

# CHINESE LITERATURE



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Front Cover: A Cadre Is an Ordinary Labourer — *Chang Wen-ju*

## **Kung I-chi**

The layout of Luchen's taverns is unique. In each, facing you as you enter, is a bar in the shape of a carpenter's square where hot water is kept ready for warming rice wine. When men come off work at mid-day and in the evening they spend four coppers on a bowl of wine — or so they did twenty years ago; now it costs ten — and drink this warm, standing by the bar, taking it easy. Another copper will buy a plate of salted bamboo shoots or peas flavoured with aniseed to go with the wine, while a dozen will buy a meat dish; but most of the customers here belong to the short-coated class, few of whom can afford this. As for those in long gowns, they go into the inner room to order wine and dishes and sit drinking at their leisure.

At the age of twelve I started work as a pot-boy in Prosperity Tavern at the edge of the town. The boss put me to work in the outer room, saying that I looked too much of a fool to serve long-gowned customers. The short-coated customers there were easier to deal with, it is true, but among them were quite a few pernickety ones who insisted on watching for themselves while the yellow wine was ladled from the keg, looked for water at the bottom of the wine-pot, and

personally inspected the pot's immersion into the hot water. Under such strict surveillance, diluting the wine was very hard indeed. Thus it did not take my boss many days to decide that this job too was beyond me. Luckily I had been recommended by somebody influential, so he could not sack me. Instead I was transferred to the dull task of simply warming wine.

After that I stood all day behind the bar attending to my duties. Although I gave satisfaction at this post, I found it somewhat boring and monotonous. Our boss was a grim-faced man, nor were the customers much pleasanter, which made the atmosphere a gloomy one. The only times when there was any laughter were when Kung I-chi came to the tavern. That is why I remember him.

Kung I-chi was the only long-gowned customer who used to drink his wine standing. A big, pallid man whose wrinkled face often bore scars, he had a large, unkempt and grizzled beard. And although he wore a long gown it was dirty and tattered. It had not by the look of it been washed or mended for ten years or more. He used so many archaisms in his speech that half of it was barely intelligible. And as his surname was Kung, he was given the nickname Kung I-chi from *kung, i, chi*, the first three characters in the old-fashioned children's copy-book. Whenever he came in, everyone there would look at him and chuckle. And someone was sure to call out:

"Kung I-chi! What are those fresh scars on your face?"

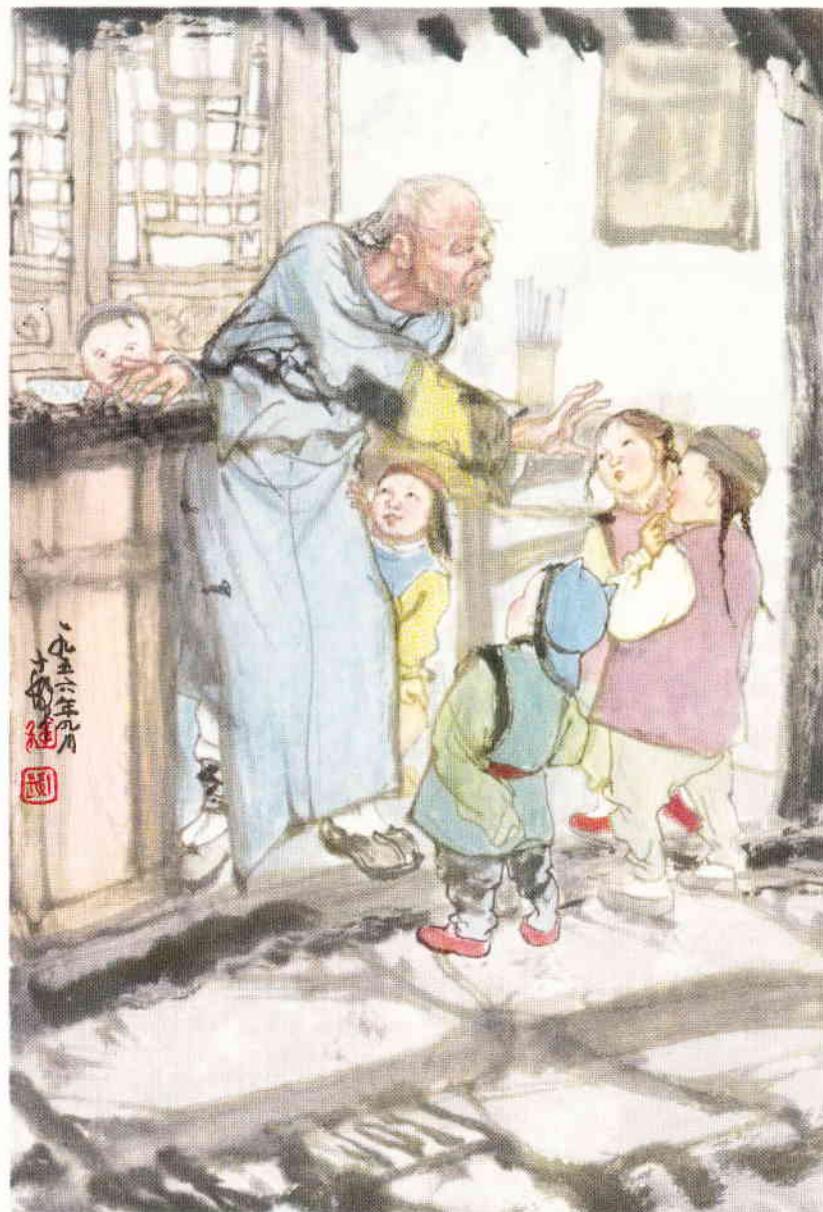
Ignoring this, he would lay nine coppers on the bar and order two bowls of heated wine with a dish of aniseed-peas. Then someone else would bawl:

"You must have been stealing again!"

"Why sully a man's good name for no reason at all?" Kung I-chi would ask, raising his eyebrows.

"Good name? Why, the day before yesterday you were trussed up and beaten for stealing books from the Ho family. I saw you!"

At that Kung I-chi would flush, the veins on his forehead standing out as he protested, "Taking books can't be counted as stealing. . . . Taking books . . . for a scholar . . . can't be counted as stealing." Then followed such quotations from the classics as "A gentleman keeps his integrity even in poverty," together with a spate of archaisms



which soon had everybody roaring with laughter, enlivening the whole tavern.

From the gossip that I heard, it seemed that Kung I-chi had studied the classics but never passed the official examinations and, not knowing any way to make a living, he had grown steadily poorer until he was almost reduced to beggary. Luckily he was a good calligrapher and could find enough copying work to fill his rice-bowl. But unfortunately he had his failings too: laziness and a love of tipping. So after a few days he would disappear, taking with him books, paper, brushes and inkstone. And after this had happened several times, people stopped employing him as a copyist. Then all he could do was resort to occasional pilfering. In our tavern, though, he was a model customer who never failed to pay up. Sometimes, it is true, when he had no ready money, his name would be chalked up on our tally-board; but in less than a month he invariably settled the bill, and the name Kung I-chi would be wiped off the board again.

After Kung I-chi had drunk half a bowl of wine, his flushed cheeks would stop burning. But then someone would ask:

“Kung I-chi, can you really read?”

When he glanced back as if such a question were not worth answering, they would continue: “How is it you never passed even the lowest official examination?”

At once a grey tinge would overspread Kung I-chi's dejected, discomfited face, and he would mumble more of those unintelligible archaisms. Then everyone there would laugh heartily again, enlivening the whole tavern.

At such times I could join in the laughter with no danger of a dressing-down from my boss. In fact he always put such questions to Kung I-chi himself, to raise a laugh. Knowing that it was no use talking to the men, Kung I-chi would chat with us boys. Once he asked me:

“Have you had any schooling?”

When I nodded curtly he said, “Well then, I'll test you. How do you write the *bui*\* in aniseed-peas?”

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\*A Chinese character meaning “anisced”.

Who did this beggar think he was, testing me! I turned away and ignored him. After waiting for some time he said earnestly:

"You can't write it, eh? I'll show you. Mind you remember. You ought to remember such characters, because you'll need them to write up your accounts when you have a shop of your own."

It seemed to me that I was still very far from having a shop of my own; in addition to which, our boss never entered aniseed-peas in his account-book. Half amused and half exasperated, I drawled: "I don't need you to show me. Isn't it the *bui* written with the element for grass?"

Kung I-chi's face lit up. Tapping two long finger-nails on the bar, he nodded. "Quite correct!" he said. "There are four different ways of writing *bui*. Do you know them?"

But my patience exhausted, I scowled and moved away. Kung I-chi had dipped his finger in wine to trace the characters on the bar. When he saw my utter indifference his face fell and he sighed.

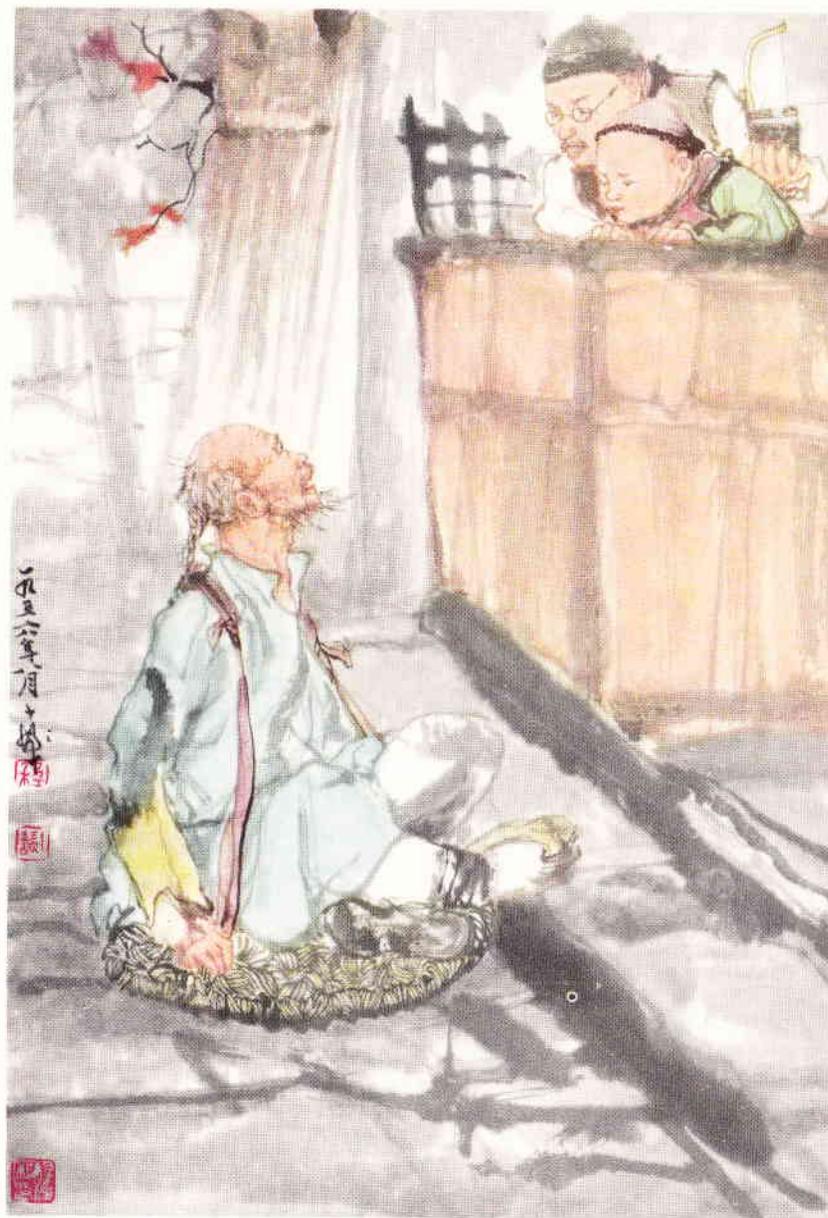
Sometimes children in the neighbourhood, hearing laughter, came in to join in the fun and surrounded Kung I-chi. Then he would give them aniseed-peas, one apiece. After eating the peas the children would still hang round, their eyes fixed on the dish. Growing flustered, he would cover it with his hand and bending forward from the waist would say: "There aren't many left, not many at all." Straightening up to look at the peas again, he would shake his head and reiterate: "Not many, I do assure you. Not many, nay, not many at all." Then the children would scamper off, shouting with laughter.

That was how Kung I-chi contributed to our enjoyment, but we got along all right without him too.

One day, shortly before the Mid-Autumn Festival I think it was, my boss who was slowly making out his accounts took down the tally-board. "Kung I-chi hasn't shown up for a long time," he remarked suddenly. "He still owes nineteen coppers." That made me realize how long it was since we had seen him.

"How could he?" rejoined one of the customers. "His legs were broken in that last beating up."

"Ah!" said my boss.



"He'd been stealing again. This time he was fool enough to steal from Mr. Ting, the provincial-grade scholar. As if anybody could get away with that!"

"So what happened?"

"What happened? First he wrote a confession, then he was beaten. The beating lasted nearly all night, and they broke both his legs."

"And then?"

"Well, his legs were broken."

"Yes, but after?"

"After? . . . Who knows? He may be dead."

My boss asked no further questions but went on slowly making up his accounts.

After the Mid-Autumn Festival the wind grew daily colder as winter approached, and even though I spent all my time by the stove I had to wear a padded jacket. One afternoon, when the tavern was deserted, as I sat with my eyes closed I heard the words:

"Warm a bowl of wine."

It was said in a low but familiar voice. I opened my eyes. There was no one to be seen. I stood up to look out. There below the bar, facing the door, sat Kung I-chi. His face was thin and grimy — he looked a wreck. He had on a ragged lined jacket and was squatting cross-legged on a mat which was attached to his shoulders by a straw rope. When he saw me he repeated:

"Warm a bowl of wine."

At this point my boss leaned over the bar to ask: "Is that Kung I-chi? You still owe nineteen coppers."

"That . . . I'll settle next time." He looked up dejectedly. "Here's cash. Give me some good wine."

My boss, just as in the past, chuckled and said:

"Kung I-chi, you've been stealing again!"

But instead of a stout denial, the answer simply was:

"Don't joke with me."

"Joke? How did your legs get broken if you hadn't been stealing?"

"I fell," whispered Kung I-chi. "Broke them in a fall." His eyes pleaded with the boss to let the matter drop. By now several people had gathered round, and they all laughed with the boss. I warmed

the wine, carried it over, and set it on the threshold. He produced four coppers from his ragged coat pocket, and as he placed them in my hand I saw that his own hands were covered with mud — he must have crawled there on them. Presently he finished the wine and, to the accompaniment of taunts and laughter, slowly pushed himself off with his hands.

A long time went by after that without our seeing Kung I-chi again. At the end of the year, when the boss took down the tally-board he said: "Kung I-chi still owes nineteen coppers." At the Dragon-Boat Festival the next year he said the same thing again. But when the Mid-Autumn Festival arrived he was silent on the subject, and another New Year came round without our seeing any more of Kung I-chi.

Nor have I ever seen him since — no doubt Kung I-chi really is dead.

March 1919

*Illustrated by Cheng Shib-fa*

## A Small Incident

Six years have slipped by since I came from the country to the capital. During that time the number of so-called affairs of state I have witnessed or heard about is far from small, but none of them made much impression. If asked to define their influence on me, I can only say they made my bad temper worse. Frankly speaking, they taught me to take a poorer view of people every day.

One small incident, however, which struck me as significant and jolted me out of my irritability, remains fixed even now in my memory.

It was the winter of 1917, a strong north wind was blustering, but the exigencies of earning my living forced me to be up and out early. I met scarcely a soul on the road, but eventually managed to hire a rickshaw to take me to S— Gate. Presently the wind dropped a little, having blown away the drifts of dust on the road to leave a clean broad highway, and the rickshaw man quickened his pace. We were just approaching S— Gate when we knocked into someone who slowly toppled over.

It was a grey-haired woman in ragged clothes. She had stepped out abruptly from the roadside in front of us, and although the rick-

shaw man had swerved, her tattered padded waistcoat, unbuttoned and billowing in the wind, had caught on the shaft. Luckily the rickshaw man had slowed down, otherwise she would certainly have had a bad fall and it might have been a serious accident.

She huddled there on the ground, and the rickshaw man stopped. As I did not believe the old woman was hurt and as no one else had seen us, I thought this halt of his uncalled for, liable to land him in trouble and hold me up.

"It's all right," I said. "Go on."

He paid no attention — he may not have heard — but set down the shafts, took the old woman's arm and gently helped her up.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"I hurt myself falling."

I thought: I saw how slowly you fell, how could you be hurt? Putting on an act like this is simply disgusting. The rickshaw man asked for trouble, and now he's got it. He'll have to find his own way out.

But the rickshaw man did not hesitate for a minute after hearing the old woman's answer. Still holding her arm, he helped her slowly forward. Rather puzzled by this I looked ahead and saw a police station. Because of the high wind, there was no one outside. It was there that the rickshaw man was taking the old woman.

Suddenly I had the strange sensation that his dusty retreating figure had in that instant grown larger. Indeed, the further he walked the larger he loomed, until I had to look up to him. At the same time he seemed gradually to be exerting a pressure on me which threatened to overpower the small self hidden under my fur-lined gown.

Almost paralyzed at that juncture I sat there motionless, my mind a blank, until a policeman came out. Then I got down from the rickshaw.

The policeman came up to me and said, "Get another rickshaw. He can't take you any further."

On the spur of the moment I pulled a handful of coppers from my coat pocket and handed them to the policeman. "Please give him this," I said.



The wind had dropped completely, but the road was still quiet. As I walked along thinking, I hardly dared to think about myself. Quite apart from what had happened earlier, what had I meant by that handful of coppers? Was it a reward? Who was I to judge the rickshaw man? I could give myself no answer.

