

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Malchinhu

Woman Basketball Player No. 6

To the north of the spacious sports field rose a modern cream-coloured building. Standing in front of it you could see group after group of young men and girls going in and out, their bright clothes all the colours of the rainbow. High-spirited, healthy and strong, you could tell at a glance they were athletes. Indeed that was one of the dormitory buildings of the Physical Culture Institute.

A room facing south on the fourth floor was occupied by three girls — graduates of the basketball department. They had finished their training but to consolidate it were now playing for the institute's Youth Team while waiting to be assigned jobs by the state. In the near future they would bid farewell to their beloved institute and go to various posts. So to every one of them the present period of time was extremely precious.

Born in a poor peasant family Malchinhu, now 48, is deputy director of the cultural bureau of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Starting his literary career in 1945, he has written *The Boundless Grassland*, a novel, and published collections of short stories including *The Flowering Steppe* and *Glad Chorus of Spring*. His most recent works are *Spring in the Desert* and *Oh, My Motherland!* two film scenarios that have been screened.

Recently, the three occupants of this room had shown even more concern for each other than ever. Even sharp-tongued Ma Li-hsin, little No. 4, was learning to speak more gently.

As to "Elder Sister" Liu Yueh-yun, she mothered her room-mates in every way she could. As soon as the two others took off their shirts, she would take them away and wash them stealthily. She even monopolized such little jobs as switching off the light when they went to bed.

Yang Chiao-lien, the No. 6, who was older than Ma and younger than Liu, used this as a pretext for doing more of the chores. For instance, not letting Ma do anything, she would say to her, "You keep out of this, you're too small." And to Liu Yueh-yun she would declare, "With your little sister here, there's no need for you to put yourself out." Thus, jokingly, she would snatch the job from Liu.

Since they were going to have a match that evening, they had the day off. Two of the three stayed in, but "Elder Sister" Liu went out at noon and had not yet returned. She must be, as little Ma put it, swimming in the sea of love again. Yang and Ma, both fond of reading, were lying down each with a book in her hand.

It was early autumn, the best season in Peking. A breeze wafted down from the azure sky was ruffling the long light blue curtains as it pussyfooted through the windows. The room was blissfully cool.

Little Ma, carried away by what she was reading, suddenly pounded the bed. "What a marvellous poem!" she exclaimed. "Listen to this, Yang..."

Yang, also rapt in her book, stopped her ears and complained, "Don't deafen me! You're really the limit!"

"Lay down your book for a while," pleaded Ma. "Just listen to this for a minute!"

Reluctantly, Yang raised her eyes to the white-washed wall and replied, "All right then, go on. I'm listening."

Ma sprang up, clearing her throat, then began reading softly. But before she could finish Yang cried out: "Enough! Enough! I can't stand that sentimental stuff."

"But comrade, this is literature," Ma insisted.

"Yes, everybody knows that. But listen to this." Holding up her own book, Yang read aloud:

.....
On we jolt, leaving Han fortresses behind,
A wild goose winging back to the Hunnish sky.
In the great desert one straight plume of smoke,
By the long river at sunset a ball of flame;

.....
Written by an ancient Chinese poet, the verses described a scene on the Inner Mongolian grasslands.

Ma herself was very fond of the last two lines but she wasn't going to admit this. "That one is good too, but..."

"But what?"

"But you're a bit narrow-minded. The only writings you like are depictions of the life in your mother-in-law's place."

Yang failed to comprehend this quip at first. Unwittingly she repeated "mother-in-law's place" under her breath.

Her eyes sparkling provocatively Ma added, "You're for ever talking about the grasslands of Inner Mongolia. I take it you've found yourself a good mother-in-law there."

Catching on, Yang blushed, her breath taken away by this. Biting her lips she jumped over and pinned Ma down on the bed. "I dare you to say that again!" she cried, tickling her in the ribs. Unable to fend her off, Ma tossed about on the bed in fits of laughter, but though she begged for mercy Yang kept on tickling her saying, "I must teach you a lesson this time!"

How come Yang could not bear the mention of a "mother-in-law"? Of course there was a reason.

Not long ago she had fallen in love with Tang Ta-chuan, a student of the Institute of Hydraulics also graduating this year and a basketball fan. Yang had made his acquaintance at a conference of Youth League members from Peking colleges. They had talked together about their determination to devote their lives to building a socialist China, and their common aspirations drew them closer. Yang was fascinated by all that she had read about life on the grassland and the great changes which had taken place there. Shortly before, when she filled out an



application form for work after graduation, without hesitation she applied to go to the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. She was eager to promote the physical culture in this minority border area.

One day when Tang came to see her, she told him her plan.

"Let's both go to Inner Mongolia after graduation," she suggested. "You know Liu Yueh-yun, my room-mate, — the No. 9 of our team? She's decided to go to a border region too. But her choice is Sinkiang, not Inner Mongolia."

"You're both showing a fine spirit," he responded.

"That means you agree to go with me!" Yang said joyously, gripping his hand.

Tang gave a smile, then lowered his head to think. "There's so much involved, it's hard to decide right away," he finally answered. "Let me go back and think it over first."

Yes, it wouldn't be right to make a hasty decision, she agreed.

Two days later Tang came eagerly to tell her that he was ready

to go and work in Inner Mongolia with her. His parents and the head of his institute had given their approval too.

Yang jumped for joy. Seeing eye to eye, they were in complete accord.

From then on she studied with even greater interest all the classical and contemporary writings she could find about life in the border region, and often read them to her classmates too.

Since they were going to settle down and marry in Inner Mongolia, that would be a "mother-in-law's" home for her. So when Ma could not get the upper hand of Yang in their argument about poetry, she resorted to that expression to checkmate her.

Now the "fight" was over. The two girls, chatting and laughing, combed each other's tousled hair. With their bobbed hair, attractive red lips and snow-white teeth, they bore a striking resemblance to each other, except that Yang's eyes were larger and more brilliant.

After doing their hair they began to tidy their beds, folding up the quilts neatly.

Just then, light, rhythmic yet rather dawdling footsteps could be heard mounting the stairs. The two girls knew it was Liu coming back.

Snatching Ma's hand Yang winked at her and said, "She's coming. We must make her own up where she's been with her boy friend."

"Right!" echoed Ma. "Compel her to come clean."

Hand in hand they hid themselves behind the door, Yang laying a finger over her lips to warn Ma not to laugh.

The footsteps drew nearer and soon the door opened softly. Holding their laughter in check the two girls behind the door saw slim Liu Yueh-yun step into the room and make for her bed. They jumped at her from behind and each gripping one of her arms demanded, "Where have you been? Own up, own..."

Here they broke off simultaneously in surprise.

Why? Liu's face was covered with tears, her eyes were red from crying.

"What's happened, Big Liu?"

"What's wrong, Sister Liu?"

The two younger girls were at a loss. Yang took out her handkerchief to wipe away Liu's tears for her, then asked again, "You've had a quarrel?"

Liu shook her head.

"Then what's the matter? Speak out quick!" Ma, holding Liu's hand, was on the verge of tears.

Liu, the captain of their team, was broad-minded and had a strong character. She wasn't one to flare up over a trifle, let alone shed tears like this. Now seeing her in such a state, Yang knew that something serious must have happened. She poured her a cup of water and said soothingly, "There's a match this evening. Don't be so upset. But what on earth has happened? Get it off your chest."

