Mongolian people have gone through tremendous changes and struggles, but so far few works have given an adequate picture of this important historical period. *Beacon on the Steppes* is significant because it helps to fill this gap, and because it indicates that the new Mongolian literature growing out of the revolutionary struggle is beginning to blossom and bear fruit.

Chronicle

Reference Material for Literary Research

A series of reference books on Chinese classical literature has recently been published by the Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. One is a collection of appreciations and commentaries written on the poems of Po Chu-yi (772-846), the famous Tang dynasty poet whose poems have been translated into many languages. For a thousand years, from the middle of the Tang dynasty to the end of the Ching dynasty, Chinese scholars recorded their reactions to his poems, giving their own interpretations. This is the first time that a fairly comprehensive collection of such material has been assembled in one book for the convenience of students.

Another work is *The Poems of Kung Shang-jen*. Containing more than one thousand poems, this is the most complete collection of Kung's poems yet made. Kung Shang-jen (1648-1718) was a well-known dramatist, whose *The Peach-blossom Fan* expresses patriotism through the love story of a celebrated Nanking courtesan and a noted scholar of the time. This drama ranks with Hung Sheng's *Palace of Eternal Youth* as one of the masterpieces of the early Ching dynasty. Though Kung Shang-jen wrote many poems, no good collection of these was previously made. This volume should shed light on the playwright's life and thought.

Exhibition of Soviet Cartoons

An exhibition of Soviet cartoons opened on February 5 in Chungshan Park, Peking. The famous Soviet cartoonists Boris Yefimov and Litvinenko, who were visiting China at the time, took part in the opening ceremony. Chang Hsi-jo, chairman of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Yeh Chien-yu, vice-chairman of the Chinese Artists' Union, and B. Yefimov spoke on the significance of this exhibition.

The 105 exhibits include some of the best works of the outstanding cartoonists Yefimov, Litvinenko, Galba, Suifertis, Dolgoryukov and Yensen, as well as cartoons by the *Boyevoi Karandash* (Militant Pencil) group of Leningrad. Yefimov's and Litvinenko's cartoons and poster-cartoons show how accurate and forceful a weapon this art form can be. Notable items were Suifertis' and Galba's cartoons of the Western "free world" and the excellent work by Dolgoryukov and Yensen dealing with the days of the civil war and the war against fascist Hitler. The artists of the Militant Pencil group, who made such a contribution in World War II, also aroused great interest. This exhibition shows that Soviet cartoonists are enriching and adding fresh variety to their art, to strive for a happier life and to defend world peace. There is much here from which Chinese cartoonists can learn, and this exhibition has further cemented the friendship between Chinese and Soviet cartoonists.

Reproductions of Pa-ta-shan-jen's Paintings

Recently the Shanghai People's Art Publishing House has published a volume of reproductions of twenty-eight of Pa-ta-shan-jen's paintings, including *The Joyful Fish*. Pa-ta-shan-jen is well known to lovers of Chinese art at home and abroad. A member of the imperial house of Ming, when that dynasty was overthrown by the Manchus, he gave up his real name and became a monk. After using various pseudonyms such as Jen-wu and Lu, he finally adopted the name Pa-ta-shan-jen. He loved to paint mountains and rivers, flowers, birds and trees, and was also a good calligrapher; his paintings have a free, bold style, unrestricted by past conventions but new and distinctively his own; these works are universally admired, but few of those extant are genuine. This collection of reproductions has been carefully selected from his best work.

French Acrobatic Troupe in Peking

Thirty-five members of the Parisian Folk Acrobatic Troupe, led by Georges Soria, director of the Paris Literature and Art Society, arrived in Peking on January 20. The seven performances they gave in the Peking Gymnasium were seen by audiences of more than forty thousand. Their roller-skating, callisthenics and turns on the swings and trapezes impressed people by their delicacy and deft execution. The roller-skating on a small, round, marble table was a miracle of adroitness and accurate timing. The callisthenics were superb, revealing the great beauty of the human form; under the arc lights the performers gleamed like marble statues. The brilliant performance built up an atmosphere of buoyancy, exhilaration and suspense. This demonstration of the fine tradition of French acrobatics has given Chinese audiences a desire to know more of French folk art. The troupe left Peking on January 29, to perform in Canton, Shanghai and Tientsin.

Second National Photographic Exhibition

The Second All-China Exhibition of Photographic Art opened in Peking on January 15. The 389 exhibits were selected from more than 1,800 sent in since 1958, and reflect the scenes of socialist construction and some of the richness and colour of life today. In choice of theme, composition and modes of expression, this exhibition shows far greater variety than the First All-China Exhibition of Photographic Art held in December 1957. There are many unforgettable pictures. In *The Old Couple in the Old People's Home* an old man holding a towel forgets to wipe his face as he smiles at his aged wife doing her hair at the mirror. Such photographs as *Moving into the New Village, Electric Light Comes to the Mongolian Yurts, Holiday in the Altai Mountain Region, The Commune Canteen* and *A Village Kindergarten* give us glimpses of the abundant new life in the people's communes. These works are strongly realistic and yet full of poetry. From Peking the exhibition went to Shanghai and Canton.

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