Even now, this incident keeps coming back to me. It keeps distressing me and makes me try to think about myself. The politics and the fighting of those years have slipped my mind as completely as the classics I read as a child. Yet this small incident keeps coming back to me, often more vivid than in actual life, teaching me shame, spurring me on to reform, and imbuing me with fresh courage and fresh hope.

July 1920

*Illustrated by Szutu Chiao*

## In the Tavern

During my travels from the north to the southeast I made a detour to my home and then went on to S—. This town, only thirty *li* from my native place, can be reached in less than half a day by a small boat. I had taught for a year in a school here. In the depth of winter after snow the landscape was bleak; but a combination of indolence and nostalgia made me put up briefly in the Lo Szu Hotel, a new hotel since my time. The town was small. I looked for several old colleagues I thought I might find, but not one of them was there. They had long since gone their different ways. And when I passed the gate of the school that too had changed its name and appearance, making me feel quite a stranger. In less than two hours my enthusiasm had waned and I rather reproached myself for coming.

The hotel I was in let rooms but did not serve meals, which had to be ordered from outside, but these were about as unpalatable as mud. Outside the window was only a stained and spotted wall, covered with withered moss. Above was the leaden sky, a colourless dead white; moreover a flurry of snow had begun to fall. Since

my lunch had been poor and I had nothing to do to while away the time, my thoughts turned quite naturally to a small tavern I had known well in the past called One Barrel House, which I reckoned could not be far from the hotel. I immediately locked my door and set out to find it. Actually, all I wanted was to escape the boredom of my stay, not to do any serious drinking. One Barrel House was still there, its narrow mouldering front and dilapidated signboard unchanged. But from the landlord down to the waiters there was not a soul I knew — in One Barrel House too I had become a complete stranger. Still I climbed the familiar stairway in the corner to the little upper storey. The five small wooden tables up here were unchanged; only the window at the back, originally latticed, had been fitted with glass panes.

“A catty of yellow wine. To go with it? Ten pieces of fried beancurd with plenty of paprika sauce.”

As I gave this order to the waiter who had come up with me I went and sat down at the table by the back window. The fact that the place was empty enabled me to pick the best seat, one with a view of the deserted garden below. Most likely this did not belong to the tavern. I had looked out at it many times in the past, sometimes too in snowy weather. But now, to eyes accustomed to the north, the sight was sufficiently striking. Several old plum trees in full bloom were braving the snow as if oblivious of the depth of winter; while among the thick dark green foliage of a camellia beside the crumbling pavilion a dozen crimson blossoms blazed bright as flame in the snow, indignant and arrogant, as if despising the wanderer's wanderlust. At this I suddenly remembered the moistness of the heaped snow here, clinging, glistening and shining, quite unlike the dry northern snow which when a high wind blows will fly up to fill the sky like mist. . . .

“Your wine, sir . . .” said the waiter carelessly, putting down my cup, chopsticks, wine-pot and dish. The wine had come. I turned to the table, set everything straight and filled my cup. I felt that the north was certainly not my home, yet when I came south I could only count as a stranger. The powdery dry snow which whirled through

the air up there and the clinging soft snow here were equally alien to me. In a slightly melancholy mood I took a leisurely sip of wine. The wine tasted pure and the fried beancurd was excellently cooked, only the paprika sauce was not hot enough; but then the people of S— had never understood pungent flavours.

Probably because it was the afternoon, the place had none of the atmosphere of a tavern. By the time I had drunk three cups, the four other tables were still unoccupied. A sense of loneliness stole over me as I stared at the deserted garden, yet I did not want other customers to come up. Thus I could not help being irritated by the occasional footsteps on the stairs, and was relieved to find it was only the waiter. And so I drank another two cups of wine.

“This time it must be a customer,” I thought, at the sound of footsteps much slower than those of the waiter. When I judged that he must be at the top of the stairs, I raised my head rather apprehensively to look at this extraneous company and stood up with a start. It had never occurred to me that I might run into a friend here — if such he would still let me call him. The newcomer was an old classmate who had been my colleague when I was a teacher, and although he had changed a great deal I knew him at a glance. Only he had become very slow in his movements, quite unlike the spry dynamic Lu Wei-fu of the old days.

“Well, Wei-fu, is it you? Fancy meeting you here!”

“Well, well, is it you? Just fancy. . . .”

I invited him to join me, but he seemed to hesitate before doing so. This struck me as strange, then I felt rather hurt and annoyed. A closer look revealed that Lu had still the same unkempt hair and beard, but his pale lantern-jawed face was thin and wasted. He appeared very quiet if not dispirited, and his eyes beneath their thick black brows had lost their alertness; but while looking slowly around, at sight of the deserted garden they suddenly flashed with the same piercing light I had seen so often at school.

“Well,” I said cheerfully but very awkwardly, “it must be ten years since last we saw each other. I heard long ago that you were at Tsinan, but I was so wretchedly lazy I never wrote. . . .”

"It was the same with me. I've been at Taiyuan for more than two years now with my mother. When I came back to fetch her I learned that you had already left, left for good and all."

"What are you doing at Taiyuan?" I asked.

"Teaching in the family of a fellow-provincial."

"And before that?"

"Before that?" He took a cigarette from his pocket, lit it and put it to his lips, then watching the smoke he puffed out said reflectively, "Just futile work, amounting to nothing at all."

He in turn asked what I had been doing all these years. I gave him a rough idea, at the same time calling the waiter to bring a cup and chopsticks in order that Lu could share my wine while we had another two catties heated. We also ordered dishes. In the past we had never stood on ceremony, but now we began deferring to each other so that finally we fixed on four dishes suggested by the waiter: peas spiced with aniseed, jellied pork, fried beancurd and salted mackerel.

"As soon as I came back I knew I was a fool." Holding his cigarette in one hand and the winecup in the other, he spoke with a bitter smile. "When I was young, I saw the way bees or flies stuck to one spot. If something frightened them they would buzz off, but after flying in a small circle they would come back to stop in the same place; and I thought this really ridiculous as well as pathetic. Little did I think I'd be flying back myself too after only describing a small circle. And I didn't think you'd come back either. Couldn't you have flown a little further?"

"That's difficult to say. Probably I too have simply described a small circle." I also spoke with a rather bitter smile. "But why did you fly back?"

"For something quite futile." In one gulp he emptied his cup, then took several pulls at his cigarette and his eyes widened a little. "Futile — but you may as well hear about it."

The waiter brought up the freshly heated wine and dishes and set them on the table. The smoke and the fragrance of fried beancurd seemed to make the upstairs room more cheerful, while outside the snow fell still more thickly.

"Perhaps you knew," he went on, "that I had a little brother who died when he was three and was buried in the country here. I can't even remember clearly what he looked like, but I've heard my mother say he was a very lovable child and very fond of me. Even now it brings tears to her eyes to speak of him. This spring an elder cousin wrote to tell us that the ground beside his grave was gradually being swamped, and he was afraid before long it would slip into the river: we should go at once and do something about it. This upset my mother so much that she couldn't sleep for several nights — she can read letters herself, you know. But what could I do? I had no money, no time: there was nothing that could be done.

"Now at last, because I'm on holiday over New Year, I've been able to come south to move his grave." He tossed off another cup of wine and looking out of the window exclaimed: "Could you find anything like this up north? Blossom in thick snow, and the soil beneath the snow not frozen. So the day before yesterday I bought a small coffin in town — because I reckoned that the one under the ground must have rotted long ago — took cotton and bedding, hired four workmen, and went into the country to move his grave. I suddenly felt most elated, eager to dig up the grave, eager to see the bones of the little brother who had been so fond of me: this was a new experience for me. When we reached the grave, sure enough, the river was encroaching on it and the water was less than two feet away. The poor grave not having had any earth added to it for two years was subsiding. Standing there in the snow, I pointed to it firmly and ordered the workmen: 'Dig it up.'

"I really am a commonplace fellow. I felt that my voice at this juncture was rather unnatural, and that this order was the greatest I had given in all my life. But the workmen didn't find it strange in the least, and set to work to dig. When they reached the enclosure I had a look, and sure enough the coffin had rotted almost completely away: there was nothing left but a heap of splinters and chips of wood. My heart beat faster as I set these aside myself, very carefully, wanting to see my little brother. However, I was in for a surprise. Bedding, clothes, skeleton, all had gone!

"I thought: 'These have all disappeared, but hair, I have always heard, is the last thing to rot. There may still be some hair.' So I bent down and searched carefully in the mud where the pillow should have been, but there was none. Not a trace remained."

I suddenly noticed that the rims of his eyes were rather red, but immediately attributed this to the effect of the wine. He had scarcely touched the dishes but had been drinking incessantly and must have drunk more than a catty; his looks and gestures had become more animated, more like the Lu Wei-fu whom I had known. I called the waiter to heat two more cattles of wine, then turned back to face my companion, my cup in my hand, as I listened to him in silence.

"Actually there was really no need to move it: I had only to level the ground, sell the coffin and make an end of the business. Although it might have seemed odd my going to sell the coffin, if the price were low enough the shop from which I bought it would have taken it, and I could at least have recouped a few cents for wine. But I didn't. I still spread out the bedding, wrapped up in cotton some of the clay where his body had been, covered it up, put it in the new coffin, moved it to my father's grave and buried it beside him. And having a brick vault built kept me busy most of yesterday too, supervising the work. But in this way I can count the affair ended, at least enough to deceive my mother and set her mind at rest. Well, well, the look you're giving me shows you are wondering why I've changed so much. Yes, I still remember the time when we went together to the tutelary god's temple to pull off the idols' beards, and how for days on end we used to discuss methods of reforming China until we even came to blows. But this is how I am now, willing to let things slide and to compromise. Sometimes I think: 'If my old friends were to see me now, probably they would no longer acknowledge me as a friend.' But this is what I am like now."

He took out another cigarette, put it to his lips and lit it.

"Judging by your expression, you still expect something of me. Naturally I am much more obtuse than before, but I'm not completely blind yet. This makes me grateful to you, at the same time rather uneasy. I'm afraid I've let down the old friends who even now still wish me well. . . ." He stopped and took several puffs at his

cigarette before going on slowly: "Only today, just before coming to this One Barrel House, I did something futile yet something I was glad to do. My former neighbour on the east side was called Chang Fu. He was a boatman and had a daughter named Ah-shun. When you came to my house in those days you may have seen her but you certainly wouldn't have paid any attention to her, because she was still small then. She didn't grow up to be pretty either, having just an ordinary thin oval face and pale skin. Only her eyes were unusually large with very long lashes and whites as clear as a cloudless night sky — I mean the cloudless sky of the north on a windless day; here it is not so clear. She was very capable. She lost her mother while in her teens, and had to look after a small brother and sister besides waiting on her father; and all this she did very competently. She was so economical too that the family gradually grew better off. There was scarcely a neighbour who didn't praise her, and even Chang Fu often expressed his appreciation. When I was setting off on my journey this time, my mother remembered her — old people's memories are so long. She recalled that once Ah-shun saw someone wearing red velvet flowers in her hair, and wanted a spray for herself. When she couldn't get one she cried nearly all night, so that her father beat her and her eyes remained red and swollen for two or three days. These red flowers came from another province and couldn't be bought even in S—, so how could she ever hope to have any? Since I was coming south this time, my mother told me to buy two sprays for her.

"Far from feeling vexed at this commission, I was actually delighted, really glad of the chance to do something for Ah-shun. The year before last I came back to fetch my mother, and one day when Chang Fu was at home I dropped in for some reason to chat with him. By way of refreshment he offered me some buckwheat mush, remarking that they added white sugar to it. As you can see, a boatman who could afford white sugar was obviously not poor and must eat pretty well. I let myself be persuaded but begged them to give me only a small bowl. He quite understood and instructed Ah-shun: 'These scholars have no appetite. Give him a small bowl, but add more sugar.' However when she had prepared the concoction and brought

it in it gave me quite a turn, because it was a large bowl, as much as I could eat in a whole day. Though compared with Chang Fu's bowl, admittedly, it was small. This was the first time I had eaten buckwheat mush, and I just could not stomach it though it was so sweet. I gulped down a few mouthfuls and decided to leave the rest when I happened to notice Ah-shun standing some distance away in one corner of the room, and I simply hadn't the heart to put down my chopsticks. In her face I saw both hope and fear — fear presumably that she had prepared it badly, and hope that we would find it to our liking. I knew that if I left most of my bowl she would feel very disappointed and sorry. I made up my mind to it and shovelled the stuff down, eating almost as fast as Chang Fu. That taught me how painful it is forcing oneself to eat; and I remembered experiencing the same difficulty as a child when I had to finish a bowl of worm-medicine mixed with brown sugar. I didn't hold it against her though, because her half-suppressed smile of satisfaction when she came to take away our empty bowls more than repaid me for all my discomfort. So that night, although indigestion kept me from sleeping well and I had a series of nightmares, I still wished her a lifetime of happiness and hoped that for her sake the world would change for the better. But such thoughts were only the residue of my old dreams. The next instant I laughed at myself, and promptly forgot them.

"I hadn't known before that she had been beaten on account of a spray of velvet flowers, but when my mother spoke of it I remembered the buckwheat mush incident and became unaccountably diligent. First I made a search in Taiyuan, but none of the shops had them. It was only when I went to Tsinan . . ."

There was a rustle outside the window as a pile of snow slithered off the camellia which had been bending beneath its weight; then the branches of the tree straightened themselves, flaunting their thick dark foliage and blood-red flowers even more clearly. The sky had grown even more leaden. Sparrows were twittering, no doubt because dusk was falling and finding nothing to eat on the snow-covered ground they were going back early to their nests to sleep.

"It was only when I went to Tsinan . . ." He glanced out of the window then turned back, drained a cup of wine, took several puffs at his cigarette and went on, "Only then did I buy the artificial flowers. I didn't know whether they were the same as those she had been beaten for, but at least they were made of velvet. And not knowing whether she liked deep or light colours, I bought one spray of red, one spray of pink, and brought them both here.

"This afternoon straight after lunch I went to see Chang Fu, having stayed on an extra day just for this. Though his house was still there it seemed to me rather gloomy, but perhaps that was simply my imagination. His son and second daughter Ah-chao were standing at the gate. Both of them had grown. Ah-chao is quite unlike her sister, she looks simply ghastly; but at my approach she rushed into the house. I learned from the boy that Chang Fu was not at home. 'And your elder sister?' I asked. At that he glared at me and demanded what my business with her was. He looked fierce enough to fling himself at me and bite me. I dithered, then walked away. Nowadays I just let things slide . . ."

"You can have no idea how I dread calling on people, much more so than in the old days. Because I know what a nuisance I am, I am even sick of myself; so, knowing this, why inflict myself on others? But since this commission had to be carried out, after some reflection I went back to the firewood shop almost opposite their house. The proprietor's mother old Mrs. Fa was still there and, what's more, still recognized me. She actually asked me into the shop to sit down. After the usual polite preliminaries I told her why I had come back to S— and was looking for Chang Fu. I was taken aback when she sighed:

"What a pity Ah-shun hadn't the luck to wear these velvet flowers.'

"Then she told me the whole story. 'It was probably last spring that Ah-shun began to look pale and thin. Later she had fits of crying, but if asked why she wouldn't say. Sometimes she even cried all night until Chang Fu couldn't help losing his temper and swearing at her for carrying on like a crazy old maid. But when autumn came she caught a chill, then she took to her bed and never got up

again. Only a few days before she died she confessed to Chang Fu that she had long ago started spitting blood and perspiring at night like her mother. But she hadn't told him for fear of worrying him. One evening her uncle Chang Keng came to demand a loan — he was always sponging on them — and when she wouldn't give him any money he sneered: "Don't give yourself airs; your man isn't even up to me!" That upset her, but she was too shy to ask any questions and could only cry. As soon as Chang Fu knew this, he told her what a decent fellow the man chosen for her was; but it was too late. Besides, she didn't believe him. "It's a good thing I'm already this way," she said. "Now nothing matters any more."

"Old Mrs. Fa also said, 'If her man really hadn't been up to Chang Keng, that would have been truly frightful. Not up to a chicken thief — what sort of creature would that be? But I saw him with my own eyes at the funeral: dressed in clean clothes and quite presentable. And he said with tears in his eyes that he'd worked hard all those years on the boat to save up money to marry, but now the girl was dead. Obviously he was really a good sort, and Chang Keng had been lying. It was too bad that Ah-shun believed such a rascally liar and died for nothing. Still, we can't blame anyone else: this was Ah-shun's fate.'

"Since that was the case, my business was finished too. But what about the two sprays of artificial flowers I had brought with me? Well, I asked her to give them to Ah-chao. This Ah-chao had fled at the sight of me as if I were a wolf or monster; I really didn't want to give them to her. However, give them I did, and I have only to tell my mother that Ah-shun was delighted with them and that will be that. Who cares about such futile affairs anyway? One only wants to muddle through them somehow. When I have muddled through New Year I shall go back to teaching the Confucian classics."

"Is that what you're teaching?" I asked in astonishment.

"Of course. Did you think I was teaching English? First I had two pupils, one studying the *Book of Songs*, the other *Mencius*. Recently I have got another, a girl, who is studying the *Canon for*

*Girls*.\* I don't even teach mathematics; not that I wouldn't teach it, but they don't want it taught."

"I could really never have guessed that you would be teaching such books."

"Their father wants them to study these. I'm an outsider, it's all the same to me. Who cares about such futile affairs anyway? There's no need to take them seriously. . . ."

His whole face was scarlet as if he were quite drunk, but the gleam in his eyes had died down. I gave a slight sigh, not knowing what to say. There was a clatter on the stairs as several customers came up. The first was short, with a round bloated face; the second was tall, with a conspicuous red nose. Behind them followed others, and as they walked up the small upper floor shook. I turned to Lu Wei-fu who was trying to catch my eye, then called for the bill.

"Is your salary enough to live on?" I asked as we prepared to leave.

"I have twenty dollars a month, not quite enough to manage on."

"What are your future plans then?"