Liu smoothed her hair and told them coolly yet firmly, "I never want to set eyes on him again."

Yang and Ma were amazed. For their lives had been plain sailing and they had no experience of the break-up of a friendship or engagement. They were devoted to Big Liu and longed to comfort her but neither of them knew what to say.

The sunny room with its friendly atmosphere was for the first time overcast with gloom....

Liu Yueh-yun's boy friend Tsao Lin worked at the Television University. For some time she had been meaning to tell him her future plans, but a series of basketball matches had kept her too busy. Five days before she had written him a letter saying that she had already applied for work in Sinkiang. Since Liberation the economic construction in national minority regions had forged ahead, but regarding education and physical culture they were still relatively backward and badly needed people in these fields to go and work there. In the past two years the Sinkiang women's basketball team had made rapid progress. Their bold, offensive style of play had won applause from other basketball players throughout the country. Liu herself was eager to work in that youthful, spirited collective. She ended her letter with the following suggestion: "Provided the leadership approves, let's go to Sinkiang together. Your technical know-how is also needed there. Being new to the place we may find their living conditions hard and their customs strange; but young

people like us should face up to difficulties — that's the only way to find true happiness!"

No reply, not even a telephone call from Tsao. So today at noon Liu had gone to see him. Her first question to him was, "Have you received my letter?"

Tsao, his eyes on his toes, murmured, "Yes."

Not liking the look of this she asked tactfully, "Do you support my plan?"

"Everybody is entitled to make plans."

"But what I want to know is: do you agree to go to Sinkiang with me?"

"Why should you go to such an out-of-the-way place?"

At that Liu fumed, "Our motherland needs people there!"

"I've not heard that I'm needed there."

"Of course people are needed everywhere. The question isn't whether you insist on going to Sinkiang but what your attitude towards going there is."

"Now, now, why get so worked up! You know, Yueh-yun, I've been brought up in Peking. I can't part with everything here...."

"Then we'll just have to split up."

She sounded so resolute that Tsao stared at her wide-eyed. Then an idea struck him and he grasped her hand. "Yueh-yun, you were brought up in a big city too," he said. "If you go to the back of beyond because of a passing whim, you're bound to regret it later."

Liu drew back her hand and turned away.

"Yueh-yun," he continued, "you're the most promising of all the girl basketball players. The last couple of years your name has appeared so often in the press, any basketball team in Peking would welcome you to join them. How much better to stay in Peking after graduation!"

"But I've already sent in my application."

"That doesn't matter. Say you've changed your mind. Take me for example. I used to be keen on mineralogy and thought I could pass the entrance exam to the Mining Institute. But on second thoughts I realized that after my graduation I should have to leave the city and traipse over barren mountains and trackless plains.

So I switched from mineralogy to television so as to be able to stay and work in Peking, or at least in one of the few other big cities that have television stations. See, wasn't it easy for me to change my mind? And my plan worked out — I was kept on in Peking. Yueh-yun, I graduated two years before you. You can learn from my experience."

Quite sure that his own example would convince her, he complacently pulled out a handkerchief to wipe his slender fingers. But to his surprise he heard receding footsteps. He raised his head to see Liu, her shoulders shaking, rushing towards the door. He chased after her, tugging at the hem of her jacket.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

With tears in her eyes she shoved him away and blurted out, "For shame!" Then she dashed out. . . .

After hearing this story Ma pounded her bed in fury. "How rotten!" she exclaimed. "What a scoundrel!"

No less indignant than Ma, but more restrained, Yang thought for a moment then said, "Yueh-yun, you wrote and told him your plan because you wanted to discuss the matter with him as a friend. If he was unwilling to go to Sinkiang or couldn't leave his work in Peking, he could simply have explained that. As you told him, the question isn't whether he wants to go to a border region or not, but what his attitude towards going there is. That disclosure of his convinces me, Big Liu, that he's unworthy of your love!"

"It's no longer a question of love," put in Ma. "The question is how to struggle with people like him. In my view, we should write collectively to the press and call for a nationwide discussion of his thinking."

Ma was always engagingly naive. Sometimes, when their team met to discuss tactics for a match outside and difficult problems cropped up, while the others were still deep in thought she would suddenly come out with some unconventional proposal. Though most of them were rejected, their coach admitted that they showed originality.

Starting a discussion in the press was not something to be lightly undertaken, and as Liu had no intention of doing this she made no response. But she had made up her mind to break with Tsao

to show her condemnation of his thinking. Glancing at her watch she found it was nearly time for supper.

"Let's prepare for the match," she suggested.

"Can you play this evening?" asked Ma.

"Why ever not?"

"I'll go and tell the coach to count you out. Don't worry, the rest of us guarantee to play well." This said, Ma turned to leave.

"Cut the nonsense!" Liu pulled her back. "From now on we won't say any more about this business. We don't want to upset our coach and other team-mates. Come on, let's get ready now!"

The three of them went together to the canteen where each of them behaved quite differently.

Ma seemed to have had a row with somebody, she kept banging the table, kicking the stool and scolding, "For shame, for shame!" When their puzzled classmates asked what the matter was, she merely answered: "I can't tell you!" Nevertheless she ate as much as usual as if to prepare herself to go all out in case Liu was not in good form that evening.

Unlike Ma, Liu showed no sign of irritation. Yang, different again, her brows knitted, remained silent throughout the meal as if she were the one who had broken off her engagement. After supper, instead of going back to the dormitory, she wandered alone to the sports field. The place was very quiet and deserted. She climbed to the top of the spectators' stand and sat down. Resting her chin on her hands she stared at the floor.

"People vary and Tang Ta-chuan may not be like Tsao Lin," she thought. "But hasn't Big Liu's experience taught me a lesson?"

She loved Tang so much, she dreaded to think that the two of them might also have to split up.

And now she recalled Tang's hesitant reaction when she spoke of going to Inner Mongolia.

"He hesitated at first, but then very soon supported my plan. Was that support genuine or not? If not, wouldn't it cause even more trouble in future? I can't force him to go somewhere against his will. But I'll never change my mind or compromise with him if

his ideas are wrong. I know what! I'll tell him I'm not going to Inner Mongolia after all and see what his attitude is. . . ."

She rose and went back.

In front of the dormitory, unexpectedly, she saw Tang who came running to meet her. "I've been waiting for you," he said, "to talk over our plans after our graduation. . . ."

"We've a match this evening," she answered, as if not keen to discuss it with him then.

"Oh well then. . . . I'll come back after the match."

She hesitated a little, then made for the stairs without giving him a reply.

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The basketball match was a heated contest.

The Physical Culture Institute's team had fielded its best players. Yang and Ma as the forwards, Liu as centre, and two experienced guards.

The visiting team, made up of Peking teachers all of whom were veteran players, co-ordinated well. As a sports correspondent remarked before the match, it was difficult to foretell which side would win.

That being the case, victory depended on two decisive factors: correct tactics in a tight spot, and the good form of the players.