"Future plans? I don't know. Just think: Has any single thing turned out as we hoped of all we planned in the past? I'm not sure of anything now, not even of what tomorrow will bring, not even of the next minute. . . ."

The waiter brought up the bill and handed it to me. Lu Wei-fu had abandoned his earlier formality. He just glanced at me, went on smoking, and allowed me to pay.

We left the tavern together, parting at the door because our hotels lay in opposite directions. As I walked back alone to my hotel, the cold wind buffeted my face with snowflakes, but I found this thoroughly refreshing. I saw that the sky, already dark, had interwoven with the houses and streets in the white, shifting web of thick snow.

February 16, 1924

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\*A book describing the feudal standard of behaviour for girls and the virtues they should cultivate.

Li Hsi-fan

## Intellectuals of a Bygone Age

— An Appreciation of Three of Lu Hsun's Stories

Although Lu Hsun's career as a revolutionary writer spans only the brief thirty years from 1907 to 1936, he has left us a wealth of writing which clearly delineates the history of two revolutionary periods in old China: the period of the old democratic revolution and that of the new democratic revolution.\* With his polemical articles and essays Lu Hsun engaged in close combat with the imperialist and feudal forces and their lackeys in the realms of social life, political thought, morality and ethics; while in his short stories he reflected some of the basic aspects of those two great revolutionary periods in Chinese history, trenchantly pointing out the chief problems of his age and creating a whole gallery of typical characters to present a panoramic view of its struggles.

\*By old democratic revolution is meant the revolution led by the bourgeoisie against imperialism and feudalism prior to the May 4th Movement of 1919. By new democratic revolution is meant the thoroughgoing anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution led by the proletariat from the May 4th Movement to the founding of New China in 1949.

In 1918, the year before the May 4th Movement against imperialism and feudalism, *New Youth* the authoritative magazine dealing with ideological problems of that time published Lu Hsun's first short story *The Madman's Diary*.\* This gives an impassioned, profound and compelling picture of the horrors of feudal society, attacking the rule of the feudal code of morality, the feudal family system and the feudal order. This was modern Chinese literature's manifesto against feudalism.

Lu Hsun followed this up with such short stories as *Medicine*,\*\* *My Old Home*,\*\* *The True Story of Ab Q* and *The New Year's Sacrifice*\*\*\* which reflected life in the Chinese countryside in this stormy period. At the same time Lu Hsun painted typical portraits of intellectuals during those turbulent years, and these contain a useful lesson for us today. The three stories published in this issue belong to this category.

In no period of history do intellectuals stand as a class on their own, but all previous ruling classes have trained and won over certain intellectuals to serve as tools for the exploitation and domination of the people. Thus China's feudal rulers used the official examination system to trap educated men into seeking rank and wealth and thus serve the purpose of the establishment. Those intellectuals who failed in the examinations, if they came from poor families, had no future open to them and died in despair.

*Kung I-chi* describes an intellectual of this type, a victim of the feudal examination system who died in poverty and misery. In this heart-breaking satire Lu Hsun trenchantly discloses how the examination system destroyed a poor scholar who was an honest kindly man.

The customers who form the "society" of Prosperity Tavern are divided into two classes: working men in short jackets who stood at the bar to drink, and long-gowned customers who sat in the inner room to eat and drink at their leisure. "Kung I-chi was the only long-gowned customer to drink his wine standing."

This old man with his pallid wrinkled face, his scars and bruises and his dirty tattered clothes was obviously not like the other long-

\*See *Chinese Literature* No. 10, 1971.

\*\*See *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1972.

\*\*\*See *Chinese Literature* No. 10, 1971.

gowned customers, but belonged to the short-jacket group. In the eyes of the young waiter in the tavern he was a comic character: poor and dispirited, old and pedantic, his speech studded with archaisms. He had studied hard, but having neither money nor backing he failed year after year to pass the examinations. He grew poorer and poorer till he was practically starving and took to thieving; thus he became an object of ridicule, a useless person with nothing to live for. However, in spite of his lifelong disappointment he could not bear to give up his ragged long gown, the status symbol of an intellectual. When people asked: "Kung I-chi, can you really read?" he would look as if it were beneath him to answer. When they asked why he had failed to pass the lowest official examination, he would turn pale, quite out of countenance. And if taunted with stealing books he would counter: "Taking books . . . for a scholar . . . can't be considered stealing. . . ."

These satirical sketches show us very clearly that though Kung I-chi had sunk to the depth of despair he clung to a dream of personal dignity, still convinced that nothing could be compared with studying the classics. Harsh reality disclosed the bankruptcy of his outworn views and contempt for the labouring masses, for he was thrown out of the class of long-gowned customers and reduced to stealing; and after being caught by the provincial scholar Ting he was cruelly beaten and had his legs broken. When he appeared for the last time at the tavern he was haggard and lean. "He had on a ragged lined jacket, and was sitting cross-legged on a mat which was attached to his shoulders by a straw rope." He drank a bowl of wine sitting at the threshold, then slowly pushed himself off on his hands amid the taunts of others, and in this way disappeared from the world of men.

The frustration and despair of Kung I-chi's life are a powerful indictment of the feudal society and feudal culture which first poisoned the minds of poor intellectuals and then destroyed them. However, Lu Hsun does not present Kung I-chi as a detestable character in that society. Not only was he an exemplary customer who never forgot to settle his account, in the eyes of the children and the pot-boy he was an earnest kindly old man. So although this type of intellectual is portrayed as weak, pedantic, vain and useless, the writer shows deep sympathy for him. Quite obviously the purpose of the story is to

condemn feudal society for its crime of creating and murdering intellectuals like Kung I-chi.

"Everything requires careful consideration if one is to understand it. In ancient times, as I recollect, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history has no chronology, and scrawled all over each page are the words: 'Virtue and Morality'. Since I could not sleep anyway, I read intently half the night, until I began to see words between the lines, the whole book being filled with the two words — 'Eat people'."

In his story *The Madman's Diary* Lu Hsun used the words of a madman to expose feudal society and feudal ethics and culture. In *Kung I-chi* this is done by concrete example. Kung I-chi was one of those who was "eaten" by feudal society.

The age of Kung I-chi belongs to the past. After the invasion and partitioning of old China by the imperialist powers, the Ching Dynasty's servility and submission to the demands of the foreign aggressors aroused the indignation and revolt of the whole Chinese people. One revolutionary storm after another rocked the foundation of the rotten rule of semi-feudal, semi-colonial China. A new group of intellectuals began to emerge. As Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Chinese progressives went through untold hardships in their quest for truth from the Western countries." "In the Chinese democratic revolutionary movement, it was the intellectuals who were the first to awaken."** Their contribution to the May 4th Movement was especially important. However, as Chairman Mao has correctly analysed: **"Although the mass of revolutionary intellectuals in China can play a vanguard role or serve as a link with the masses, not all of them will remain revolutionaries to the end. Some will drop out of the revolutionary ranks at critical moments and become passive, while a few may even become enemies of the revolution."**

Lu Hsun himself took part in the 1911 Revolution and the May 4th Movement; thus he experienced the high tides of the revolution and the sharp struggles and splits in the ranks of the revolutionaries. In 1922 *New Youth*, the magazine which had exercised a great influence in the May 4th Movement and which Lu Hsun had

enthusiastically supported, was forced to suspend publication as the result of sabotage by comprador scholars such as Hu Shih. Then some of Lu Hsun's former colleagues secured official positions, some gave up working for the revolution, others continued to advance. These changes among his former comrades and the dereliction of the ideological and cultural front in Peking, once so stirring and spirited, gave Lu Hsun a sense of isolation. In a four-line verse written for his second collection of short stories *Wandering* he revealed his sadness:

*All is quiet in this new garden of letters,  
On the old battlefield today peace reigns;  
Between the lines, one last solitary soldier,  
Shouldering my spear I wander on alone.*

Though Lu Hsun at that time had not yet found new comrades-in-arms he devoted most of *Wandering* to bidding farewell to his old comrades, directing his criticism at intellectuals of different kinds and creating many typical characters. Lu Wei-fu in the story *In the Tavern* is an example of the type of intellectual who has fallen out of the ranks in the course of the battle and lost heart completely.

Lu Wei-fu in his youth was an active, dynamic rebel who would argue heatedly about ways to reform China and even broke into the tutelary god's temple to tear off the idols' beards. But as Lu Hsun once remarked, those who turn radical quickly may turn passive or even decadent equally quickly. Some setbacks and the pressure of hard reality made Lu Wei-fu lose his rebellious spirit and courage, so that he became apathetic, dejected and useless. When the narrator in this story meets his old classmate in the tavern, he finds that Lu Wei-fu's attitude to life has changed. He seems benumbed and forgetful of the past, with no hope for the future either. His individualistic outlook keeps him out of the ranks of the revolution. He sums up his position with the words: "When I have muddled through New Year I shall go back to teaching the Confucian classics."

*In the Tavern* presents a cold, melancholy picture. We can almost hear the sighs of the characters and the whole story breathes misery and desolation. Though the writer reveals a certain sympathy for Lu Wei-fu's wretchedness and misfortunes, he has nothing but con-

tempt for the cowardly despair of this individualist. The description of the deserted garden symbolizes Lu Hsun's own determination to fight on, carrying his spear in his lonely wanderings.

The cold bleak winter cannot destroy all sparks of life. Thus "Several old plum trees in full bloom were braving the snow as if oblivious of the depth of winter; while among the thick dark green foliage of a camellia beside the crumbling pavilion a dozen crimson blossoms blazed bright as flame in the snow, indignant and arrogant. . . ." Again, the description of the heaped snow "clinging, glistening and shining" seems to symbolize the writer's stubborn fighting spirit.

After probing the depth of Lu Wei-fu's soul, the writer realizes that he cannot take the same path as such a man: they have to bid farewell for ever and go their different ways.

To battle fiercely against the coldness of winter, just as plum trees braved the snow and red camellias blazed bright as flame, was the course chosen by China's revolutionary intellectuals of that period represented by Lu Hsun. During the period just after the May 4th Movement when the revolution was at a low ebb, Lu Hsun was still a revolutionary democrat who had not yet mastered the Marxist-Leninist world outlook; hence he was unable to make a correct analysis of the tortuous, complex development of the revolutionary movement and felt that he was groping his way alone, without any comrades-in-arms. However, Lu Hsun's "wandering" was different from Lu Wei-fu's disillusionment, just as his sense of loneliness was due to the fact that he was unable at that time to see the strength of the workers and peasants — the revolutionary masses. He never lost the courage to battle against harsh reality.

Lu Hsun came from a feudal literati family which had come down in the world, and as a boy he had the opportunity to mix with the children of peasant families; thus he was familiar with life in the countryside and could enter into the thoughts and feelings of the poor peasants, from whom he drew inspiration and courage. Although in later life he was cut off from the labouring masses he retained his deep feeling for the common people. He took up writing in order

to fight for the working people of China who suffered all their lives from such bitter oppression, and in his mind's eye he kept a vivid picture of the countryside with which he was familiar. In this way his revolutionary path was different from that of most bourgeois intellectuals of his age, and this is why he went further than many revolutionaries and thinkers of his time.

Lu Hsun's deep feeling for China's labouring masses enabled him to battle on undaunted by the White terror, and gave him the strength to learn humbly from their splendid qualities. He was convinced that a revolutionary intellectual must link himself with the labouring people.

The "I" in the story *A Small Incident* is just this type of Chinese intellectual.

This story, simple as it is, by praising the noble quality of the labouring people subtly reflects the self-analytical spirit of the narrator.

Lu Hsun describes the reactions of this man after the rickshaw has knocked down the old woman. Because he is in a hurry, he is very annoyed by this old woman who is not really hurt but wants the rickshaw man to help her. He believes she is just putting on an act and secretly blames the rickshaw man for halting, thinking he is simply asking for trouble. However, the rickshaw man pays no attention when told to go on, but helps the old woman to the police station, not hesitating to accept the blame. This ordinary yet unexpected act on the part of the rickshaw man gives the narrator a jolt and makes him feel under strong pressure. "Suddenly I had the strange sensation that his dusty retreating figure had in that instant grown larger. Indeed, the further he walked the larger he loomed until I had to look up to him. At the same time he seemed gradually to be exerting a pressure on me which threatened to overpower the small self hidden under my fur-lined gown."

In his "Afterword" for the collection *The Grave*, Lu Hsun wrote: "It is true that I often dissect other people's minds, but what I do even more often is dissect myself ruthlessly." *A Small Incident* is fiction, not something which happened to Lu Hsun; yet undoubtedly the views expressed are a generalization from his own experience. He had felt the pressure of the fine qualities of the working people. The small

self hidden under a fur-lined gown, in other words the intellectual's lack of sympathy and contempt for other people which stem from individualism, his vanity, hypocrisy and selfishness, is strongly contrasted with the labouring masses' simple and honest class feeling, the strict demands they make on themselves, their willingness to accept responsibility, their sense of justice and utter selflessness. We may say that this bold exposure, this heart-searching, this brave self-analysis expresses Lu Hsun's serious criticism of a common weakness of intellectuals.

"A revolutionary is never afraid of criticizing himself. Because he understands things very clearly, he has the courage to speak openly." The "I" in *A Small Incident* makes a ruthless self-analysis, and the moral of the story is: If an intellectual wants to take the revolutionary path and become one with the masses, he must have the courage to face the truth, the determination to learn humbly from the labouring people, and the revolutionary spirit of pitiless self-analysis.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Intellectuals who want to integrate themselves with the masses, who want to serve the masses, must go through a process in which they and the masses come to know each other well. This process may, and certainly will, involve much pain and friction, but if you have the determination, you will be able to fulfil these requirements."**

Owing to the limitations of his objective conditions, Lu Hsun was unable to go through the whole of this process; yet in the fierce and complex struggles of his time he endeavoured to remould himself and made very strict demands on himself, thus he was able to accomplish the revolutionary leap to the stand of the proletariat. Although this short story gives us a brief glimpse only at a section of the course he travelled, there is great poignancy in its revelation of the bright future awaiting this type of revolutionary intellectual.

Fu Tzu-kuei

## The Track

That day, on orders from Headquarters, I set out for Green Rock Peak carrying a radio transmitter on my back. Towards evening, a brick building with a wooden fence around it appeared in the distance. There was a box something like a beehive in the centre of the compound, and the wind vane on top of a pole was spinning fast. I guessed it must be a weather station. And as I approached it I read on the signboard: Meteorological Station of Green Rock Peak People's Commune. Just ahead lay a cross-road. Which way should I take? I decided to ask for directions at the weather station.

As I entered I heard a clear crisp voice. "Hello! See whether the commune members' houses are weather-proof. And take special care of the families of martyrs and army dependants — fill their water vats and make sure they have plenty of firewood."

A girl in a red tunic was making a telephone call. Not wanting to interrupt her, I occupied myself by observing the room. The walls were hung with meteorological charts. But the most striking thing was the oil-painting *Be Alert to Defend the Motherland* on the



left wall with two bright rifles beneath it. I was looking at these with interest when the girl's raised voice attracted my attention. "Our militia is to prepare those stretchers and other material needed by the PLA and the Liuchi militia to resist a paratroop landing. As soon as the order comes we must be ready to deliver them."

The militia were certainly moving fast. We had not been out long on our field manoeuvres and it was only yesterday that Headquarters

had ordered Third Company to prepare the Liuchi militia for anti-paratroop training in co-ordination with the regular troops. Yet they had already finished their preparations. Before I could speak the girl added emphatically: "Don't forget to bring raincoats and tarpaulins." Then putting down the receiver she came over to me with a smile. "Sorry to have kept you waiting, PLA comrade. Please have a seat."

Because I was in a hurry I said bluntly, "No, thanks. I just came to ask you the way."

"Where to?"

"Liuchi."

"Liuchi!" She gave a slight start. Her face took on a thoughtful look. Then eyeing me doubtfully she said: "There's a snowstorm in the offing."

"A snowstorm!" I was surprised. When I started off from Headquarters the sky had been cloudless. I had thought that since today was the fifteenth of the twelfth lunar month, the full moon would make it easy for me to travel at night. However, the weather in the mountains is as fickle as a baby's smile. I slipped out to have a look. It was getting dark. Black clouds were converging from all sides. The summit of the mountain was already shrouded in mist. At any time the snow would fall.

"Can you make it?" asked the girl following me out.

I thought: Third Company's radio transmitter has broken down. The commander has ordered me to take them this new one; I was to be there before midnight. How can I stop here? Adjusting the set on my back, I said without hesitation: "Sure, I can make it."

"But you have to pass Monkey Rock." The girl sounded worried.

I had heard that Monkey Rock was a steep, difficult climb, especially in bad weather. But I said firmly: "To ensure victory in battle, I'm willing to charge into a tiger's den."

She looked at the radio transmitter on my back. Suddenly her face cleared and she glanced at me with a smile. Instead of dissuading me she urged: "Your mission won't wait, comrade. You'd better be going." Then she told me in detail the way to Liuchi.

It was a dark night.

The north wind blustered and roared over the cliffs, chasms and valleys of Green Rock Peak. The pines tossed in turbulent waves; the snow was dancing and whirling. Soon it lay so thick on the mountain that the narrow winding track was lost to sight. I stopped to take my bearings. Then a thought struck me. The light reflected from the snow showed a row of footprints before me. Someone had just passed that way by the look of it. Although the heavy snow was gradually obliterating the imprints, they were still visible if you looked hard. I wondered who the traveller was. What had brought him out on such a stormy night? To be on the safe side I took out my pistol. Then it occurred to me that perhaps a barefoot doctor was going to give a patient emergency treatment, or a cadre from a brigade was delivering firewood to some poor or lower-middle peasant. At all events I was grateful to have these footprints to follow in that hard climb up the mountain.

All of a sudden I saw a faint light in the distance. I rubbed my astonished eyes. No mistake — it was a red lantern. The sight warmed me from head to foot, as if the red lantern were radiating strong heat through the dark stormy night. As fast as I could, I floundered towards it.

"This is Monkey Rock. Be careful, PLA comrade!" a cordial voice hailed me. I found the lantern held by a middle-aged woman who asked me with a smile: "You're going to Liuchi, aren't you?"

"How do you know that, comrade?" I was astonished.

"The deputy head of our militia told me."

"Deputy head?" I was even more bewildered.

"Yes, the deputy head of our militia," she repeated. Then she pointed up. "This is Monkey Rock. Be careful."

It was indeed a fearsome place. The little goat-track winding up the mountain, too narrow for more than one person to pass at a time, was bounded on one side by high rocks, on the other by a precipice. Down in the abyss weird boulders protruded from the snow-drifts. But the woman evidently knew the place as well as she did the palm of her own hand. She walked ahead of me holding the lantern behind her to light my way. From time to time she warned me: "Mind!

It's slippery here. . . . Keep close to the rocks or the wind may blow you over. . . . Don't look round." I took her advice and concentrated on following her footprints.

As I plodded on I thought: That stretch further down isn't so dangerous, yet ploughing through the snow there was harder. Climbing Monkey Rock is riskier, but I'm finding the going much smoother. Why? Finally, by the light of the lantern, I discovered the answer to this riddle. There was only a very thin layer of snow on the track up Monkey Rock. And the higher I went the less snow there was. I could even see stones and soil, as if someone had been sweeping the path for us.

The woman walked with vigorous strides which set the lantern swaying. With her to guide me, I felt full of confidence and energy. And so, eventually, we crossed Monkey Rock.

Soon after reaching the rear of the mountain I urged her to go back. She seemed put out.

"Are you going to visit relatives, comrade?" she asked.

"No."

"Calling on friends?"

"No."

"If you're neither visiting relatives nor calling on friends, what brings you out in the cold so late at night?"

"I'm carrying out orders. I have an urgent task." I pointed to the radio transmitter on my back.

"Why have I come out on such a dirty night?" She narrowed her eyes.

"To show me the way," I answered without thinking.

"That's right, comrade. But there's more to it than that," she said seriously. "As a militia woman I'm carrying out orders too, doing my bit to help win victory."

This was irrefutable. She had her instructions. But acting as guide on Monkey Rock was a tough job for a woman. "It's all downhill now, comrade. I can manage," I told her honestly.

"Climbing a mountain is tiring, but coming down is when you're likely to fall." She pointed downwards. "See! With snow covering everything, how can you find the path?"

There were fewer trees on the back of the mountain which faced south. Since it was protected from the wind, the snow lay thicker than on the other side. Snow-drifts had levelled all the hollows and ditches, making them hard to distinguish. But I made up my mind not to let her go any further. While I was wondering how to persuade her she urged: "We must hurry, comrade!" She strode down the mountainside without turning her head.

We continued on our way, guided by the footprints winding through the snow.

"Look out!" she cried suddenly, catching hold of my arm. I saw some branches sticking out of the snow in front of us. Beyond them was a deep pit out of which jagged stones projected like sharp knives. From the footprints and other marks near the pit it was obvious that whoever had blazed this trail for us had fallen into the pit and left these branches as a danger signal. I was deeply moved by this sight, but started worrying about the safety of the man responsible for this thoughtful action.

"Who is it leading the way, comrade?" I asked.

"The deputy head of our militia," she replied frankly.

"On such a stormy night, how. . . ."

Seeing my anxious expression she made haste to reassure me. "Don't worry, comrade. Our deputy militia head's no tender hot-house plant but quite able to weather any storm." There was deep love evident in the confident answer.

Following the footprints we passed several other danger signals marking pits or ditches. "Your deputy militia head must really be terrific!" I couldn't help exclaiming.

"Nothing of the sort!" A clear crisp voice rang out near by.

"Did you hurt yourself falling, Red Plum?" The woman with the lantern stepped forward.

Then I saw a girl standing on the road at the foot of the mountain. She was coated with thick snow. Icicles had formed on her eyebrows. She had a rifle over one shoulder, a broad cartridge-belt round her waist and a shovel in her hands which were crimson with cold. Her red tunic glowed like a flame in the light of the lantern. She heaved a sigh of relief at sight of me and her brilliant eyes lit up.

"Don't you work at the meteorological station, Comrade Red Plum? What are you doing here?" I asked, both pleased and astonished.

"Doesn't our militia have a part in combat preparations?" she retorted.

"I mean how did you get here before us?" I explained.

"I took a short cut."

"Why didn't you tell me about it?"

"Because it's a difficult, risky climb." She laughed. "You're carrying a radio transmitter, aren't you? That's expensive equipment and won't stand rough handling. How could I take the responsibility if you damaged it on the way?"

With deep feeling I recalled what had happened in the snowstorm that night: the footprints, the red lantern, the "orders from the deputy militia head" and the danger signals — these were all her doing. I was so touched I cried: "Comrade Red Plum, you..."

"Give me the red lantern, sister-in-law," she cut in.

So they came from one family. I gazed with respect at the woman and the girl who had such deep feeling for the people's soldiers.

*Illustrated by Huang Chia-yu*

## The Roadside Inn

By the roadside a small red-brick building with a tiled roof stands alone in the green valley, far from any shop or village. The large porch in front provides shelter from the sun. One can see at a glance that this is a wayside inn where passers-by can rest, get something to eat or drink and occasionally spend the night.

On my way to Cliff-top Brigade I went into the inn to find out from the two carters there how far I still had to go. It seemed there were some twenty *li*, mostly uphill, before me. I decided to stop for a rest and to "stoke up".

The place was fairly empty. Apart from the two carters and a cook, there was only an elderly woman at a table by the door. Her black costume was neat, her face serene and cheerful.

A girl came in with two buckets of clear water dangling from her shoulder-pole. Putting down her load, she deftly hung up the pole and turned to lift the lid of the rice-steamer. From it she took two bamboo food-boxes which she placed with a pleasant smile before the carters. "Here you are," she said. "Piping hot."

The older of the carters laid a new book on the table. "I've brought that book you asked for," he said.

She picked it up with an exclamation of delight. "Yes, that's it."

"Hey, what's this?" quipped the younger carter. "Getting fed up with your job here?"

"Yes, I'm studying to become an agronomist," she retorted in such a mock-serious tone that the two men burst into laughter. The girl now went over to the elderly woman. "Well, aunt, what can I offer you?" she asked, bending over her solicitously. The woman simply shook her head with a smile, her eyes fixed on the girl's plump rosy cheeks. In some embarrassment the girl poured her a cup of tea before attending to me.

When presently the girl brought me a bowl of noodles, the woman took her hand and asked with a twinkle, "Aren't you that middle-school student from town, lass?"

"No. I'm a member of this commune."

The other let go of her hand but continued to size her up. "How many of you work in this inn?" she asked after a while.

"Just the cook and I."

"Then you're the student who came to settle down here the year before last. You made so much progress that the commune members elected you to take charge of the inn. Right?"

Instead of answering, the girl just laughed. Then she in turn asked, "Which brigade do you belong to, aunt?"

"Why, the brigade which is in closest touch with you, of course."

"But there are several brigades..." The girl eyed the older woman carefully, then knitted her brows. "I can't think which you mean." She shook her head.

The other started laughing so heartily that it was a full second before she was able to say, "Of course you can't think what I mean."

"Where are you going, aunt?" asked the girl.

"I've come specially to see you."

"I don't believe it!"

"Listen, lass." The woman hitched her stool nearer to the girl. "They say you know everyone from the neighbouring communes."

"How could I possibly know so many people? I don't recognize you, for instance."

"I also hear that you're the local encyclopedia. You know all there is to know about the communes near by."

"Don't you believe it, aunt. That's a tall story. It's only that working here by the roadside I take an interest in what's going on. I think knowing a little about the various communes and brigades is all to the good."

"Certainly. It's a very good thing. If not for you, lass, that snow early this spring would have meant a real shortage of seedlings for our brigade. Thanks to the way you helped fix things up, our early rice crop promises to yield more than a thousand pounds per *mu*."

"So you're from Rear Valley Brigade!" exclaimed the girl.

"Right, lass, you must come and see our rice for yourself when you have time. It's growing green and sturdy, just ready to form ears." In her enthusiasm she rose to her feet to gesticulate as she spoke.

"I know what your rice is like by watching the patch here at our door. It's shooting up so fast, you can practically hear it growing. It's a sight to gladden your heart."

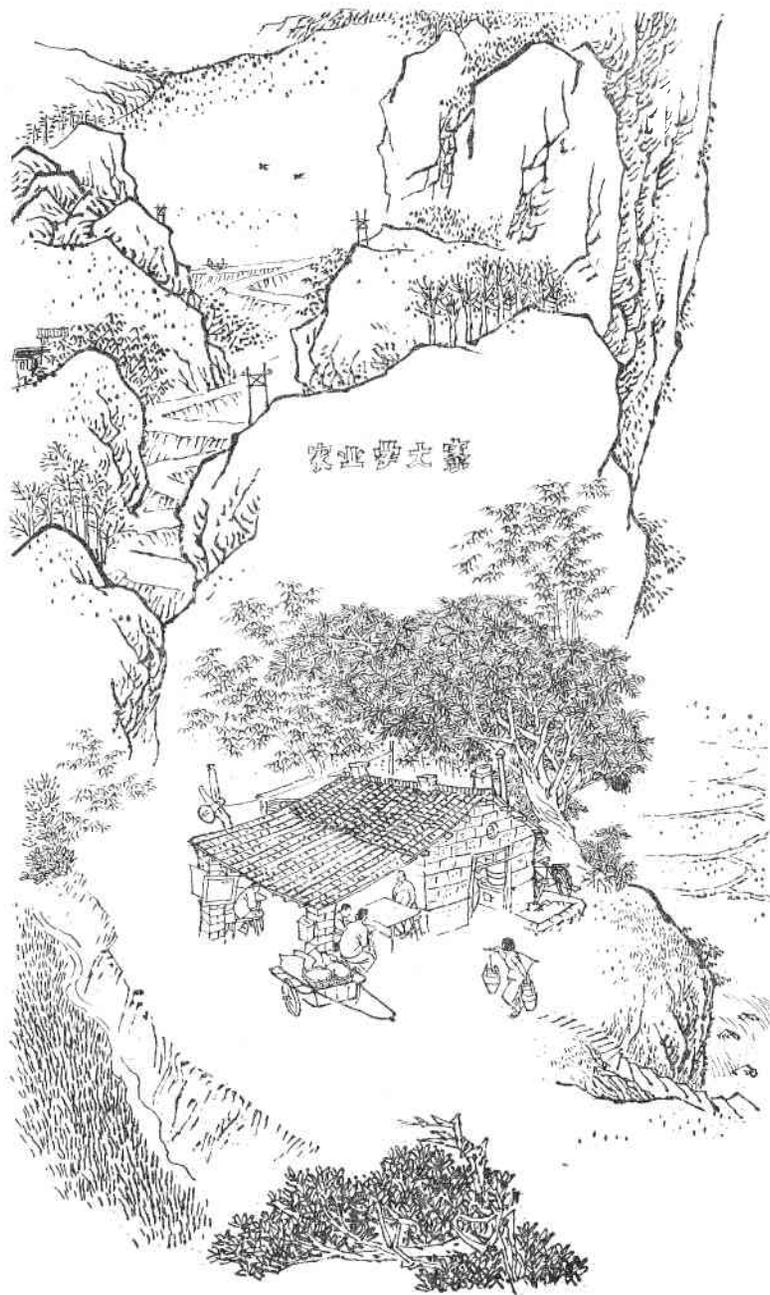
"Just listen to you, lass! It's a treat to hear you talk."

"This is how it is, aunt," continued the girl as she brought the carters some tea. "Our inn is here to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants who pass by. And what keeps them all so busy? Working to build up new socialist villages. Though I take no part in ploughing the fields and planting rice seedlings, the success or failure of the crops concerns me too, doesn't it, aunt?"

"You're quite right," smiled the other, nodding emphatically.

Louring clouds piled up in the northern sky as a strong wind sprang up. The two carters got ready to be on their way.

"Wait!" urged the girl, pulling them back. "It may rain any minute." When the older of the two men told her that his brigade was waiting for the fertilizer they were carting, the girl puckered her forehead and went into her room, to return with a big plastic sheet. She spread this over the load of fertilizer, securing it with a rope. "Go along, you'll be all right now," she said with a wave of her hand.



Returning after seeing off the carters, she found the elderly woman washing the dishes and hastily tried to stop her.

"Let me do it, lass," protested the woman, clutching a bundle of chopsticks. "You've got too much on your hands, what with managing the inn, keeping accounts, fetching water, cleaning and mopping, washing rice and vegetables. . . . On top of all this you take an interest in farm production and put yourself out to help the passers-by. How can you manage so much?"

"Oh, I'm not all that busy." Pushing a stray lock of hair behind her ear, the girl picked up a stack of clean bowls and put them away. "Every brigade is busy learning from Tachai. There isn't a single person who's got time on his hands. I'm no busier than everybody else. Just look at all the people who pass here every day: every one of them is going all out, working for the revolution." She dried her hands on a duster and continued in a lower voice, "When I see them spurring ahead like that, my heart seems to beat faster too."

"Because your heart is with them," said the woman playfully pointing at the girl's breast.

Out on the road the chug-chug of a tractor drowned their voices. Soon it came to a stop at the door. The woman driver beckoned to the girl who promptly ran out. I seized this chance to strike up a conversation with the woman in black.

"What a pleasant warm-hearted girl," I remarked.

"Yes. But do you know what she was like when she first came?" The woman seemed eager to air her knowledge. "At first, she didn't feel at home here with the poor and lower-middle peasants."

"Then she must have made a lot of progress since then."

"Here in our mountain gully, when we get a good strain of corn we really treasure it. You can't imagine how many folk here have put their heart's blood into bringing her up." The way she spoke led me to believe that she herself had been one of the most eager to tend this precious shoot.

The girl came back after the tractor driver had left and caught the tail end of our conversation.

"Aunt, have you heard any criticism or comments on my work from the masses?"

"Criticism?" The woman seemed a little taken aback. Then she answered, "Oh yes, yes. The head of our Rear Valley Brigade's poultry and pig farm has a lot to say about you."

"You mean Aunt Chen? Oh dear! More than once she's sent me things but I've never met her."

"Well, she can have her own opinion of you even if you haven't met, can't she?"

"What's bothering her?"

My curiosity aroused, I made no pretence of not listening. And for my benefit the elderly woman told the whole story from the beginning. The previous summer Rear Valley had bought a batch of fine chicks from another commune. The heat on the road proved too much for the newly-hatched chicks. By the time they reached the inn they were prostrate. The girl promptly put her room at their disposal so that the chicks could be let out of the coop, get more air and cool off. She fed and tended them till late in the afternoon, refusing to let the chicks be taken away until they were in good shape again.

Another time, a big sow belonging to Rear Valley Brigade was taken ill. Again the girl helped to save it by finding a vet. Aunt Chen who was in charge of the poultry and pigs felt so grateful to this girl she had never met that she sent her gifts more than once by people passing that way, but the girl sent them all back.

"Aunt," said the girl, "I was only doing my duty. But Aunt Chen insisted on sending me gifts to thank me. How could I accept them? I hear the commune is going to hold a meeting on stock-breeding and Aunt Chen will be there to talk about her experience. Will you take her a message? Ask her to drop in here, please, on her way to the meeting."

"She will, don't worry," said the woman. "What's more, she's got something for you, something she's made herself, stitch by stitch. If you send this gift back again, she'll surely lose her temper."

All of a sudden, a bolt of thunder crashed overhead. The next second, a man with a satchel raced in to announce that forty members of his brigade were arriving before nightfall. He wanted the inn to provide food and lodgings for them. This request simply staggered me. How could a small inn accommodate so many people? The

woman in black was even more concerned. "Look, comrade," she said walking up to the newcomer. "This small room can't even hold forty men, let alone put them up for the night."

"It'll be all right," said the girl.

This was so unexpected that both the woman and I gaped. Our sceptical expressions made the girl continue, "You can call our inn small; you can also call it big." At this we felt even more puzzled. Then she explained, "I'll talk to the nearby brigades. With their help, it won't be any problem to put up forty men. As for food, I'll wash the rice right away and put it on to boil." Her hands were busy tidying the place as she added: "A boat can't move without water and we can't do a thing without the masses. If not for the support of the poor and lower-middle peasants round here, the cook and I could never run this inn well however hard we tried."

The woman's face brightened. "Listen, lass, I know the leader of the brigade down the road. Let me go and tell him."

"Will you do that? Thank you!" said the girl.

"Let me pitch in too. What work have you for me?" asked the man with the satchel.

"Go and give the cook a hand in the kitchen."

Thunder-storms come in a flash. Before the woman in black could leave, rain poured down like a torrent, crashing with a din on the roof top. It ended quickly too. Before long the sun was out again. Slanting rays, filtering through the clouds, caressed the rain-washed fields. I decided to set out immediately. The girl put the new book the carter had brought her in my hand, saying, "Please take this to the Youth Agronomy Research Group at Cliff-top Brigade."

While we were talking I spied the woman in black in the act of unwrapping a small packet. It was a new sky-blue apron, daintily embroidered in one corner with a young swallow in flight. Quietly she placed this by the girl's cash box and then tiptoed out of the inn.

Watching her, I was convinced that this woman was no other but the Aunt Chen who had tried so many times without success to send gifts to the girl.

*Illustrated by Tai Tun-pang*

## Sister Lung

When I came to the ferry across the Lungho River waves were slapping against the boulders on which the five characters **"In agriculture, learn from Tachai"**, painted in red, glittered in the sunlight.

How was I to cross, I wondered, for there was no ferry boat in sight. "Hi!..." somebody swimming out from a patch of reeds along the opposite bank called out to me. Halfway across the river he dived head first through a towering wave which rolled right over him. For a long time he didn't emerge again. I was about to call for help when suddenly his head popped up just before me. I saw to my surprise that it was a laughing girl.