They had been playing for nineteen minutes now and had still one minute to go before the end of the first half. The score was 32 all. Both sides were contesting hard for the lead and the excited spectators were applauding vigorously to spur them on. Now the teachers' team had the ball. A long pass brought it underneath the basket of the institute's team. But as one of the forwards was about to make a jump shot, Liu, the institute team's No. 9, intercepted her. Liu was playing brilliantly, quite unaffected by her unhappiness, and had already scored 12 points. She seized the ball and dribbled two steps forward. Spotting Ma flying from her right to take up a position under the basket, she saw a good chance for a fast break and tossed the ball to her. Their opponents put up a full court press. Ma feinted and dodged the guard, but another unexpectedly blocked her advance. Hesitating, Ma suddenly saw Yang standing under

the basket with no one covering her. An opening for a basket! She swiftly flipped the ball to her. And as Yang jumped for the basket the spectators began to applaud, because it seemed she couldn't miss. But then a long sigh went up from the crowd — she had missed! The opposition got the rebound and were making a fast break when the gong sounded the end of the first half. The institute team which should have been in the lead was two points behind.

As they left the court Liu patted Yang on the shoulder — their way of encouraging players out of form. Yang, wiping her perspiring face, fanned her chest hard with a small handkerchief, saying despondently, "I really muffed that!"

It was certainly a poor show. Throughout the first half Yang had only scored two points, having missed four or five easy shots. This of course was bad playing. But the coach had not substituted another player for her, because any experienced coach concentrates not on the players who are playing well but on those who are not up to par, analysing the situation until he has found the root of the problem. But this time their coach could not understand the reason. Lack of skill? No! Slackness in training? Never! Failure to take the match seriously? Not likely. . . . What then? Not only the coach but the other players as well as the spectators were bewildered.

Yang did not enter in the second half. After the match when she alighted from the bus before the dormitory building she found Tang there again.

At his request they walked to the lotus pond in front of the building and sat down on a bench.

From Yang's downcast expression Tang guessed that she was upset by her bad play in the match. He had better not speak about it. So he began:

"Recently I've designed and sketched a small hydroelectric station for the grasslands. After I've improved on it, I'm going to hand it in when I have my viva. It is mainly based on the special features of the grasslands, using lakes and springs as generating power. . . ."

"Why don't you design a bigger one?" asked Yang.

"In the first place, my ability is limited; in the second, I want it to suit the needs of Inner Mongolia."

"You're still planning to go to Inner Mongolia?"

"Why, certainly! I've been boning up on its politics, economy, history and customs, besides reading novels and stories describing the life there. They help me understand more about the place and strengthen my confidence. When we arrive there. . ."

Yang was very pleased by his determination. She couldn't hold back a smile, but she burst out, "Well, I've changed my mind about going."

Tang threw back his head and laughed, then said, "You're joking!"

"This is no joking matter," she replied seriously. "After giving it careful thought, I've decided I can't leave Peking. I was born and brought up here and can't live anywhere else."

Tang's face turned pale. He glanced at her face several times and then shifted his eyes away, his feet kicking the bamboo railing around the pond.

"What's got into you, Little Yang?" he demanded irritably. "Didn't you yourself tell me how happy you were at the thought of going to work in the border region?"

"Forget it. I told you just now I can't break with city life. If you'll change your mind too and stay in Peking, then we can continue to be friends; otherwise, I can't but say goodbye to you!" With that, off she went, until very soon her figure was swallowed up in the darkness of the night.

Tang stood motionless as if in a trance. All this seemed to be happening in a dream. Recalling their first meeting, he told himself sadly: "How quickly a girl can change!"

He had no idea how he returned to his institute. All the vehicles, passengers, conductors and the street lights along the way made no impression on him. He saw nothing but Yang's icy expression when she said "goodbye" to him.

He passed a wretched night. When he got up the next morning he felt a little calmer. But whenever he was reading or studying, Yang's voice sounded in his ears: "Stay in Peking and we can continue to be friends. . . ." No, it was out of the question! He muttered to himself: "I'll never surrender to thinking of her kind!" But what had influenced her and changed her so swiftly? That was

the question Tang was unable to solve. He had spoken to her in a fit of anger last evening. At any rate he should have another talk with her when they were both calmer. After mulling over the matter he decided to ring her up and make an appointment. At the midday break he took action, but for some reason his heart was throbbing hard.

Presently Yang answered the phone. He told her he wanted to see her.

After what seemed a long silence she responded, "That means you've changed your mind? Fine, come right over. You're welcome!"

Before Tang could say any more the receiver on the other end cracked down. He cradled his and walked out of the telephone kiosk, fuming to himself: "What does she take me for?"

Still he felt impelled to talk with her once more and explain his stand to her clearly. Half an hour later he arrived at the Physical Culture Institute and made straight for Yang's dormitory. However, before he reached it he slowed down and finally came to a standstill. "Yang told me pointedly that she welcomed me because she thought I'd changed my mind," he thought. "What am I to say to her now? Of course I haven't changed. In that case, what need? . . ."

He turned round suddenly and headed for the gate.

Huhehot in mid-autumn was a beautiful sight, without the dust of spring, the rain of summer and the biting north wind of winter. The rustling of falling leaves, golden and orange, aroused people from their slumber in the morning and lulled them to sleep at night. When dusk fell, the big Mongolian-style buildings at the foot of the green mountains were silhouetted against ruddy evening clouds. Living here, it was hard to conjure up the scenes of desolation below grim mountains depicted in classical poems.

Tang Ta-chuan had graduated from the Institute of Hydraulics with an outstanding record. At his own request he was assigned to Inner Mongolia and settled to work at the Hydraulics Research Institute which had the task of helping supply the grasslands with more hydroelectric power. Well satisfied with his post, Tang prepared to make investigations on the grasslands. To facilitate his work

he was learning Mongolian together with some other university graduates from different parts of the country. With the help of the local comrades he had also made a long-term plan to obtain a working knowledge of the language in two or three years.

One Saturday after work when his colleagues had gone to see a film, Tang strolled towards the municipal park alone. At the gate he saw a red sports bulletin on the wall. As a basketball enthusiast, he instinctively went over to have a look. The bulletin read: Basketball match between both men's and women's teams at 7 p.m. this evening. Inner Mongolia vs. A Province. Place: The park's basketball court. He had not watched a single game since his arrival. And he would give up all other forms of amusement to see a basketball match. As he neared the entrance of the basketball ground he heard from the loudspeaker that the match between the women's teams was in process. He did not go in for fear that it would remind him painfully of Yang Chiao-lien.

He strolled about aimlessly outside waiting for the men to start playing. But strangely enough, the harder he tried not to think of Yang, the clearer was his mental picture of her. Perhaps this was caused by the commentary being broadcast. The commentator, although doing his best to remain "neutral", could not cover up his inclination to praise the team of his own autonomous region. Now he was going on tersely:

"Good shot! Lovely play, No. 6! She feinted a pass which flummoxed the other side, then popped a basket. Now No. 6 has intercepted the ball again in mid-court..."

As an amateur basketball player himself Tang knew that there could be a No. 6 in any team. But this evening that number grated on his ears. If Chiao-lien had come here with him, he'd have felt quite differently towards "No. 6". However, she... he looked down on her way of thinking.

These memories were so painful that he decided to put a stop to them by going in to watch the match — it should help to distract him.

The stands were thronged right up to the top. He could not but stand behind the last row of the seats. Being rather short-sighted,

he usually wore glasses to watch films or ball games. Unfortunately he had neglected to bring them. It was really most annoying, as all he saw was blurred and he could not distinguish the different players' faces as they darted from place to place. Still he stood there watching and managed to make out the general situation.

The whistle for the "final five minutes" had just blown. The decisive time had come. Now Inner Mongolia, the home team, was at a disadvantage; the visiting team was up by five points. Hoping to turn the tables, No. 6 of the home team suddenly shouted out an order in Mongolian. Her team-mates promptly went over to a pressing defence formation. At once the atmosphere grew tense. The visiting team was one of the best in the country with skill and experience. They were ready for these tactics, and to lessen the chance of losing the ball they made their best ball handler No. 10 bounce it forward. But since all her team-mates were tightly marked she had to dribble left and right, finding no chance to pass out the ball. But then No. 4 of the home side lowered her guard, and No. 10 flashed past her straight towards the basket. The spectators raised a great shout. This shot would be a clincher. If successful, the gap would be widened, and it would be virtually impossible for the home team to catch up in just four minutes. Some of the visiting players cried: "Shoot, shoot!" No. 10 was drawing a bead on the basket when No. 6 of the home team materialised as if by magic. It was a quick, clean steal — no question of a foul. Tang thought admiringly: "She couldn't have done that without tiptop training!"

No. 6 wanted to pass the ball but as she saw no team-mates in the front-court, she dribbled it speedily forward, while the visiting team quickly dropped back on defence. When No. 6 reached the front-court three of them were already there blocking her way. Unable to penetrate she halted somewhere past the mid-court line. That same second the tall centre who usually teamed up with her appeared under the basket. Reassured of the rebound No. 6 resolutely made a set shot. Swish, the net trembled — 2 points! Deafening cheers resounded over the ground.

Now the Inner Mongolian team was only three points — one and a half baskets — behind.



All athletes know that the loss of what seemed a safe score has a worse psychological effect on the players than the two points forfeited. A sudden reversal like this may make them lose their nerve or grow reckless, undermining their normal skill and even costing them the match. On the other hand, the whole team will be bucked up by a successful score. Put on their mettle they may sweep all before them, transforming what looked like defeat into victory. This often happens in ball games.

Sure enough, after the ball was put into play, the visiting team pressed closely to their front-court, but because the forward was nervous she missed an outside jump shot. The rebound was controlled by the home team. The visiting players turned at once to zone defence and the home team, not wanting to risk a long shot, passed the ball among themselves outside the 3-second zone. When it came

to No. 6, she dodged past the defender and cut in. She was attempting a jump shot, when suddenly an opponent's hand reached out overhead to block the ball. No. 6 responded with a "second act" in mid-air, feeding the ball to the centre who was standing under the basket. The centre went up for an easy lay up.

There were only 90 seconds to go and the gap between the two teams was one point!

The visiting team asked for a time-out. As the players of both sides ran to their own coaches a buzz of comments went up among the spectators.

Tang had not expected to find this match so exciting. He knew that the time-out could affect its outcome. He glanced at the visiting team and saw that its coach was experienced. In order not to let their opponents guess what their last-minute tactics would be, he made no gestures while instructing his players, who just nodded their comprehension. Then Tang turned to the home team. Its coach, pointing to the score

clock, was talking, occasionally interrupted by the players. Only No. 6 stood a bit behind the rest, fanning her chest continuously with a small handkerchief.

"Isn't that what Little Yang used to do?" Tang asked himself.

As No. 6 was fanning away, her resemblance to Yang increased. Could it really be she? He could have kicked himself for not bringing his glasses. No matter how hard he strained his eyes he could not see her face clearly. Nor could he move a step closer because the gangways were packed with spectators.

The time was up and the match resumed. To conceal their tactics the home team players, including No. 6, called out to each other in Mongolian. How could Yang speak Mongolian? This couldn't be her.

The ball was put into play by the visiting team, one of its forwards heading to the 3-second zone. It was obvious that this was on the

instructions of their coach, to try for a quick basket or, if that failed, to force their opponents to foul. They scored and were three points up again, with only forty-five seconds left to go. As soon as the home team put the ball into play, No. 6, according to the plan worked out, took up a good shooting position at an angle of forty-five degrees to the right of the basket, while one of her team-mates feinted to cut in, drawing the other side's defenders over. She promptly passed the ball to No. 6, who made a quick jump shot. The ball banked off the backboard into the basket.

Now there were thirty-five seconds left and the visiting team still had a one-point lead. They passed the ball to and fro to kill time, not meaning to try for a basket till the last few seconds. At the twenty-fifth second they shot, but missed the basket. As the home team launched a fast break the captain of the visiting team shouted: "Block No. 6's position on the right corner!" But co-ordinating well with the rest of her team, No. 6 shook off the defenders and suddenly appeared in the left corner. As soon as she caught the ball she shot, and it dropped through the net just as the gong signalled the end of the match. The Inner Mongolian team had won by one point. The stirring, strenuous and friendly match had ended.

When the spectators stood up to applaud, Tang squeezed his way down through the crowd, hoping to have a closer look at No. 6 when the women's team left the stadium. He was perspiring profusely by the time he reached the exit through which the home team had just passed. As he saw the back of No. 6 he wanted to call her but thought better of it. What if she was not Yang? When the players began to get into their bus he felt frantic. Plucking up his courage, he shouted: "Comrade Yang Chiao-lien!"

No. 6 turned her head to speak to her companion but he was too far away to hear what she said.

"Yang Chiao-lien!" he shouted again.

No. 6 stood on tiptoe, looking to see who had called her. This time Tang saw her clearly: Yes, it was she all right — Little Yang!

He hastily squeezed through the crowd and gripped her hand. As if these were the only words that he remembered he kept repeating: "Little Yang, Little Yang!"

Meanwhile Yang had recognized him too. But instead of exclaiming in delight or jumping for joy she simply covered her mouth with her small handkerchief and beamed at him.

That beaming smile of hers defied description.

Illustrated by Yeh Yung-sheng



The Iron-Armed Girl

One morning in early spring, coming out of the warm personnel department after applying for work at the hydroelectric power station, Shao Hsiao-hung shivered when the wind from the Hsingan River blew piercingly down her neck. She quickly wrapped her red scarf around her neck just as she had not long ago tied on her Young Pioneers' scarf at school. Sweeping her bright eyes over the hundreds of machines operating on the big dam, she walked with a springy step through the busy crowd of workers, her face lit up with a smile.

The weather was so cold that the puddles in front of the dam were frozen over, but the heart of the seventeen-year-old girl was ablaze. She had been taken on and could start work tomorrow. How glorious to help build a power station! She wanted to set to work right away, but it seemed to her that every post on the site was already manned. Where could she give a hand?

Several workers passed by pushing a tank of cement. Hsiao-hung at once rolled up her sleeves and joined in, shoving hard at one

corner. Soon she was sweating but she enjoyed it tremendously as if this were a game.

Leaving the tank on the track in front of the dam, the workers went away while Hsiao-hung stayed behind to have a better look at the magnificent dam. Overhead she saw an iron arm swinging out from the top of the dam above her.

"What does this long arm do?" she exclaimed as she watched it raptly.

"Out of the way! Want your skull smashed in?" someone thundered behind her while a big hand grabbed her collar and pulled her three metres away like a hawk carrying off a chicken. Hsiao-hung nearly lost her balance. She glared, pouting, at the old worker.

"Why be so rough! Do you want to gobble me up?"

He ignored her while he blew a whistle and raised a green flag. At his signal a big hook clattered down from the end of the long iron arm. Still pouting, Hsiao-hung watched it hoist the tank of cement up to the top of the dam.

When the cement was safely on the dam the worker added coldly, "Still hanging around? You should keep out of the way if you want to watch us work."

"Why throw your weight about? I haven't come to watch. I'm a worker myself," Hsiao-hung retorted, then turned and left in a huff.