Wiping the water from her face she introduced herself, "My name is Lung." Then, smiling, she asked curtly, "What's yours, comrade?"

"I'm Wang..." She grasped my hands before I could finish. "Welcome, Comrade Wang Hsiao-lan." Was I surprised! "Commune Secretary Chung phoned to tell us that you were joining our commune after graduating from the water conservancy school," she explained. "You're coming to toughen yourself by working in our brigade first. Is that right?"

"Yes, I've come to learn from the poor and lower-middle peasants."

She nodded brusquely. Then sizing up the weight of my knapsack she said, "The going is rough through the mountains. We expected Secretary Chung to send somebody to bring you here."

"Oh, commune cadres are busy people. I could hardly let them do that," I protested.

"That's the spirit!" She slapped me lightly on the shoulder.

I took to her immediately, set at ease by her warmth and frankness. "Isn't there a ferry boat here?" I asked casually.

"Yes, but it's been called away on an urgent job. You wait here. I'll swim over and call it back."

"No, please don't." I stopped her quickly. "I can swim too. Let's swim across together."

She insisted on taking my knapsack and held it on her head with one hand, while with the other she helped me down the bank and into the water.

Although she swam with only one arm I could barely keep up with her. She turned her head frequently to see how I was getting along. Halfway across the river, she pulled me to the left saying, "That's Dragon Whirlpool over there. Steady does it. Bear left. That's it. Fine!" Just then a wave from the whirlpool rolled towards us. With two strong strokes Sister Lung swam in front of me to break its force with her shoulder.

As soon as we reached the shore, she jumped on to a rock. "The tide covers this piece of land when it comes in," she told me. "If we can build a dyke to stop it, we'll gain a hundred *mu* of arable land."

They had told me at commune headquarters about Lungho Brigade's plan to build a dyke and reclaim land. So this was the site of the project. I remembered too that the commune secretary had mentioned that the leader of the brigade was a girl called Lung Pei-ying. Could this be the girl?

"Are you by any chance Comrade Lung Pei-ying?" I asked.

"Yes."

I nearly jumped for joy. So she was the girl who was known all over the commune.

"Sister Lung. . ." I began, but stopped short as a boat shot out from the reeds. An old man with a pole stood at the bow. Several youngsters behind him, all wet from swimming, were lustily singing a song about learning from Tachai.

"Look, here's Uncle Jen," Lung exclaimed.

Cupping his hands to his mouth, Uncle Jen called out, "Lung, we've finished our investigation."

"What are you trying to find out?" I asked Lung.

"The speed of the water when the river's in spate," she answered, smiling.

I put up at Sister Lung's and joined her and the others in surveying the riverside. I had almost filled my notebook with data. Now, I thought to myself, after making a draft and calculating the work involved, we can begin.

That afternoon as I was finishing the draft I heard footsteps approaching the house. It was Sister Lung. Seeing what I was doing, she said, "There's still something we must check carefully."

"What?" I asked in surprise. "Haven't we covered the whole length of the riverside with our footprints?"

"That's only the surface. Have you never heard about underground streams? At noon today when one of the brigade members was grazing his cattle he missed one calf. He looked high and low until he heard the poor creature bellowing at the bottom of a deep pit. When he climbed down into it he found himself knee-deep in water — running water."

After supper Sister Lung went to a meeting. I sat up to wait for her till quite late.

Mama Lung urged me many times to go to bed, saying, "Ever since your sister Pei-ying became a brigade leader, she's never had a free evening at home. So don't wait up for her, she may not even come home tonight."

"I'm not sleepy, Mama Lung. You go to bed first," I protested.

It was midnight before Sister Lung finally returned, her hair wet, her clothes smeared with mud.



"I've been to the riverside with the other Party members and we all heard it," she blurted out in her excitement.

"Heard what?"

"The stream! There's definitely an underground stream. We think it's seepage from Dragon Whirlpool."

"Is that so?" I became anxious. If that was the case we would have to alter our entire construction plan for the dyke. Worse still, the building of a dyke might prove impossible. "Please take me there, Sister Lung," I begged frantically.

We came to the riverside in the moonlight. The pebbles were wet and slippery. I squatted down and listened carefully.

"No! You can't hear it that way," Sister Lung said. She lay flat on the ground and pressed one ear to it, trying to catch the faint sound underneath. After a while she beckoned to me. "Come here and listen."

I lay down beside her. Although I listened very intently I could hear nothing. I stood up feeling depressed.

"Try again," she urged.

Once again I flopped down. She broke a flowering reed and waved it above me to keep the mosquitoes away while insisting, "You must listen more carefully."

Sure enough, I finally caught the faint sound of water burbling deep down beneath us. When I stood up I hung on to Sister Lung. She was so strong and reassuring; I felt her warmth and confidence flooding over me.

After a careful survey it became clear that the underground stream, flowing through an opening at Dragon Whirlpool, was more than ten feet below the surface. We decided to block it at its source.

I began to wonder whether the stream, so deep underground, would affect the building of the dyke. If not, why bother to block the opening? When I told Sister Lung what I thought, she listened carefully and then explained, "It's true it doesn't matter very much right now whether we block it or not. But what about the future? After three years, five years or ten years . . . it may erode the land and cause a cave-in."

I nodded. "Who'll take the lead on this job?" I asked with some apprehension.

"I will." Sister Lung's answer was firm.

It was a bright sunny day when the battle to block the source of the stream started. The brigade members gathered along the riverside and set to work chopping down reeds and bushes, filling sacks with sand and carrying stones.

Together with several young men carrying a banner, I jumped into a boat.

"Watch your balance," warned Sister Lung from the bank as she began to shove us off. Then, with the help of her pole, she vaulted lightly and gracefully onto the boat.

The waves rippled and plashed; Dragon Whirlpool churned and swirled, throwing up rainbow-tinted spray in the sunlight. A chip of wood I threw in was quickly sucked into the vortex. Sister Lung tied one end of a thick rope around my waist.

"What are you doing that for?" I protested. She looked at the whirlpool and smiled at me. "You're not a very strong swimmer and we mustn't let you take unnecessary risks. We must combine revolutionary drive with a scientific attitude." She gave the other end of the rope to one of the strong youngsters. "You hold onto this tight when she goes in," she told him. She took the lead then by diving first into the water.

After a while she surfaced, drew a deep breath then plunged down a second time. Several young men followed her. When Sister Lung emerged again and waved vigorously to the people on shore we knew that she had found the source of the stream. Uncle Jen called to her to come up and take a rest, but she just turned a deaf ear.

I followed her then after motioning to the young man who held the end of my rope. The suction of the whirlpool was not too great as I swam downwards towards it. The water was blue and clear. I spotted Sister Lung not far away and swam over to the boulder by which she was crouching, watching the churning water. By then, however, my eardrums were ringing, my head felt ready to burst. . . . I tugged on the rope.

Back on board the boat, I was quite deaf for some time. I worried about the others till finally they all came up together.

Rafts with bundles of rushes, sand-bags and stones came alongside.

As my ears stopped buzzing I heard Sister Lung saying, "The water was too swift for us to get very close. Let's block the opening bit by bit to slow it up."

After some thought Uncle Jen agreed, saying, "That'll be my job."

Sister Lung went down again with a bundle of reeds weighing about a hundred pounds which she propelled towards the whirlpool. As soon as it was caught and submerged the current slowed up. Then with Uncle Jen in the lead, a dozen or so bamboo rafts, loaded with sand-bags and stones closed in.

Sister Lung leapt onto a raft and, waving a powerful arm, directed the battle. In my eyes she epitomized the turbulent river racing on and on, ever forward. . . .

*Illustrated by Weng Ju-lan*

## Red-Heart Plum

The bus was bowling along a road through the mountains. The late autumn sky seemed loftier than usual, the air was crisp and fresh. Distant hills stood out in vivid silhouette, while in the sunlight the rocky cliffs nearby seemed to be cast in bronze. But Chao Chien, a young agronomist from the state farm, was in no mood to enjoy the scenery. He took from his pocket his letter of introduction. He was to fetch five hundred crates of bamboo saplings from the production brigade at Lu Family Sandbank. "So they're growing bamboo there too now," he thought.

Lu Family Sandbank had specialized in growing peaches and plums. More than ten years ago, when Chao was studying in the Agricultural College, he had come here to get a specimen of Red-heart Plum for research purposes. It was April then, he remembered, when flowers were in bloom.

At that time there had been no bus service. After leaving the county town he had walked for hours till he came to a small river. Some local people told him to follow this stream. But it was growing dark and

night came swiftly in these mountains which looked deserted with not a village in sight. He halted, worried and tired, not knowing what to do.

Then he heard a cough and saw ahead of him a shadowy figure. An old man stepped forward and accosted him: "Are you going to Lu Family Sandbank?"

Chao briefly explained his business. The old man stuck his stick in the sand, wiped his hands and pointed to the other side of the stream. "It's over there. Just follow me."

As they walked over the pebble-strewn sand Chao had some difficulty keeping up. At the edge of a stretch of shallow water, the old man stopped.

"Shall I carry you over on my back, comrade?" he offered.

With a smile Young Chao shook his head. The old man sat down on the shingle then to take off his straw sandals which he tossed to Chao. "Put these on in that case. Mind you don't slip and fall."

It was dark by the time they reached the village, where the head of the agricultural co-operative told Chao that the old man who had helped him was Li Ah-keng.

Lu Family Sandbank was an island in the river. After a flood swept away the houses and trees there it had remained deserted until, not long before Liberation, a few families of homeless refugees from a nearby island made a new settlement here. Li Ah-keng had been one of the earliest settlers. They started from scratch, with no implements, no fertilizer, no cattle. Old Li had planted some plum-stones which he had brought with him, and under his skilful care soon a dozen plum-trees were growing on this sandy island, a source of joy and encouragement to all. When the first lot of plums were ripe, a Kuomintang official from the county town happened to come here on a pleasure outing. These trees took his fancy. He appropriated them. After that, Old Li went about with a long face and seldom opened his mouth. Then his wife died, leaving a child less than one year old. Li Ah-keng was in despair. But then came Liberation. He got back his land as well as his dozen plum-trees.

"You know," said the co-op head, "after that Kuomintang official took those plum-trees, for several years they were barren. But as

soon as Old Li got them back they started blossoming again and bore fruit."

"What happened later?" asked Chao, eager to know by what means the old man had improved this variety of plum.

"Now our Red-heart Plum has grown more ambitious."

"Ambitious?" Young Chao thought this an odd epithet for a plum.

"Old Li himself, I mean. Because he cultivated this new species, and because although he's old his heart is red, we all call him Red-heart Plum. Now he wants to extend the orchards down to the river bank."

"So that's what he was doing on the bank after dark."

"Yes, he's like that. When some course of action strikes him as right, he has to go the whole hog. Well, you must spend the night here. You can find him tomorrow morning."

The next morning, searching for Old Li, Chao saw that the whole island was dotted with fruit trees. Clusters of pink peach-blossom and white pear-blossom seemed like sunlit clouds hovering above the village. To the south, where the river branched off east and west, the whole sandbank was covered with blossom.

"Going the socialist way means using our heads and working hard." Old Li was talking to a small boy in the tree nursery. "Remember what Uncle Lu told us: even the water in town. . . ." He paused as he saw Chao approaching, then said to him: "You're from town, comrade. You know how your town got its running water. If the workers hadn't found a spring, built a water-tower, laid pipes and fixed up taps, would the water have come by itself?"

Young Chao nodded, although he did not know where this was leading.

"So it seems to me," continued the old fellow, "if we want to build socialism we must work for it the way we do growing fruit: planting, pruning, keeping down pests. . . . Don't you think I'm right, Comrade Chao?" He bent down to put more earth around the roots of the sapling just dug by the boy.

As the sun rose higher, smoke from the village chimneys could be seen through the blossoming trees. "Come on, son," said the old man to the boy. "Let's go and plant these saplings along the river bank before breakfast."

"What trees are they?" Chao asked.

"Plums," replied the old man.

"The famous Red-heart Plums!" put in the boy proudly.

Chao stayed there for five days on that occasion, studying the evolution of the red-heart species, Old Li's experience in growing it and the natural conditions of that locality. In the course of this he became good friends with the old man. . . ."

The bus came to a stop. They had reached Lu Family Sandbank. Chao Chien collected his wandering thoughts and got off.

He found that the newly-built highway was in fact the top of the dyke. On both sides of the river stretched orchards and paddy fields. The place had changed out of all recognition. As he was wondering which way to go, a young man came towards him. Chao asked the way to the village.

"Whom do you want to see?" the young man inquired. Chao told him: an old man named Li.

"Li Ah-keng, is it?" said the youngster. "You've found the right man. My name is Li Ching. He's my father . . . but haven't we met before?" He scrutinized Chao.

Chao grasped his hand, smiling as he realized that the boy he had met more than ten years ago had grown into this sturdy young fellow.

"Don't you find our place completely different now?" Li Ching pointed at the pylons for high-voltage electric cables on the hill. "Further upstream the commune has built a reservoir with an electric generating plant. The paddy crop is fine this year; our peaches, plums, apricots and pears are doing well too. Come on home with me. Tonight the commune's showing a film here." He took Chao's arm as he spoke and led him into the village.

They made their way to a newly-built house where Li Ching introduced his wife, a young woman with bobbed hair. When she had gone to the kitchen to prepare supper, Chao asked: "Where's your old man?"

"Well, it's a long story," rejoined Li Ching, pulling out a bamboo chair for his visitor. "The year I joined the army, dad was experimenting on growing bamboo here. When I came back there was

already a whole bamboo plantation. Last year I got married and fully expected dad would live with us in our new house; but he could think of nothing but his bamboos, so he built a mud hut for himself in the bamboo plantation."

"Whereabouts is that?" Chao asked.

"It covers the whole of East Hill now."

Chao was delighted. He had doubted, previously, whether this brigade could supply him with all the bamboo his farm wanted.

Dusk was falling. Chao was eager to find Old Li, but Li Ching dissuaded him from taking the difficult road into the hills, explaining that his father might be coming to the village to see the film. To Chao's disappointment, the old man failed to show up.

The next day as soon as it was light Chao set out, following Li Ching's directions, to find Old Li. Passing an orchard he started up the track to East Hill. Dense clumps of bamboo covering the hillside made a mass of vivid green below but higher up vanished in the morning mist.

Soon the track narrowed to a path. He put on a spurt, eager to see the old man. The utter stillness of the bamboo groves was broken only by the twitter of birds.

By a small brook there grew a great maple, a magnificent gnarled tree whose crimson leaves brought out the green luxuriance of the bamboos. Nestling behind the maple tree was a mud hut. Chao called out to ask if anyone was in.

The door opened promptly and a youngster came out.

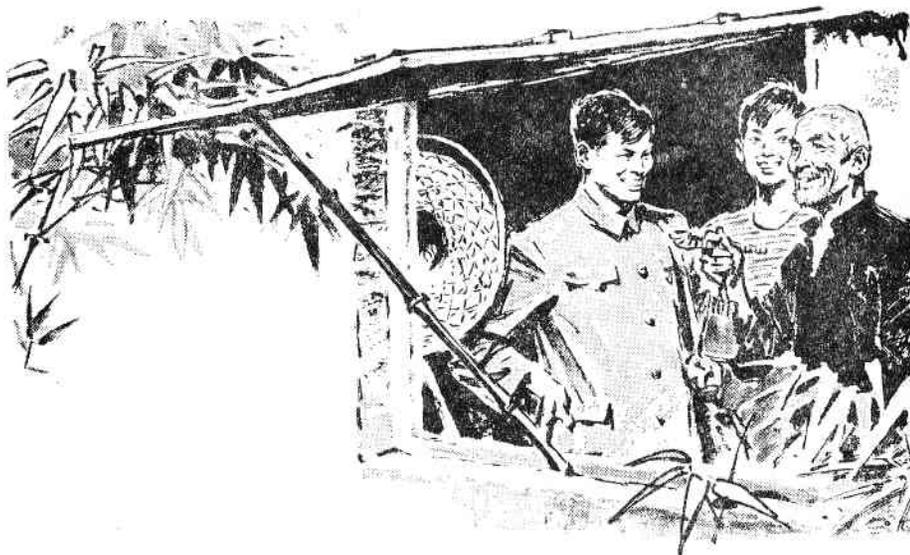
"Is Uncle Li in?" asked Chao.

"He's gone to Rear Hill Brigade," replied the lad, then invited Chao inside. In the small room were two beds, a stove and some farming tools. The youngster opened a window to let the sunlight in.

Chao found that this lad after finishing middle school had chosen to settle in the countryside. He was learning from Old Li how to grow fruit.

"When will your teacher be back?" Chao asked.

"Hard to say. Last night I asked him to go to the film with me, but he refused. He said now that our bamboos are full-grown and we have a pylon carrying high-voltage cables, we must watch out



for sabotage. So last night when everybody had gone to the film he kept watch over the hill. And after that he went to Rear Hill Brigade.”

In the course of conversation Chao learned that Rear Hill Brigade wanted to start a new side-line: the production of woven bamboo thermos-flask cases. Li had gone to teach the local women how to weave bamboo.

“Uncle Li thinks the world of his bamboo,” remarked the youngster. “When I first came, no one was allowed to touch it. You couldn’t even break off a twig as a toothpick. Still, sometimes he was very generous. The year before last he noticed that we young people had nothing to do in the evenings, and suggested we should put on some opera performances. He cut several dozen bamboos and let us have them to make fiddles, flutes, clappers and so forth. Last year when there was an amateur drama festival in the county town, our team’s home-made instruments were a great success.”

Just then they heard a voice outside: “Has some comrade come from town?” The next moment Old Li strode in. He shook hands with Chao and looked him carefully over.