She stepped through the thin ice into a puddle, splashing mud all over her printed cloth shoes and her trousers.

"What rotten luck!" she grumbled, stamping her foot as if it were the fault of that old worker. "He wouldn't let me watch and drove me away. Tomorrow I'll be a worker too, then I won't let him get on his high horse."

The prospect of taking part in the construction work the following day revived her spirits, making her eyes shine. "What will my job be?" she wondered. "How great it'll be to build a dam and make a reservoir out of this turbulent water which has flooded so often through long centuries. The hydroelectric generator in the dam will light up the whole region south of the Yangtse..." Every



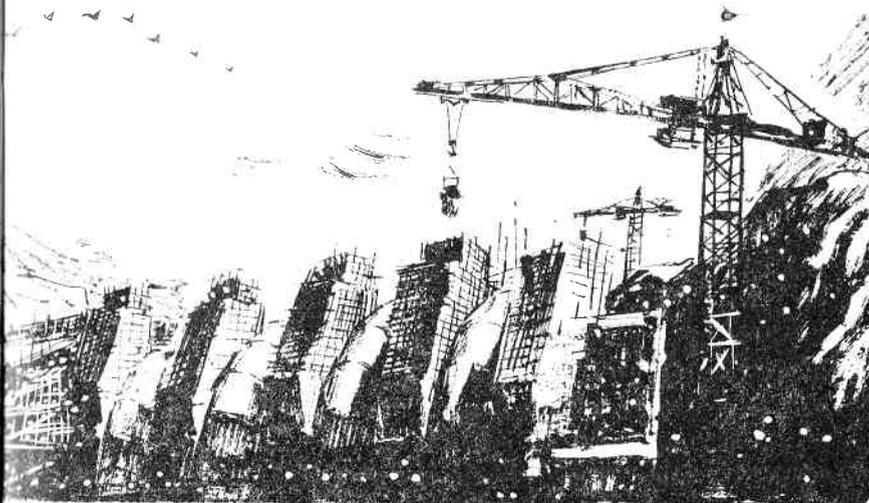
aspect of the Hsingan River had a novel appeal to this girl on the threshold of life.

Late that night Hsiao-hung tossed and turned on her bed, unable to sleep. In her mind's eye she kept seeing the bustling construction site and the bronzed old worker. It was a long time before she finally dozed off.

When the clock on Hsiao-hung's desk struck four, she jumped out of bed as lightly as a kitten to turn on the light, then put on her overalls and her red scarf. Surveying herself in the mirror she thought she looked the image of a worker, especially when she had stuffed her two short plaits under her rattan helmet. Then she quietly left her home.

The sky was still full of stars, but countless electric lights made the worksite as bright as day. The roar of machines reverberated in the valleys, as if to welcome this girl to her first shift. Hsiao-hung took a deep breath of fresh air and, humming to herself, walked with a light step towards the worksite.

As soon as day broke, she was waiting in the personnel department. The middle-aged cadre there came straight to the point, "What do you want to do?"



"Anything."

"How about operating a crane at the dam?"

"I'll do whatever you say." She turned to go.

"Don't be in such a hurry. I'll get you a master to show you the way." He made a phone call.

Too eager to sit still, Hsiao-hung stood waiting at the door. Soon the weather-beaten face of an old worker looked in at the rear window. "Has the new girl come?" he asked.

"I've been here a long time," Hsiao-hung cried, hurrying out.

But when the two of them came face to face she was stunned. He was no other than the worker who had told her off the day before. Tongue-tied, she stared at him.

"Come on, lass." He seemed not to sense her embarrassment.

She was reluctant to go with him, yet didn't want to make a bad impression on her very first day at work. What rotten luck, she told herself, to have such a tough master who talks so grimly. Hesitantly she followed Master Wang along the steep road leading up to the dam.

Unable to keep up with him she lagged several metres behind. The old worker's lips were clamped tight. It seemed that his mouth

would have to be pried open before he would talk. Fifteen minutes passed in dead silence. The chatty lively girl thought, "I'm sure I shall die of boredom working with this fellow who says not a word all day long." Panting up the slippery road she regretted that she hadn't put on her gym shoes but had on her printed cloth shoes instead.

"Tired?" half-way up the slope Master Wang turned to ask.

"Not at all," she grunted, eyeing his poker face.

Wang walked on, way ahead of her.

At the top of the dam Hsiao-hung gazed eagerly at the towering crane. Drawn by the jib she stretched out her own arms towards that long iron one, and asked, "Can my arms lift loads the way this crane does, master?"

"Sure," he answered in all seriousness. "Human arms are stronger than iron ones."

"Really?" she asked again. "I can operate the crane then?"

Wang shook his head. Not wanting to hurt her feelings, he pointed at the iron ladder of the crane and told her:

"You mustn't be too impatient. Go up and get to know the crane first." Peeling off his greasy gloves he gave her the cleaner pair he wore inside.

"Put these on," he urged. "You can grip better with them. You'll break your neck if you fall from up there."

Warmth flooded her heart when she accepted the gloves. The action was so incongruous with her master's poker face. "His face is cold, but these gloves are warm." She smiled to herself.

This girl from north of the Yangtse had never climbed such a height in her life. Her legs soon gave way. She grabbed the rails with all her might lest she should fall into the river. Plucky as she was, her heart missed a beat when she saw white clouds floating around her while eagles soared below her. The trucks on the highway seemed no larger than goats and the water in the reservoir appeared to stretch endlessly to the horizon. Her head span. The whole worksite seemed to whirl round. . . .

"Go on. Don't be scared. I'm watching you," shouted Master Wang from beneath her.

She pulled herself together and went on climbing. But her right shoe caught on something and fell off. At once the sole of her foot felt cold and sore. She looked down in time to see Wang reaching out, with only one hand holding on to the ladder, to catch the shoe. Warmth coursed through Hsiao-hung like an electric current. Not wanting to lose face again she steeled herself to climb on.

"Good for you — you stuck it out." Standing at the cabin door, her master handed her the shoe and urged her to put it on.

"Thank you, Master Wang." Her nose tickled as, touched by his encouragement, she took over the shoe.

Hsiao-hung had a great sense of well-being after climbing up to the dam and then scaling the high crane. Contentedly she looked around at every corner of the worksite. Was that train bringing the generator? Had those drillers nearly bored through the mountains? And had the fishing boats in the reservoir had a big catch? The telegraph lines on both banks of the river must surely have reached Hangchow and Shanghai by now. The pines and cedars on the slopes looked simply magnificent. And the jib, now within her reach, could hoist loads weighing several tons as easily as a young girl drew water from a well.

"If only I could operate this iron arm and build the dam right now!" she cried in elation.

Patiently her master told her, "A meal has to be eaten mouthful by mouthful, and we learn technical know-how step by step. You'll be an iron-armed girl in six months if you put your mind to it."

The term iron-armed girl filled Hsiao-hung with confidence. "I'll work hard, master," she promised. "But why will it take so long? The dam will be finished in less than six months."

With a fatherly look, Wang told her, "When it's finished we'll install the generator. You'll have plenty of work to do."

Unable to answer this, Hsiao-hung fell silent.

To learn to operate a crane and be an iron-armed girl was no simple matter. At the very start, Hsiao-hung had to admit to herself, "Gee, it's difficult. My head is fairly bursting trying to remember the names of thousands of parts, and there are so many things I don't understand." Yet she applied herself doggedly to her studies.



One day, because Wang spoke with a Shanghai accent, she failed to understand his explanation of the function of one part.

"Well, let's go and look at the thing itself," he suggested.

"Fine."

Hsiao-hung had been longing to lay hands on the crane arm. So she agreed readily and ran all the way up the dam.

Poking about the operator's cabin she became covered with oil and her face was grimy, but she felt like a fledgeling about to take wing.

After that she hardly ever left the crane, taking down notes of all Master Wang's instructions as well as his demonstrations. She became so wrapped up in the crane that she moved to the hostel by the dam in order to save time getting to work every day. From the window of her room she had a clear view of the crane and its long arm.

Two months later, especially after several demonstrations of crane-operating, she found that Master Wang had a heart of gold although he seldom smiled.

One day, before work started, he said to her, "I'm going to let you operate the crane alone today."

"You mean it?" Hsiao-hung opened her eyes wide, her eyebrows dancing with pleasure.

"Have I ever fooled you?"

Hsiao-hung's heart beat fast and she flushed.

"Nervous?" Master Wang asked.

She sheepishly lowered her head.

"Don't worry. I'll be watching from below here."

"Thanks." Biting her lower lip Hsiao-hung put on her gloves, then climbed nimbly up the ladder of the crane.

Sitting in the operator's cabin, Hsiao-hung's heart thumped wildly when she found herself so high above the dam, reservoir, workers and trucks. She said to herself, "Calm down now, Shao Hsiao-hung. Watch your step and don't be nervous..."

A whistle blast reminded her that her master was down below. By degrees she calmed down.

When Master Wang waved his triangular green flag, Hsiao-hung started the motor and pressed the control switch. Obediently, the iron hook rose slowly at the end of the iron arm.

Her eyes and all her attention were concentrated on the hook when, by accident, her left hand jerked the switch. The hook went clattering down, startling the workers below. They raised a warning shout, "The hook, the hook!"

Hsiao-hung broke out in a sweat. For a moment she panicked. But Master Wang kept his head, thinking this emergency good training for her. He blew his whistle to signal to her to keep calm.

Taking a grip on herself, Hsiao-hung switched the control to zero and the hook halted.

Letting out a sigh of relief, she said to herself, "What a near thing! There'd have been a bad accident if not for my master."

Pleased that she had stood the test, Wang blew his whistle again. The long arm lifted five tons of cement and poured it on to the dam on the Hsingan River.

When the shift was over and Hsiao-hung jumped off the ladder, Master Wang gave her a big hug. Smiling slightly he said:

"Well done. You're an iron-armed girl now."

"If not for you the big hook would have dropped into the river," said Hsiao-hung gratefully.

Day after day, week after week, Hsiao-hung worked under her master's supervision. As her skill improved, her confidence grew too.

One day after work, on their way back to the hostel Wang remained silent and seemed preoccupied. After they had crossed the chain-bridge he said, "You've made rapid progress, Hsiao-hung. You can work independently now — after just three months."

"I owe it to you, standing down there guiding me. I'm more confident when you're there." Her innocent eyes flashed him a grateful glance.

"You must stand on your own feet. You expect me to be with you all my life?" said Master Wang with feeling. Looking the girl up and down, he broke the news, "We have to part, Hsiao-hung."

"What? I want to be with you all my life. I'll go wherever you go." Hsiao-hung pouted, cast down by the idea of their parting.

"That's impossible. Tomorrow, I'm going to another worksite."

"Who'll take over here then?"

"You will. I'm handing this crane over to you."

"That won't do!"

"The state needs you here, lass. Besides, I shan't be far away and we can still see each other. Don't take it too hard. A Youth League member should have guts."

Master Wang had never said so much or spoken so kindly before. He was like a father taking his leave of his daughter.

Tears welled up in Hsiao-hung's eyes. She broke down and threw herself into her master's arms.

The seventh day after Master Wang's departure the dam was completed ahead of schedule. It was Hsiao-hung, the iron-armed girl, who lifted the last tank of cement up the dam. Looking at the dam which linked the hilly banks of the Hsingan River and the red flag fluttering in the wind while gongs and cymbals celebrated the occasion, she was overcome with happiness. She longed to tell her master the news so that he could share her rejoicing.

Hsiao-hung was just about to write a letter to her master, when in came Secretary Huang of the Party branch of the machinery team.

"Building a power station is like fighting a battle: one campaign followed by another and new fighters taking over from the old," said Huang, himself demobilized from the army.

"Have you a new task for me, Secretary Huang?" Hsiao-hung asked biting the end of her pen.

"Yes. We must install the generator right away," he answered. Hsiao-hung was to lift a seven-ton part of the generator. "This is a crucial job," he explained. "Whether or not the power station is put into production ahead of schedule depends on when the generator is installed. The Party is confident that our iron-armed girl will be able to do it in three days. We'll help you if you have any difficulties."

Secretary Huang's trust gave Hsiao-hung strength. After some thinking she said, "I promise to accomplish the Party's task."

But her fellow-workers told her that this crane had never lifted such a weight before. Even in Master Wang's time it had never lifted more than six tons. Could the motor and the jib hoist seven tons? Hsiao-hung was worried stiff.

She made a careful study of the instructions for operating this crane. The iron arm reminded her of what her master had said on her first day of work. "Human arms are stronger than iron ones." She reflected:

"Machines are lifeless things and they have to obey the live operator."

But how to make it obey? Wishful thinking wasn't enough. She had to abide by scientific data. She was still racking her brains in the crane cabin when dusk descended and the lights came on. All the lamps in the worksite flickered expectantly at her. And she seemed to hear someone ask, "Can we generate electricity ahead of time?" The long iron arm seemed to be asking too, "What can I do to help generate electricity?" A thousand questions were revolving in her mind.

With a heavy heart she started back to her hostel. It was close enough, but today the road seemed rough and long. She halted presently and turned to look at the iron arm in the sky.

"That iron arm is so massive, we may have underestimated its potential," she thought more hopefully. "If it can stand the stress, the rest will be easy." Taking the measurements of the length, width and volume of the jib, she hastened to the office of the Party branch.

It was almost midnight when Hsiao-hung and Secretary Huang came out of the engineer's home with smiling faces. Calculations had shown that the crane could take a load of seven and a half tons. Beaming, she said to Secretary Huang:

"So far this crane has been too conservative."

"It's lucky we have an iron-armed girl like you to operate it and put a stop to its conservatism." Secretary Huang saw her back. His parting words were, "Don't think about it any more tonight. Have a good sleep. We'll install the generator tomorrow."

For the first time in her life Hsiao-hung could not sleep. She opened the window and looked out at the worksite. The night was still. The machines were silent too, maybe because the shifts were changing over. When she woke up the next morning the Hsingan River would roar like a lion again.

When the next day dawned at the worksite, Hsiao-hung had already started the crane and was manoeuvring the long jib through the air just as if it were her own arm. Deftly she let the big hook

down and began steadily lifting the seven-ton load. To her, it seemed this was not just a machine but a whole power station.

Alertly, the young girl watched every part of the crane and listened intently to every sound it emitted. Suddenly the motor stopped — short-circuited. With no motive power to lift it, the seven-ton load swayed in mid-air as Hsiao-hung's heart missed a beat.

"The hook!" the workers below shouted warningly.