“Do you still remember me, uncle? It’s been more than ten years...”

“Of course. You came from the Agricultural College. I remember you all right.” The old man’s powerful grasp made Chao wince. “You’re just the man we want. Our youngsters have set up a silviculture research team, and they need someone to help them.”

Far from having aged, Li looked more vigorous than ever.

Chao told him that the

state farm had sent him to fetch bamboo saplings.

“Yes, when I was at Rear Hill, our brigade phoned me about this,” Old Li said. “We’ll do our best for you. It’s a good thing to grow more bamboo.”

“Yes, your assistant has just been telling me some of the uses of bamboo. The shoots can be eaten; the plant has medicinal value; and the stems can make musical instruments.”

The old man produced a bamboo tobacco pipe and smiling at his visitor asked, “What else?”

“Even the sheath of the bamboo has a use,” chipped in the youngster. “It can be woven into baskets and things of that sort.”

Knocking out the ash from his pipe the old man continued: “It serves as a weapon too.” Then Chao noticed on one wall a painting of Vietnamese fighters in bamboo hats who were sharpening bamboo stakes and setting booby traps for the enemy.

The old man changed the subject then to ask: “What fruit does your state farm grow now?”

“Peaches, plums, apricots and pears, the same as you. Our main job is to develop good varieties for fruit-growers all over the country.”

"Fine."

"We've got your Red-heart Plum too," continued Chao eagerly. "And we heard that it's now grown as far south as Yunnan and as far north as the Changpai Mountains."

The old man murmured as if to himself: "In the past we farmed and grew trees to eke out a living, yet we poor folk couldn't keep body and soul together. Now Chairman Mao tells us to learn from the example of Tachai Brigade, and we're growing crops and fruit for the revolution. Yes, for our socialist revolution! We haven't made a big enough contribution...."

The two young men listened intently, with growing respect for the old man's spirit.

It took the brigade at Lu Family Sandbank a few days only to meet Chao's request. Under the watchful eye of Old Li, five hundred crates were filled with young bamboos, carefully chosen with healthy roots and shoots wrapped in cellophane to keep them moist.

*Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien*

*P o e m s*

*Li Chun*

*The Grassland*

Like a sea of emerald the grassland.

Thick grass, lush grass  
Rolls like waves;  
The undulating hills  
Are the crests of the waves,  
Flocks of sheep  
The white sails at sea,  
And eagles wheeling high above  
The swift sea-gulls....

Like a sea of emerald the grassland.

See our cavalry  
Brave and splendid!  
Chargers speed  
Like torpedo-boats,

Their riders crack their whips  
And spur them on,  
Cutting through waves of grass  
As scouting and patrolling  
They guard our far-flung frontier.

Like a sea of emerald the grassland.

This sea of emerald,  
Gorgeous tapestry  
Of our motherland's  
Rich northern plains,  
Gives us broad vision,  
Infinite courage too;  
Our cavalry love and guard it  
As sailors do the sea.

Like a sea of emerald the grassland.



*Kung Wei-kun*

## *Delivering Grain*

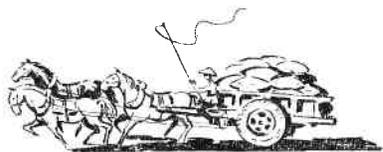
Dust swirls,  
Hoofs flash,  
Bells tinkle,  
Red-tasselled whips crack....  
Surely this is some heavenly caravan  
Descending from the clouds.

Oh white-haired carter,  
Roan horse!  
They say the carts loaded last night  
Set out while yet the stars were in the sky.  
Peak after peak bends down to ask:  
"What brings you out so early?"

Loud and long  
Laughs the carter.

“This year’s fine harvest  
Sets my old heart singing.  
We are leading the way  
To deliver grain to the state,  
Putting our country first!”

Far and wide  
Through green hills  
And golden mist  
Floats singing;  
Like a scroll unfurl the red banners,  
And looking back  
We see speeding after us  
A host of men and horses.



## *Olunchun Folk-Song*

What has vanished from the hearts of the Olunchun people?  
The bitterness and grief of a thousand years.  
What today fills the hearts of the Olunchun people?  
The sweetness and the joy of liberation.  
Since we found our saving star, Chairman Mao,  
From the depth of old mountain forests  
We have stepped into paradise!

What makes the forest pines grow tall and strong?  
The nurture of dew and rain.  
What makes red flowers bloom on snowy steppes?  
The sunshine of the spring.  
What makes the Olunchun people race ahead?  
Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line —  
This it is that shows us the way!

*Illustrated by Hao Chan*

*Li Chin-hua*

## **Gun-Running**

South of the county town of Hukou lies vast Poyang Lake. From it rises a rocky island named because of its shape Mount Shoe; and nearly five hundred square kilometres of water around this is known as Shoe Lake. East of Shoe Lake is Clear Water Bay where, when our story starts, lived several dozen families of poor fishing folk and peasants.

One night towards the end of April, 1930, several dozen sampans were moored side by side in Clear Water Bay. Apart from the plash of waves against the boats, all was still. The doors of the thatched huts were closed: fishermen and peasants had turned in to rest after a hard day's work. One door only was ajar, disclosing a gleam of lamplight inside where several fishermen were seated around a table as if to drink. Instead of raising their cups or chopsticks, however, they were discussing something in low voices. By the window sat a girl of twenty or so. From time to time she raised her eyes from the fishing-net she was mending to glance outside.

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Li Chin-hua is a transport worker in Hukou County, Kiangsi Province.

This was an emergency meeting of the underground Party branch of this district. The man seated in the middle was the Party secretary Li Yung-ching. He was a fisherman of over fifty with a swarthy, weather-beaten face, thick eyebrows and gleaming eyes. Li pushed aside his cup now to announce softly: "We've waited a long time, comrades. Here's good news at last." All the others leaned forward eagerly as he continued: "Today our liaison man has brought instructions from the Party committee. Our branch, which has been operating underground, is now to start open armed struggle. An officer is on his way here to help us set up a Red guerrilla base." The others stirred and exchanged excited comments, but Li held up one hand to silence them. "He's bringing us an urgent task to carry out."

"What is it?" they demanded eagerly.

"We'll discuss it when the new comrade turns up," replied Li. "I've sent Young Chen to fetch him."

Before he had finished speaking the girl by the window exclaimed: "Dad, turn up the light!" Aware that someone was coming, the men picked up their cups and started laughing and chatting.

The door swung back with a creak. The newcomer was a young man in his twenties wearing a felt hat, black cloth jacket and white girdle. At sight of him they exclaimed: "Why, Chen-chiang, where did you spring from?"

Chen-chiang had been born in this fishing village. In 1926 when the revolutionary forces were advancing victoriously towards the north, a peasants' association was set up here under the Communist Party. They confiscated the property of the local despot Skinflint Yang, sharing out the landlord's clothes and grain as well as his three rifles among the poor peasants and fishing folk. Chen-chiang's father Yu Liang-chuan had joined the Party then along with Li Yung-ching and several others. But in the spring of the following year Chiang Kai-shek betrayed the revolution, and Yang who had fled the village came back with the reactionary troops to suppress the villagers. Yang's brother-in-law Chang Ta-fa seized Yu Liang-chuan and ordered him to hand over the rifles and a list of the Party members. When Yu refused he was murdered and his fishing-boat smashed.

Chen-chiang's mother died soon after. The lad waited for a chance to avenge his parents. One night when Chang Ta-fa was out gambling he jumped on him, swinging an axe, but failed to kill him. While the other gamblers were still collecting their wits, Chen-chiang disappeared into the darkness. Li Yung-ching's daughter Shan-hsiu, who was engaged to the young man, managed to ferry him across the lake that same night. Then Chen-chiang joined the Red Army while Li remained in the village, became the underground Party secretary and kept charge of the landlord's three guns.

Three years had passed since then. And Chen-chiang, now a company political instructor in the Red Army, had been sent back by the battalion Party committee to help the local people wage armed struggle. Not knowing this, they were puzzled by his sudden arrival.

Chen-chiang turned with a smile to Li and said: "Uncle, I've come to buy prawns."

Li could hardly believe his ears, for this was the password agreed on. Gazing at the young man with shining eyes he replied: "We have crabs. Will that do?"

"Yes. I want live ones."

The men in the hut exclaimed: "So you're the leading cadre we've been expecting, Chen-chiang!"

"Did you see Young Chen?" asked Li.

"He's out there." Chen-chiang pointed to the door.

At that Young Chen came in and said teasingly to the girl: "Comrade Shan-hsiu, let me introduce you to our new leading cadre...."

"Cut it out," put in Old Ho, a member of the Party branch committee. "This is no time for joking."

Meanwhile Chen-chiang had produced his credentials which he handed to Li. Before he could embark on an explanation Young Chen grabbed his arm and demanded: "What's the urgent task, Brother Chen-chiang?"

"Don't be so impatient," said Old Ho. "This isn't like frying sticky rice. There'll be plenty for you to do presently."

Pulling Young Chen over to sit beside him, Chen-chiang told them: "Comrades, last January Commissioner Mao Tsetung wrote a splendid



article — *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire*. It points out the right path for the Chinese people and makes us absolutely sure that the final victory will be ours. Now our battalion Party committee has decided to set up a new Red base in this district. Shoe Lake's in a key position for controlling communications by water. The enemy ship troops and war material to Kiangsi Province through here, and now they want to use this place to cordon off the guerrilla base in the west part of Poyang Lake. So to consolidate and expand our base, we must wipe out the bandit forces led by Skinflint Yang and the other landlords along the lake."

"Right!" Young Chen leapt to his feet. "When do we start?"

"Our orders are to carry out this task within a week," was Chen-chiang's resolute answer.

While the men were digesting this stirring news Chen-chiang turned to ask Li: "Think we can do it, uncle?"

"We haven't got many guns," said Li thoughtfully.

"Apart from the three you've got, we're going to give you another twenty."

"Twenty guns! Where are they?" The others jumped to their feet.

"The battalion Party committee has given us twenty rifles, one machine-gun and several cases of ammunition and hand-grenades," replied Chen-chiang. "They are on the far bank of Frog Lake, just before it joins Shoe Lake. But the last two days the enemy has tightened up on security everywhere. Maybe they have some inkling of what we're up to. We must work like lightning and ship those guns over here tonight."

In high spirits the men discussed with Li who could best carry out this task. They ruled out Old Ho and Young Chen because they worked on Skinflint Yang's grain barge and their disappearance might alert the enemy; while Li as Party secretary must stay behind to see to things in the village.

Finally Chen-chiang said: "I know the lay-out here as well as the situation over there. Just give me a boat and I'll do the job."

"Right." Li nodded. "But it's a long way to row. You need someone to help you...."

Shan-hsiu turned from the window and cut in: "Let me go with him, dad."

The others all thought this a good idea, but before Li could give his consent they heard the barking of dogs in the distance. The girl quickly turned to the window and saw people approaching with electric torches. Chen-chiang drew his pistol and, with a nod to the others, slipped into the inner room.

Li and the rest were chatting over their wine when in came a man with a scarred face at the head of a few thugs. This was Chang Tafa, Skinflint Yang's brother-in-law, who still bore the marks of Chen-chiang's attack on him three years before and was commonly known as Scar-face. Glancing round as he entered, he said: "You're drinking late, eh?"

Li stood up and asked him to join them, but Scar-face brushed the invitation aside. When his eyes fell on Old Ho and Young Chen he scowled. "Why have you both left the junk? Who's to be responsible if there's any trouble?"

"These days the boss has put on more guards," retorted Young Chen. "How could anything happen?"

Scar-face glared, on the point of an outburst, but thought better of it and turned to Li to ask: "Any boats out tonight?"

"Not that we noticed," Li answered.

"Well, listen here," growled Scar-face. "From now on no sampans or junks are to put out. Tomorrow some people from the county town will come to register the boats, and each will be issued with a flag as a pass. Anyone caught without a pass will be shot as a Communist spy." Turning to Old Ho he added, "Go to the bank and pass on my orders to all the fishermen. Look snappy." Then he and the thugs slouched off.

This sudden turn of events complicated their task. Apparently the enemy already had wind of the gun-running plan. Chen-chiang returning from the back room said resolutely: "No matter how hard it is, we must get the guns over tonight."

"Their patrol boat will be coming this way soon," Li reminded him. "It takes the patrol boat four and a half hours to Frog Lake and back; so we'll have to do the trip in less time than that. Seventy li

there and back means rowing seventeen *li* in an hour. It's too much for one man. 'There must be another to help.'

Again his daughter volunteered: "Let me go with him, dad."

Li asked Chen-chiang's opinion. "She'll do," was the confident answer.

Just then they heard the chug of a motor on the lake. Chen-chiang and Shan-hsiu quickly got their oars ready to leave as soon as the patrol boat had passed.

"Here we've been talking all this time and forgotten to give Chen-chiang something to eat," exclaimed Li.

"I've had my supper. I'm not hungry," said Chen-chiang.

"No, you'll be rowing all night. Take this porridge left in the pot." Li gave the pot to his daughter to carry, and then Young Chen saw them to the shore of the lake.

By the time they got there the patrol boat had passed. Shan-hsiu stepped aboard first with the warning: "Watch your step. There's a loose plank in the prow." A second later they weighed anchor and shoved off. With Chen-chiang rowing and Shan-hsiu sculling, the boat sped like an arrow towards Frog Lake.

As they approached Mount Shoe, they were startled to hear the sound of a motor. "Has the patrol boat turned back, do you think?" asked Shan-hsiu.

Chen-chiang listened carefully and soon detected that this was a steam engine, not a diesel engine. Judging by the lantern on the mast, it was probably a barge.

"Whatever it is, we must be careful," he said. "You take the oars while I pretend to be fishing." With that he cast the net. It was just the season for carp, and before long he had caught three good-sized fish. The barge either failed to notice them or was not interested, for it chugged past and vanished.

"That son-of-a-bitch Skinflint Yang won't let us fish at night," complained Shan-hsiu. "Otherwise we could catch several hundred pounds a day."

"Just wait till this place is liberated," answered Chen-chiang. "Then this lake will belong to us poor folk, and you'll be able to fish whenever you please."

"Yes, we're longing for that day," responded the girl.

After rowing for two hours they reached the far side of Frog Lake. As soon as the boat touched the shore, a shadowy figure materialized and asked: "Have you any fish to sell?"

"No, we're visiting relatives," replied Chen-chiang.

Recognizing the signal the other came to the boat and exclaimed with relief: "So you're back."

Chen-chiang clasped his hands saying: "We're in a hurry. Quick!" Then he told the girl to wait and the two men ran off.

As Chen-chiang vanished into the darkness Shan-hsiu smiled, well pleased to have found him so confident and experienced after these years in the Red Army. She had a vision of the happy days in store after they had got guns to wipe out Skinflint Yang's bandit forces and set up their own government for workers and peasants. As she mused, a flash of lightning split the sky, followed by a crash of thunder. Dark clouds were looming up from the north horizon. A tempest was on its way. Luckily at this moment she saw Chen-chiang coming back with four other men, all heavily loaded. She helped them to carry the weapons aboard and stowed them in the cabin. Chen-chiang loaded the machine-gun, took two hand-grenades from the cases and placed them within reach, then covered the other weapons with a quilt. The four men shook hands, wished them success and pushed the boat off.

The storm was approaching now. A high wind sprang up; waves started pounding the boat. Anxious to discharge their important task as quickly as possible, they rowed with all their might towards Clear Water Bay. Then the heavens opened, the rain poured down in torrents, and their little craft started tossing up and down. Chen-chiang steered steadily through the inky darkness, relying on the flashes of lightning to get his bearings. Towering waves were crashing down over them, and he was afraid that if the storm continued their swamped and heavily-loaded boat might capsize.

"Leave the rowing to me," he said firmly to Shan-hsiu. "You bale out the water."

For more than an hour Shan-hsiu baled as fast as she could while Chen-chiang rowed as if his life depended on it, and then at last the

storm began to die down. A flash of lightning lit up Mount Shoe in the distance, showing that they had still two thirds of the way to go. "You can help row too now," he told Shan-hsiu. "We can still make it in time."

As the girl took up her oars they heard a motor.

"The patrol boat's back!" she exclaimed. "What shall we do?"

Chen-chiang was puzzled. The patrol boat should take four and a half hours to make its rounds; why was it back so soon? It looked as if the enemy had learned of their plan and was patrolling only Shoe Lake.

"Don't worry," he said after a moment's thought. "Let's row to Mount Shoe and keep under cover."

They pulled hard on the oars, but it was too late: the patrol boat had closed in. As its searchlight spotted them Shan-hsiu ducked down.

"Halt, or I'll spray you with my machine-gun!" brayed a rough voice.

Since escape was impossible, Chen-chiang softly instructed the girl: "Quick, splash that porridge over the deck then get into the cabin and cover yourself with the quilt as if you were ill. I'll deal with them. If they won't let us go, I'll board their boat and blow them up with my hand-grenades. If I don't come back, just row the boat home. You must carry out the task at all costs."

"No," said Shan-hsiu. "Let me tackle them with the hand-grenades. You have your work in Clear Water Bay to see to."

"Orders are orders," interposed Chen-chiang sternly.

Then Shan-hsiu could not refuse. She spilt the porridge over the deck, picked up an axe and slipped into the cabin, while Chen-chiang put his hand-grenades ready in the darkness beside him. By now the patrol boat had come alongside.

A man on the bridge yelled: "Who are you?"

Then a grappling-pole reached out and hooked on to the small fishing-boat.

"I'm a fisherman, captain," said Chen-chiang. "My wife's ill and I've taken her to see a doctor."

Ignoring this, the other man bawled: "Search the boat!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" A White soldier flabby as a loofah prepared to jump aboard.

Tightening her grip on the axe Shan-hsiu thought: "If you stick your neck in here, I won't let you escape."

Chen-chiang too, as he calmly answered the enemy's questions, was secretly resolving: "If you discover our guns, I'll sink your boat."