"Don't panic," came the calm voice of the iron-armed girl above them while she pulled the brake to steady the iron arm. The hook and its load hung immobile in the air. They were wondering frantically what to do when she added:

"Call the electrician, quick. We'll carry on when the circuit is connected."

"What about the crane?"

"It will hold!"

To Hsiao-hung now, the load suspended in the air was not simply crucial equipment but the whole globe. Sweating with anxiety, she kept her head and fixed her eyes on the short-circuited motor. Biting her lips, she told herself, "Hold on to the brake. Otherwise this crucial equipment will drop into the river and our plan for the power plant will be a flop."

By now the electrician was repairing the line in mid-air. Hsiao-hung told herself, "This is an air-battle!"

The water was rising in the reservoir. There would soon be enough to propel the turbine. She must keep this equipment safe. Countless eyes were watching her while she stared intently at the switchboard. When the red light came on again her eyes lit up — the circuit was connected. She started the motor, and the long iron arm veered, then set its load carefully down on the platform prepared for it.

"Done! We can generate electricity ahead of time!" Exultant shouts re-echoed through the mountains.

Her task finished, Hsiao-hung remained on the crane, reluctant to leave it. She polished all the parts until they shone. Her ruddy face flushed with excitement, she scanned the bustling site with her innocent young eyes.

The sun rose over the mountains dispersing the mist on the river. The tranquil water in the reservoir shimmered. Azaleas were blooming on the mountain slopes. Hsiao-hung the iron-armed girl gazed avidly at this scene, as if she were seeing it for the first time.

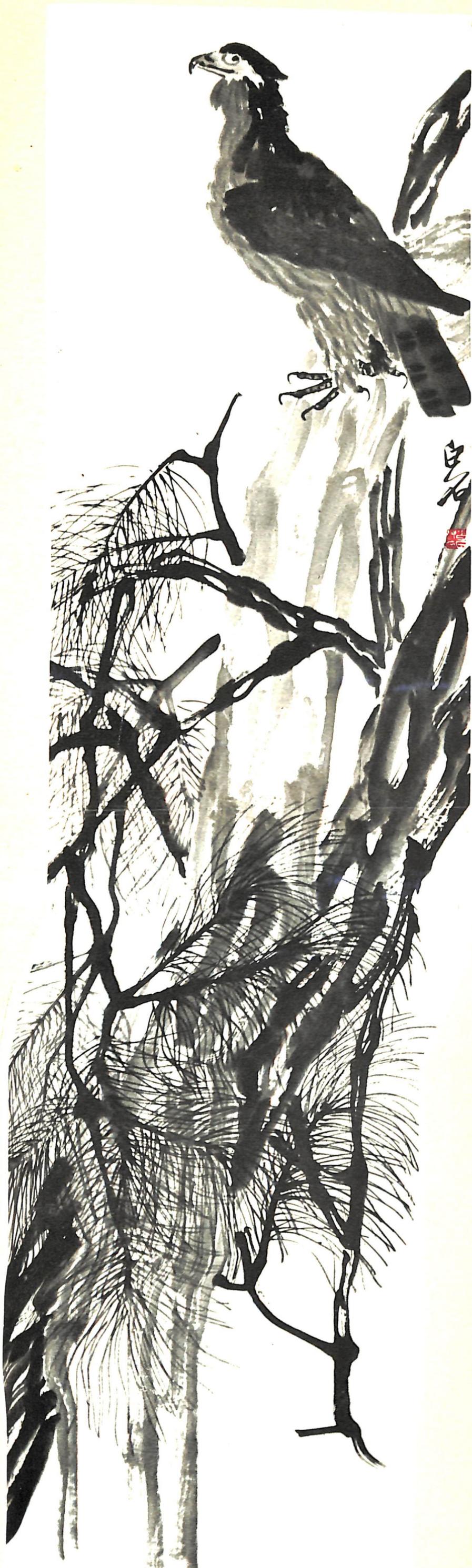
Her thoughts turned suddenly to Master Wang. Quickly alighting from the crane, she exclaimed, "I haven't finished my letter to him yet. I nearly forgot..."

Hsiao-hung flew like a bird along the sunlit bank of the Hsingan River.

1964

Illustrated by Chang Ta-ping

Eagle (traditional Chinese painting) by *Chi Pai-shih*



A Fine Old Woman

Night fell suddenly, catching me unawares.

Black clouds still shrouded the hills. Pokuda Mountain loomed massive in the darkness. I shouted frantically at the top of my voice, but there was no reply. The realization that I was lost made my eyes widen in dismay.

I trudged along, shouting as I went, till hoarse and spent I slumped down on a wet rock, cursing this misadventure.

The weather on the grassland is capricious. The day had dawned sunny and bright, but at noon it started to rain. Fortunately, we found a cave to shelter us from the downpour which disconcertingly went on till dusk. The girl whom I was escorting, a new graduate from the conservatory of music who had come to the grassland to learn about the life of the herdsmen, had caught cold and became

Chalakahu, a writer of China's Mongolian nationality, was born in 1930 in the Koyuchian Banner of Kirin Province where his parents were peasants. He worked for some time as a reporter and is at present the chief editor of the monthly *Inner Mongolian Literature*. He started writing in 1951 and has published the novels *The Red Road*, *Morning on the Grassland* and *Spring Comes to the Grassland* as well as a collection of short stories, *The Story of a Little White Horse*.

feverish. So I left her in the cave and scoured the hilly countryside, but not a yurt could I find and in the end I lost my bearings completely.

Suddenly, a beam of light flashed, so startling me that I almost fell off the rock.

"Who is it?" I cried.

"Don't be afraid, child!" This unexpected greeting filled me with warmth. Switching on my own torch, I saw an old woman.

"Ah, granny!" I exclaimed in relief.

"Were you scared, child?" Panting a little, she said reassuringly, "Come with me! I've two horses tied to a tree over on the west side."

"There were two of us, granny, I came with a girl. . . ."

"Who is she, this girl?" the old woman cut in.

"We're both from Huhhot."

"Are you in the same unit?"

"No, in different units. We met in the banner and came here together. She's a Han* who doesn't understand Mongolian. I'm serving as her interpreter."

"Ah! You're so kind you'll enjoy a long life," joked the old woman. "She wears glasses, doesn't she?"

"Yes!"

Seeing my surprise, she told me that she had already taken the girl to her yurt. Gratefully I grasped her hand.

"That's very good of you, granny!"

I went with the old woman. When we mounted our horses, a cold wind swept over. Together we spurred forward.

"How did you know we had lost our way, granny?"

"Every time there's a storm or it rains or snows, I don't feel easy at home. I have to go out of the yurt and roam the hills. Sometimes, I take back quite a few youngsters like you who've lost their way, or girls from the south who can't speak a word of Mongolian. Some of them are geologists, some railway surveyors, some meteorologists, some cadres from the league or the banner. Although I'm

*The largest nationality in China.



old, I want to be of some use. But as I can neither read nor write and have no special skill, all I can do is live here at the foot of the mountain keeping an extra horse in readiness to go out and help you young people. In this way I can do my bit."

"Granny, just now you said you don't feel easy every time there's wind, rain or snow. But why?" I asked.

The old woman gave a long sigh and did not answer. I supposed that I must have touched on a sore subject and did not press her further. After a while, we heard a dog bark and a yurt came into sight. Reaching it we tethered the horses to a cart, then went in.