Since this was a fishing-boat, Loofah saw his chance to get some fish for nothing. Scrambling over the rail of the patrol boat he leapt quickly down. Crash! Landing on the broken plank he measured his length on the deck.

The patrol-boat commander shouted: "What are you doing?"

"Captain, I . . . f-fell."

"Damn your guts!"

"Yessir."

"Get a move on — search!"

"Yessir." As Loofah scrambled to his feet he trod on something slippery. Shining his torch on it he exclaimed: "I've f-found them, c-captain."

"Found what?"

"Th-three . . ."

Assuming that he had discovered three weapons, the crew of the patrol boat hastily trained their guns on the small craft while Loofah stammered out the rest of his sentence: "Th-th-three . . . big f-fish."

"Hell!" swore the captain. "All right, pass the fish over. Then go on with your search."

When the soldier picked up the fish Chen-chiang protested: "Don't take my catch, sir. This is to pay the doctor."

"Go to hell. Why are you out s-so . . . late?"

"I've told you, officer. My wife's very ill with diarrhoea, throwing up all the time. We've no doctor in our village, so I had to take her across the lake to see one. He said it's a dangerous infectious disease and there's nothing he can do; so we had to come back."

Mention of a dangerous infectious disease scared the soldier stiff. "Wh-what is it?"

"Cholera."

Loofah trembled with fright and his torch, flashing over the deck, showed the spilled porridge looking like vomit. His own trousers too, he saw, were smeared with the same sticky mess. He hastily reported: "Captain, they've got s-someone with cho . . . cholera."

"Come back quick then," ordered the captain. "Don't go into the cabin."

This ended the search. But Chen-chiang's boat was firmly hooked by the grappling pole to the patrol boat, which started towing it towards the county town. Chen-chiang racked his brains to think of some way out. Putting the hand-grenades out of sight he took a rope from the hatch and told the soldier holding the grappling pole, "You'll soon be fagged out doing that. Let's use this rope instead, that'll hold better."

A fat bespectacled head looked out from the bridge. "What the hell are you doing?"

"Do me a favour, sir," pleaded Chen-chiang. "Take my boat to town so that I can find a doctor for my wife."

This captain had never done a kind deed in all his life. He had intended to tow the fishing-boat to town as a punishment. He had no intention of doing the fisherman a good turn. Besides, he had discovered nothing suspicious. "Why the hell should I tow you all that way?" he swore. He barked out the order: "Let that boat go!"

Thereupon the soldier with the grapnel unhooked it and shoved the fishing-boat off, after which the patrol boat put on steam and roared off towards the county town.

As soon as the patrol boat was out of sight, Shan-hsiu came out of the cabin and complimented Chen-chiang on his success in foxing the enemy. "How cleverly you handled that!" she said.

"It's all for our struggle against the enemy," replied Chen-chiang with an ingenuous smile. "Look, Shan-hsiu, where have they brought us?"

The girl raised her head to look eastward and found that they were eight or nine *li* from Clear Water Bay.

"*Aiya*, what a distance they towed us!" she exclaimed.

"In fact, they've done us a favour." Chen-chiang looked back, beaming, over the course they had travelled. "We were over twenty *li* above the bay when we were intercepted, but now we're nine *li* below it. So much the better."

By now the clouds were dispersing and a few stars had begun to peep out. Shan-hsiu turned her eyes to the clear sky and remarked: "The moon will soon be up, Brother Chen-chiang."

"Yes. When the moon's up we'll be more easily seen. Let's put on a spurt."

Their small craft, hugging the eastern shore, moved upstream. After they had rowed a few *li* the moon showed its face, silvering the whole lake and revealing the dim outlines of distant mountains. As Chen-chiang plied the oars he kept a look-out ahead. Presently from behind a rocky promontory emerged a large junk. The two of them were taken by surprise.

"Whose boat can this be, out so late at night?" wondered the girl.

What had happened was this. That night while Skinflint Yang was smoking opium on his couch after a game of mahjong, he received urgent instructions from the county government. The order read: "We have just been informed that the Communists are sending arms towards the mouth of Poyang Lake, probably by way of Shoe Lake. All the chiefs of the civilian corps are hereby instructed to set out at once with their men to patrol Shoe Lake. Any negligence will incur severe punishment." The last sentence had been heavily underlined.

Realizing the urgency of the matter, Yang dared not delay. He immediately ordered Scar-face to call his men together. They were to guard his house and the shore while he, Scar-face and three other lackeys would do the patrolling. But just as they were setting off, a gale sprang up followed by a heavy downpour. Yang took this as a pretext to retire to his den for another pipe of opium, and not until the storm ceased did he start towards the lake with his thugs.

In the meantime Old Ho and Young Chen, employed as oarsmen by Yang, returned to his junk after helping Li Yung-ching make arrangements for the disposal of the arms. Concern for Chen-chiang and Shan-hsiu kept them from sleeping. The storm doubled their anxiety and made them restless. But there was not a sign of Chen-

chiang and the girl. What could have happened? Old Ho strained his eyes upstream but all he could see was darkness. He turned and looked at the shore. There he saw some torches flashing and moving his way. Both Old Ho and Young Chen realized that Skinflint Yang and his gang had come out either to make a night round or to patrol the lake. In the former case, they had not much to worry about; in the latter, the gun-running would be in jeopardy.

"What's to be done?" asked Young Chen anxiously.

Old Ho made no reply. He was thinking: If Yang means to patrol the lake and we refuse to go, that will arouse the enemy's suspicion. If we do go, what shall we do when we meet Chen-chiang coming back? There are only two of us and the night is dark; how can we team up with Chen-chiang who won't be expecting us to be out on the water?

The torches drew nearer and nearer. How to cope with the situation? "Well," Old Ho said to himself, "since none of his guys can steer, Yang is sure to take me. The only other fisherman around here who can steer at night is Old Li. Suppose I sham ill? Then Yang will have to ask Old Li to take my job. Old Li knows Chen-chiang's plan; so he's the best man to deal with the enemy."

Thereupon Old Ho pulled his young mate over and whispered something to him. Then he darted into the cabin, threw himself down and pulled a quilt over his head and feet.

By this time Yang and his gang had reached the boat. "Hey!" bawled Scar-face. "Lower the plank. The boss is here."

"Old Ho's sick." Young Chen slowly paced to the bow to answer. "He has a splitting headache."

"What the devil!" Scar-face howled. "Just a short while ago he was drinking. How can he be ill? Tell him to get up."

Yang and his lackeys now came on board, only to be greeted by Old Ho's groans.

"Confound it!" Yang blustered, furious. "Why choose this time to fall ill? Can you take the boat out?"

Old Ho only groaned, as if too ill to speak. In desperation Yang spun round and round like a monkey in a circus. "Why stand there

like a fool?" he bellowed at Scar-face. "Get another boatman, quick!"

"Li's a good helmsman, even better than Ho," replied Scar-face. "Once I was on his boat supervising a grain delivery to the county. It happened to come over stormy..."

"Cut it short. Go and get him. Look sharp!" Yang shook his fist in a frenzy.

"Very good." Scar-face hurried off, and soon came to the door of Li's hut.

"Li Yung-ching, open up!" he yelled, hammering on the door.

Li was up, waiting for the return of Chen-chiang. The arrival of Scar-face heightened his vigilance. In the darkness he picked up an axe and went to the door.

"Who's there?" demanded Li, pretending not to have recognized the scoundrel's voice.

"It's me — Chang Ta-fa," replied Scar-face. "The boss is going to patrol the lake tonight. Old Ho happens to be ill. The boss wants you to take the rudder."

Putting down the axe Li opened the door, mulling the matter over in his mind. "The enemy all of a sudden wants to patrol the lake? They must have got wind of our shipment of weapons. Old Ho's illness is faked, he wants me to be on board so that if we meet Chen-chiang on the lake I'll know how to tip him off and help him cope with the danger."

Having reached this conclusion, he decided to take advantage of the situation. "You know I'm a timid man, Captain Chang," he said. "Suppose you run into the Communists when you're patrolling the lake?"

"What are you afraid of?" retorted Scar-face, putting on a show of boldness. "We have guns."

"Guns, yes. But not enough men," countered Li. "I heard that some time ago a whole battalion of the garrison on the opposite shore was wiped out by the Communists. Running into the Reds is no joke."

Li's words made Scar-face's flesh creep. "Orders are orders," he answered helplessly.

"Well then, Captain Chang," Li proposed, "can't we take some strong young fishermen along? They can make a show of force for the boss."

"Right, right, that's a good idea. I'll suggest it to the boss. Now, come along."

Back on the boat, Scar-face told Yang of Li's proposal. Yang rolled his cunning eyes, then gave his consent and ordered Li to fetch some men. As Li turned to leave, however, the Skinflint stopped him. "Wait a minute," he said. "Tell the fishermen to come on their own boats. I won't have them on board mine."

Li nodded, realizing that this arrangement would suit his purpose still better.

Li rounded up the Red Guardsmen — all of them fishermen — and informed them of the unexpected development. It was decided on the spot that he should take along Old Wang and eight others. They rowed alongside Yang's junk in three sampans, and their arrival made the landlord feel much safer. Everything being ready, the four boats set out.

Three of Yang's thugs sat at the bow taking gulps of the liquor they had brought with them, while Scar-face at the stern downed bowl after bowl. "Which way shall we go?" asked Li from his place at the helm.

"Upstream or down, it doesn't matter," answered Yang off-handedly from his couch in the cabin where he was smoking opium.

Li was secretly pleased by this. He imagined that since Chen-chiang had gone to fetch arms from Frog Lake, he would naturally return from that direction. If they sailed upstream they would be bound to meet him. He set course downstream instead.

Nothing so variable as spring weather: the storm over, the lake now lay calm and serene. But to make the boat easily visible from a distance, Li told Young Chen to hoist sail. He then set the desired course and sailed off with the current, the three sampans trailing behind.

As Li steered eastward round a promontory, keeping a close watch ahead by the light of the moon, he spotted a small vessel less than three *li* away heading straight towards the junk. "Who can that be out so early?" he asked himself. "Surely it's not Chen-chiang?"

How could he possibly be coming from downstream? Anyway, to play safe we'll give it a wide berth." With that he turned the tiller to direct the boat towards the heart of the lake.

But it so happened that one of the three brigands drinking at the bow had detected the moving craft too. "There's a boat over there!" he cried. He ran into the cabin to report, in the hope of some reward. At once Yang drew his Mauser and scuttled out on deck. The cry had aroused Scar-face in the stern as well. He quickly jumped to his feet, pistol in hand.

Shan-hsiu was rowing steadily along when she caught sight of the junk and identified it as Yang's. Almost in the same instant Li recognized his daughter. What surprised him most was the fact that she seemed to be alone. Where was Chen-chiang? He kept a cool head, however, sure that the brave and resourceful young man must be well prepared for all contingencies.

Now the two vessels were closing in on each other. One of the thugs bawled: "Who's there? Come alongside."

"It's me, sergeant," answered Shan-hsiu calmly. "I was so sleepy last night that I didn't fasten my boat securely. During the storm it slipped its moorings, and by the time I found out it had drifted a long way. Now I'm taking it back."

Seeing it was only Li's daughter, Scar-face spat a curse at her and dropped his pistol. But Yang would not let it go at that. Mainly to impress his men and show that he had not come out for nothing, he ordered Scar-face, "Never mind what she says. Search!" With this he went back to the cabin and his opium.

Scar-face in turn shouted to one of the thugs: "Get down and have a look!" Then he returned to his place, putting down his pistol beside him to go on drinking.

"Come alongside. We're going to search," shouted the landlord's thug, already tipsy.

"You stupid girl!" thundered Li. "You don't even know how to moor a boat. All you do is sleep like a log!"

Shan-hsiu, hearing her father's voice, felt reassured. "Watch out, dad!" she cried. "Don't ram us."



Li knew that Chen-chiang and his daughter were fully prepared for a situation like this. "Don't you worry," he answered. "I'll take care. Come and let the sergeant search you."

Seeing that the two of them were father and daughter, the thug judged that the search he was to make was purely routine, just to please the boss. Entirely off guard, he even neglected to take his gun as he sprang towards the fishing-boat. But in that split second Shan-hsiu backed with her oars, so that the fellow crashed into the water.

Another of the thugs, assuming this to be an accident, snatched up a pole to rescue his mate. As he did so Chen-chiang shot out from under cover in the cabin and with a sudden pull on the pole toppled this rascal too into the water, where he cracked his head against that of his mate who had just managed to surface. The third thug raised his gun, but before he could shoot — wham! — a blow on the head from Young Chen knocked him out.

Scar-face, seeing this rough-and-tumble from the stern, threw away his bottle and reached for his pistol. But Li, with one spring, planted a foot on the gun and struck out with the steering rod he had snatched from the tiller. As Scar-face dodged, the blow caught him on the backside and batted him overboard.

By this time Skinflint Yang was so terrified that his legs gave way under him. To save his skin, however, he pulled out his Mauser and levelled it at Li. Then Old Ho who had been shamming ill leapt up and charged him. He seized Skinflint by the throat with one hand and with the other tried to grab the Mauser. Yang crashed to the floor. Old Ho pinned him down with one knee and the two men grappled together. At that moment Chen-chiang, revolver in hand, jumped aboard the junk, kicked down the cabin door and rushed in. He prodded Yang's head with his gun shouting: "Don't move!" Then the landlord, knowing that the game was up, collapsed in a heap like a deflated balloon. And Li and Young Chen hurried over to help tie him up.

Meanwhile the Red Guardsmen who had kept on the alert rowed their sampans closer in. Seeing Scar-face felled by Li's blow, they watched the surface of the water closely, and when the scoundrel's head reappeared they raced towards him like flying arrows. The

blow Li had dealt was not fatal and Scar-face, brought up in the lake district, was a good swimmer. At sight of his pursuers he dived under to escape. But he was no match for the fishermen who had weathered countless storms. Led by Old Wang, the three sampans closed in from three directions in search of their quarry. When Scar-face popped up for air near the bow of Old Wang's boat, the old fisherman struck him over the head with a pole, bashing a hole in his skull, and so put paid to all his villainies. The battle lasted no more than ten minutes and the enemy was vanquished without firing a single shot.

Chen-chiang and Shan-hsiu had returned safely with the arms. All the fishermen exulted over their success. After a consultation with Li, Chen-chiang distributed the guns among the Red Guardsmen on each fishing-boat. Then he addressed them in loud ringing tones: "Comrades, now Skinflint Yang has been captured alive and that devil Scar-face has got what he deserved. This is a victory; but we have a still bigger battle to fight. We'll go into action tonight — to smash all the armed bandits in Clear Water Bay. Old Li will be in charge of the fishing-boats, while I'll have my command post on the landlord's junk. Let's get ready."

The Red Guardsmen got ready for the coming fight. With the big junk in the lead, riding the waves they headed for Clear Water Bay.

*Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng*

*Yen Yi*

### *Night in the Hills*

Late at night the village lies dreaming;  
None so fond of a good chat  
As the old shepherd,  
But even he  
Has long since closed his eyes.  
Intoxicating stillness  
Of night in the hills!

But listen:  
Here and there  
On both banks of the stream  
Sounds a droning,  
A murmurous trilling,  
As if someone unseen  
Were humming a melody.

Who is it?  
Some students  
Come back to the village  
Have started up the pumps,  
Using the clear stream water  
To spur the crops.

This music spurs  
Flowering, the forming of ears,  
The ripening of fruit:  
White pears, red tangerines. . . .  
Even in their dreams  
The hills are softly sprayed  
With iridescent rain.

*Yen Yi*

### *The Sugar-Cane Plantation*

It was the talk of the county town,  
In the commune too they told me  
Of Lan Family Village's  
Fine bunch of youngsters  
Who could write reports,  
Make up accounts,  
Invariably chose the hardest tasks,  
And had reclaimed  
Nine  $\frac{1}{2}$  of stony wasteland.  
The old team leader  
Had his work cut out  
Keeping up with them —  
And how this made him chortle!  
So off I went, eager  
To see this for myself.

From across the stream I heard singing;  
From behind the mountain, shouting;  
But in Lan Family Village  
No young folk did I find.  
Grinning from ear to ear  
The old team leader  
Pointed to the sugar-cane.  
"See how well these nine *li*  
Of sugar-cane are growing!  
Just try a few,  
Our canes are honey-sweet."

A shout from the old man  
Shook the whole plantation;  
Whooping with laughter  
Out rushed a band  
Of fine young lasses and lads.  
But when I asked their names  
I was bewildered:  
So many fine youngsters  
In Lan Family Village,  
Why wasn't a single one of them  
Named Lan?  
The girls exchanged nudges,  
The young fellows winks;  
Then back they plunged into the canes,  
Leaving behind them  
Peal upon peal of laughter.

Nodding his white head proudly  
The team leader told me:

"Five years ago,  
Fresh from junior middle school,  
They passed the entrance exam  
To this 'higher grade'.  
Since then from dawn to dusk  
This small village of ours  
Has always been filled with singing!"

After this praise  
He cited some "shortcomings":  
"These youngsters don't know how to rest,  
They're always dreaming dreams:  
They dream of driving this stream  
Up Tiger-head Mountain,  
Of planting sugar-cane  
High on the hills.  
That's how they are,  
Our younger generation!"

Our talk was cut short  
By a burst of laughter;  
Tracking the sound through the canes  
I found the answer  
To whether or not the young folk  
Could make their dreams come true;  
For there, spirited as tigers,  
They were swinging their hoes  
As if to challenge Nature.  
And how deep the roots,  
Lush the leaves and sweet the juice  
In that green sugar-cane plantation!

*Li Kuang-wen*

## Clay Sculpture

Clay sculpture is a very old folk art in China. Clay figurines and models dating from the third century B.C. have been unearthed. Coloured sculptures must have evolved about one or two centuries later when folk artists used colour on their works. There are many Buddhist images and statues of deities in China's temples and monasteries, as well as sculptures of ordinary people. This art, developed over long centuries, has in the last two decades achieved a more realistic depiction of the everyday life of workers, peasants and soldiers.

Clay sculptures are to be found all over China, but the best-known centres of this art are Huishan near Wusih in the lower Yangtse Valley and Tientsin in north China.

Huishan is noted for its plump doll-like figures modelled with a sweeping economy of line. The folk artists concentrate on the main features, such as the facial expression, paying relatively less attention to the hands, feet and rest of the body. After modelling the general outline, they may simply use a patch of colour to show the clothes or



**I Love Peking's Tien An Men**

by Liu Chia-kuei

## New Clay Sculptures



Yenpien Drum-Dance



Herding Buffaloes



Delivering Coal Through the Snow



Tending Pigs

sculptures by Cheng Yu-ho



In the Mountains

by Shen Chi

draw two lines to represent the arms. A few strokes of this kind produce a vivid likeness of a chubby child.

The best exponents of this art in north China are a family named Chang who became known for their clay modelling in the early nineteenth century. The fourth generation of Changs is carrying on the family tradition today. They excel in the depiction of characters from the traditional theatre and classical fiction, as well as ornate colourful figures of women and working people. Whereas the Huishan clay figures are somewhat romantic in style, those made by the Chang family artists are realistic down to the smallest detail.

In old China clay modelling served the needs of the ruling class and inevitably came under its influence, while folk artists did not receive the respect they deserved for their hard and skilful work. Chang Ming-shan, the first of the Chang family artists, was conscripted in the Ching Dynasty to work in the mansion of a Manchu prince, and he spent all his time modelling figures of the prince's household, even including his horse. Later, the grinding poverty and social turmoil of semi-feudal, semi-colonial China reduced folk artists to the verge of starvation. By the eve of Liberation this clay modelling art had virtually died out.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, under the care of the Chinese Communist Party and the people's government, the ranks of clay sculptors expanded and the art revived and flourished, while there was a marked increase in the variety of themes. A clay figure factory was set up in Huishan, a workshop for clay sculpture in Tientsin. Chang Ching-hu, one of the third generation of Chang family artists, joined the staff of the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts. However, under the domination of the revisionist line on art of the renegade Liu Shao-chi, feudal elements still featured fairly largely in the Huishan clay figures, and the Chang family school of clay sculpture in Tientsin failed to break completely with its old tradition of depicting figures from the feudal ruling classes.

Since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, under the guidance of Chairman Mao's policy, "Let a hundred flowers blossom; weed through the old to bring forth the new", a number of new clay sculp-

tures have appeared portraying themes from the socialist revolution and socialist construction as well as other sources including popular myths and legends.

The clay modelling school of the Chang family in Tientsin has not only assimilated past traditions but has introduced innovations. Chang Ming of the fourth generation has recently produced a work called *Selecting Cotton Prints*. In this, using the realistic and meticulous style evolved by his family, he shows some minority women up in the mountains expressing their satisfaction with the salesman who has brought his wares to their villages. This sculpture is true to life and full of vitality. Another artist of this school, Shen Chi, has modelled a work *In the Mountains* which shows a woman doctor asking the way from a girl of the highland Aini minority people. The perilous surroundings are not shown, but the attitude of the girl makes it clear that the doctor has encountered difficulties on her way to visit a patient, thus vividly testifying to the selfless spirit of our medical workers in the service of the people. This work pays equal attention to line modelling and the use of colour, aiming at perfection in structural composition. It shows how the traditional style has been further developed by the Chang family school.

In recent years clay modelling in Peking has evolved its own distinctive style. This school of clay figures was developed from folk toys. Its special characteristics are: the exaggeration of significant features, attention to depicting the spirit rather than the form, and a highly decorative finish. Representative works of this school include Cheng Yu-ho's *Tending Pigs* and *Yenpien Drum-Dance*. Raising pigs is a routine affair, but this clay sculpture reveals that there is more to it than that. It shows a woman cheerfully bathing some piglets which are frisking round her, conveying the joy of labour.

The clay figures of Huishan are unsophisticated with a distinctive rustic character. A successful example of this style is a new work by Liu Chia-kuei called *I Love Peking's Tien An Men* based on a popular children's song. It presents three plump children singing side by side, and has all the traditional liveliness but none of the old feudal ideas, such as the desire for the birth of a new son each year.

Works dealing with popular legends include *Monkey Fights the White-Bone Demon* by Liu Chia-kuei and Kuo Po-chin and Wang Kuo-tung's *Tripitaka Seeks for Buddhist Sutras*. Both these are based on episodes in the famous classical Chinese novel *Pilgrimage to the West*. They present Monkey as adept in seeing through the disguises of monsters and praise his fighting spirit. From these we can see that they neither condemn all traditional themes out of hand, nor do they accept them in toto. They judge each case on its own merits, keep what is good, discard what is bad and make old things serve our requirements today. Indeed most of our artists in clay are working along this line.

The developments and achievements of our socialist revolution and socialist construction and the emergence of countless heroic characters from among the workers, peasants and soldiers supply the clay modelling art with a wealth of subjects. Since the new contents are different from the old, we must make constant renovations in our art through practice. If we restrict ourselves to the traditional means of depicting ancient costumes to portray our workers, peasants and soldiers of today, the result is bound to be unsatisfactory. However, in renovation we must neither cut ourselves off from real life nor forget our heritage. If we divorce ourselves from life and aim not at depicting the content but simply at producing something new and sensational, we shall lapse into formalism. If we forget our traditions and ignore national features in our eagerness to be original, the clay-modelling art will lose its distinctive Chinese style and its special features. With these principles in mind, many clay sculptors have carried out successful experiments. For instance, Chang Chang's work *A Fine Catch of Fish* breaks with the old convention that clay figures should be static to depict two fisherwomen advancing with a basketful of fish. Their movements are boldly over-emphasized. The effect is realistic and the aesthetic pleasure conveyed is typical of the best handicrafts.

The application of colour is an important aspect of clay modelling. Cheng Yu-ho's *Delivering Coal Through the Snow* has made a significant innovation in this respect. In the past, the colouring of clay figures seldom conveyed the natural surroundings but merely showed the colour of the different objects. In this work, however, the white

snow on the figures' clothes and on the coal cart conveys the effect of a snow-storm. This use of atmosphere makes the work more moving.

Of course, the reform of clay modelling depends not only on understanding life and mastering technique but is also closely linked with the artist's world outlook. Artists with different outlooks on life have different feelings about innovations. Only by achieving a proletarian world outlook can we create new socialist clay sculptures.



## **New Lacquer Handicrafts**

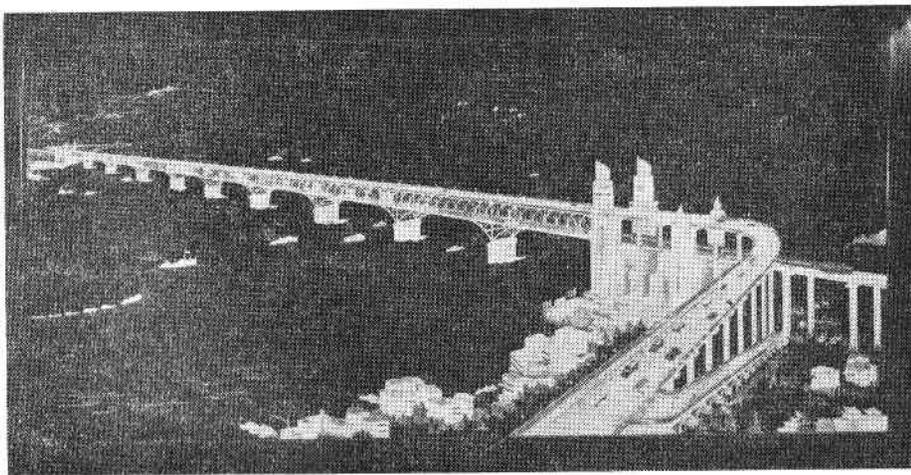
Lacquer work, one of the earliest developed arts and crafts in China, has a history of several thousand years. The first reference to the use of lacquer by the Chinese people occurs in the ancient bamboo-slip writings. According to old classics, lacquer eating-utensils came into use as far back as the second millennium B.C. Not long afterwards coloured lacquerware appeared. Chinese archaeologists have found many clay imprints of red lacquer designs during their excavations of the capital of the Shang Dynasty (1711-1066 B.C.). These are the oldest findings so far unearthed proving the existence of ornamental lacquerware in that period. During the West Chou Dynasty (1066-771 B.C.), in addition to the use of red and black varnishes, inlaid work with mother-of-pearl was introduced. By the time of the Warring States (476-221 B.C.) and the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) this craft was already highly developed.

This year when a 2,100-year-old tomb was discovered at Mawang-tui in the eastern suburb of Changsha in Hunan Province, among the burial objects found were a number of fine red and black lacquer cups,

plates and other funerary ware, all in an excellent state of preservation. The lines in the designs on these vessels are as fine as silken threads. The coffin in this tomb had three layers. All three were lacquered scarlet inside and painted with various designs in red, black, yellow and white on the outside. The skilled craftsmanship found here demonstrates the accomplishments as well as the wisdom of our working people in the ancient past.

Lacquerware is made in many parts of China: Foochow in Fukien Province, Yangchow in Kiangsu, Sian in Shensi, Chungking in Szechuan, Poyang in Kiangsi, Tafang in Kweichow, Weifang in Shantung, Tienshui in Kansu, Yangkiang in Kwangtung as well as Shansi Province, Peking and Shanghai. We have carved lacquer, lacquered inlaid work, gilded lacquer, painted lacquer and other varieties. The products include screens, vases, plates, pots, boxes, ash-trays, lamps and other furniture.

The famous Yangchow lacquer is inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Recently the Yangchow Lacquerware Factory produced a screen depicting the entire Nanking Bridge over the Yangtse. The materials used are sea-shells, phosphorescent shells and mica; and the design, employing traditional techniques, conveys the sense of a panoramic view. The black background throws the luminous bridge into



strong relief while the general colour effects vary wonderfully according to the direction of the light. A bold innovation introduced by the workers of this factory was coating the sea-shells with fluorescent powder so that in the dark the whole bridge appears illuminated.

Gilded inlaid work is another variety produced by Peking handicraftsmen who fit shells, jade, ivory, agate, coral and redwood on the lacquerware in high relief, and often add finishing touches in gold. Screens showing *Immortals Scattering Blossoms* and the portrait of Li Shih-chen, famous Chinese herbalist of the 16th century, are examples of this type of work. These take their theme from history and legends, employ the traditional methods of portraying characters and make full use of different materials.

Peking's carved lacquerware is carving done on many layers of lacquer. A flower-basket type of dish, one metre across, has been hollowed out according to the traditional method of jade carving, adding richer variety to lacquer carving. The Foochow lacquerware which has no wooden base is light, durable and good-looking. The motifs also cover a wide range, both ancient and modern. And whether a small lamp-stand or a big imitation-bronze lion or rhinoceros, all this work is vivid and life-like. One carved lacquerware factory in Foochow has made a deep-red lacquer vase, glossy as satin with graceful gilded tassel designs. The craftsmanship is exquisite, combining a simple classical form with magnificent glowing colours.

Foochow and Szechuan are renowned for their highly polished painted lacquerware with its clean lines and smooth lustrous finish. Whether a lacquer painting or a lacquer vessel, the surface is as bright as a mirror. The old craftsman Li Chih-ching, making use of the high transparency of lacquer, has evolved a new varnishing technique which is now widely applied. A vessel produced by his method is polished to look like translucent red glass with delicate designs visible under the surface. An outstanding example of this work is a plate with a goldfish design. The fish are sporting in a pool. Due to the successful treatment of depth and light effects, some appear at a distance others close at hand; but the whole composition has perfect harmony. In another goldfish plate made by Sheng Fu-wen of Szechuan, each

fish-scale has been painted separately, dusted with silver powder and then polished. The water-weeds too are very finely done.

In the past few years, more and more artists have begun to explore the possibilities of reflecting the socialist revolution and socialist construction of our country through lacquer paintings. Apart from the traditional techniques — gilding, carving, inlaying and so forth — they are experimenting with new techniques such as those already mentioned, in order to break new ground in the art of lacquer painting. These craftsmen have not only taken over what is best in this ancient art and developed it but are assimilating the techniques of painting in the traditional style and oil-painting as well as some sculptural arts.

As a richly decorative art, lacquer painting has characteristics of its own. In such recent works as *Morning in the Tachang Oil Fields* and *Putting Out to Sea*, the artists have attempted to depict the thriving scenes of our socialist construction in a limited space by making full use of transparent varnishes.

*Putting Out to Sea* is lacquered in different tones of red to depict the industrious fishermen who set out early, riding the waves to meet the rising sun. In order to convey the morning mist, the artists have paid special attention to the polishing of the lacquer at the horizon, and the higher transparency here gives a luminous effect. Crimson clouds in the sky enhance the sense of space, while a small patch of green in the upper right-hand corner serves as a contrast to the prevailing red. The sea too is red, its foaming waves harmonizing with the sky. The technical level of this work, as a whole, is high.

After Liberation and particularly since the cultural revolution, under the guidance of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art, the lacquerware artists have taken over many fine traditions both as regards subject matter and technique and at the same time have made some bold innovations in this ancient art. This they have done in accordance with Chairman Mao's instructions to **"Let a hundred flowers blossom; weed through the old to bring forth the new."** As a result, they have created quite a number of good works successfully reflecting the socialist revolution and socialist construction of their motherland.



Red Vase

by the Foochow Carved Lacquerware Factory

**Amateur Art Activities in Shanghai**

Shanghai is currently the scene of an upsurge of mass amateur art activities, and a wide range of new works has been produced. Most popular of all perhaps is mass singing. Numerous organizations have put on concerts of new songs composed by their members, and this has led to the writing of many new songs. Again, many factories, mines, colleges and schools have organized shows consisting of items produced by the workers and students, thus enriching their cultural life in their spare time. Noteworthy too is the fact that the amateur artists in different units not only put on shows during festivals but regularly devote much of their spare time to art activities. This trend is evident in the suburbs too. In this way people of different walks of life in Shanghai have recently created a considerable number of literary and art works reflecting their work and study.

**Film Version of "Raid on the White-Tiger Regiment"**

During the celebrations of the twenty-third anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, a new colour film based on the revolutionary modern Peking opera *Raid on the White-Tiger Regiment* was released on October 1 and shown in various parts of the country.

The film depicts Yen Wei-tsai, leader of a scouting platoon of the Chinese People's Volunteers during the war to resist U.S. aggression



and aid Korea. In close co-operation with the Korean people's army and the Korean people, he and his men smash the headquarters of the White-Tiger Regiment, a crack enemy unit.

The opera was staged by the Peking Opera Company of Shantung Province and filmed by the Changchun Film Studio. It was shown together with some new documentary films and newsreels.

### **Opening of Peking Man Exhibition Centre**

Recently the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Palcoanthropology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences has carried out further research at Choukoutien south west of Peking, the site where Peking Man was discovered. The Peking Man Exhibition Centre which has now opened there displays human fossils and fossils of vertebrates discovered here and in various other parts of China since Liberation.

The early ape-man known as Peking Man lived half a million years ago. These ape-men were cave-dwellers who hunted animals and

used rough stone and bone implements. In 1927 and 1929 skull caps of the ape-man, fragments of skull, lower jaw bones and limb bones were excavated from the deposits of Lungku (Dragon-bone) Hill, Choukoutien, together with large quantities of stone implements, animal fossils and evidence of the use of fire by Peking Man. At the top of the hill were also found fossils of the upper cave man and cultural relics dating back more than ten thousand years.

This newly opened exhibition centre with its abundance of ape-man fossils provides a systematic introduction to the origin and development of animals and men. It also shows what has been achieved in research in vertebrate paleontology and palcoanthropology in new China.

# Letters

## — From Our Readers

As to *On the Docks*, I think it is a new and wonderful experiment to make these stories into Peking opera. I also think it is a great thing that the Chinese people are making such efforts to create a new Peking opera while carrying on the traditions of Chinese literature.

Hamamatsu,  
Japan

N.T.

By far the most interesting article was Kuo Mo-jo's *Li Po and Tu Fu as Friends*; it was a pleasure to see the two great poets viewed from a modern, progressive perspective and discussed with such wise analysis.

Mass.  
U.S.A.

D.J.H.

You give a very good selection of poems, stories, plates that shows the great creativity of workers, peasants, and soldiers living in a socialist country.

Hamburg,  
Federal Republic  
of Germany

H.H.

I find *Chinese Literature* interesting because it teaches me more about the Chinese.

Wukari,  
Nigeria

D.I.A.

*Chinese Literature* is not only extremely interesting reading, it serves an invaluable function of showing just what the correct line in proletarian literature is *in practice*.

I study math. and I don't read much literature as a rule. I'm totally divorced from the people and all reality. I gratefully and enthusiastically welcome real proletarian literature created in the real live struggles of the Chinese people.

Manchester,  
England

D.B.

I have got much knowledge from your Numbers 1-6. These magazines impressed me because in them I read about the revolutionary ideas of the Chinese people. One who wants to

become such a revolutionary should read this literature.

Jamshoro,  
Pakistan

A.G.

The poems printed in *Chinese Literature* No. 12, 1971 show the great love for country and fellow men. They show how when people with an idea unite, many things can be accomplished. A general feeling of wanting to get things done for the benefit of everyone is displayed in these poems. I feel that these poems have a good deal of value because

these are examples of what a quarter of the world's population is thinking or feeling. They represent the total, overall picture.

Literature is a very necessary and important part of a culture. Without any written form of the way people feel or think another person can't get a realistic and clear picture of the people. Literature is the best means through which man can express himself and his surroundings.

D.E.S.

An American student  
in Hongkong



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Children's Orchestra (coloured woodcut)

Chiang Chun



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