The girl who had come with me was sleeping peacefully on a bed to the left, a green silk quilt covering her. The old woman touched her forehead, then whispered to me:

"She's much better now." She added a few pieces of dry cow-dung to the stove, then washed her hands and started to prepare food for us.

"Sorry to give you so much trouble!" I said gratefully as she busily chopped meat.

She turned to look at me and took some noodles out of the chest beside her, saying: "Since you've come to my yurt, you must make yourself at home here. Don't give me that polite talk."

With that she cooked the noodles.

By then, it was raining again. The old woman put on a raincoat and went out. After my meal, I looked round the yurt carefully and noticed several things there which surprised me. Near the door was a red chest three feet wide, filled with packages of noodles. And opposite the door hung a long pole from which were suspended seven or eight jackets, each with a different number of short sticks in the pocket. Out of curiosity, I lifted the white table-cloth under the jackets and discovered a sewing-machine.

After a long while, the old woman brought back a doctor. I hung up their wet coats. The doctor examined the girl, gave her an injection and three packages of medicine, then left.

The old woman and I did our best to soothe the girl, and before long she went to sleep again. Then the old woman looked at me with tired eyes, saying:

"Why don't you go to bed? Better get some sleep. It's late."

"I'm not sleepy."

"After walking for a whole day and getting lost, how can you not be sleepy?"

"What about you? You must be more tired."

"I can't sleep when it rains. At times like this, the only thing that can comfort me is the whirr of my sewing-machine."

"When it rains . . . but why?" I couldn't help asking again.

The old woman's face clouded over and for a long time she said nothing. Then she took an old photograph out of the red chest and handed it to me, saying, "When it rains, I think of them."

I saw a middle-aged couple seated together with two children standing one on each side.

"This picture was taken when I was in my prime. That's my husband and my two children." A look of longing appeared on her face. She glanced upwards, tears welling up in her eyes.

"My husband and I were born as slaves of Lord Darhan. After the Japanese seized Ulancharu Grassland, Lord Darhan went over to them and turned traitor. The Japs gave him a car as reward and he made my husband learn to drive it.

"One stormy night my husband came home unexpectedly, flinging open the door so hard that he woke the children. Before I could say a word he switched on his torch and told me hurriedly:

"Tonight I'm going to take a real good Mongolian out of danger." He flashed the light on to the tall figure beside him, a man with a bronzed face and big eyes who looked clever and capable. He was wet through. My husband went on: "His name's Puho and he's making revolution for people like us. Maybe you don't know the meaning of revolution. It means letting the likes of us live like human beings by overthrowing our present rotten set-up. Because of this, he's maddened the Japs and their soldiers are out to arrest him, so I'm going to take him to the forest on Hardanpater Mountain where our Communist Party and Eighth Route Army are.

"I got to know Comrade Puho two years ago, but I kept it from you. Now I have to tell you. I'm taking Lord Darhan's car. If he finds out that I've used it to rescue Puho, he'll be after you, so you

must be prepared. As for me, you don't have to worry. If I come through alive, I'll get back sooner or later.' Then he told the children: 'Do as your mother tells you.' Squatting down, he kissed them, then just up and left.

"I was choking with grief and couldn't hold back my sobs. The two children were crying too. When I saw them off in the rain, Comrade Puho told me, 'Don't worry. Our Communist Party and the Eighth Route Army will soon be coming to liberate the poor. Once we've toppled the traitors everyone will be equal. We won't have to worry any more about food and clothing.'

"While the children were still crying for their father in the yurt, the car drove off.

"Little did I think that my husband's instructions that night were the last he was to give me, while the memory of that stormy night would haunt me ever after," said the old woman.

"I remember clearly that four days after he left, I was tossing and turning in bed late one night, unable to sleep, when the door suddenly burst open. Several flashlights lit up the whole yurt. There stood Lord Darhan and four Japanese soldiers who had dragged in my husband, his hands bound. When I saw how cruelly they had tortured him, I nearly fainted away. The children threw aside their sheepskin cover and rushed towards their father. But the Japs kicked them so hard, they started crying and, stupefied, I held them in my arms.

"Leave my family out of this!' my husband shouted. 'Whatever's wrong, I'll take the blame. This has nothing to do with them.'

"Lord Darhan whispered something to one of the Japs and then a Mongolian traitor interpreted, 'Old bitch! Make those two whelps of yours stand up.'

"Hearing this, I held them tighter. The poor children looked at me wide-eyed, clinging to me. A Jap strode over to snatch the elder boy from my arms. In broken Mongolian, he called my husband's name.

"You tell where Puho is, we let you go. You no tell, we smash this boy's head. Understand?' Then he drew his sword.

"Lord Darhan!' I pleaded. 'Don't let him kill an innocent child!'

"Lord Darhan aimed a kick at me and snarled:

"If you want your child you'd better make your husband tell me the truth. Otherwise...'

"It was I alone who helped Puho to escape,' my husband put in. 'This has nothing to do with my children. Only savage beasts would butcher innocent children.'

"If you want to save your child, come clean!' Lord Darhan yelled.

"That same instant, the Jap beside me swung his sword and my little son fell to the ground. I rushed towards him and before I lost consciousness I heard my husband shouting:

"You swine! The people will settle scores with you!'

"When I came to, I was lying in a pool of blood. With a great effort I lifted my head and looked around. My husband and the two children were badly mangled and weltering in blood. I tugged desperately at my husband's hand. After a while he came to. In a faint, barely audible voice, he said, 'Comrade Puho is alive, out of their clutches. If he comes here, shelter him and do as he tells you. Men like him are our only hope — it's worth giving our lives for them...'

"I called him frantically, but he'd gone. I fainted away again.

"When I came to, I was lying in a dry cave surrounded by strangers. I sprang up, calling for my husband and children. The people around me shed sympathetic tears. A tall man told me:

"We've buried your husband and children at the foot of this mountain. After victory is won, we'll set up a monument to your husband. We'll never forget what your family have done. Come, let me take you to the burial ground.'

"I didn't realize that the tall man was Puho until we came to the place where my dear ones were buried. It was he and his fighters who had brought us to this mountain.

"Puho told me that the morning after they left, they were pursued by a Japanese car. To help Puho escape my husband told him to get off and hide in the bushes while he drove on to lead the enemy away. My husband was captured when his car broke down at the foot of a mountain. But Comrade Puho had got away.

"From then on, to carry out my husband's wishes I tried to live for the Party. To do what I could to help Puho and his comrades I moved my yurt here to Pokuda Mountain. It used to be called Hardanpater Mountain but after Liberation, in memory of my husband, it was renamed Pokuda — my husband's name.

"In those days, to reconnoitre, I once travelled three hundred *li* in twenty-four hours, scaling mountains and crossing rivers. To deliver messages, I sometimes slept alone in the depth of the forests, where wolves howled and tigers roared. One time, carrying boiled mutton to the guerrillas, I lost my way in the mountains.

"After Liberation, some of those former guerrillas came back to see me. Comrade Puho brought me gifts from our government and personally saw to the setting up of a monument to my husband. It's on the west side of the mountain. You can go and have a look tomorrow."

A contented smile brightened the old woman's face now. She sipped some milk tea before continuing:

"After Liberation, I really began to feel younger. My life is very happy and I'm not in the least lonely. I have dear ones everywhere. And you know, when I see young people like you, I feel as happy as if my own children were here with me again."

The old woman got to her feet and opened the red chest by the bed. She showed me a square cardboard box and explained, "Here are photographs of girls from Shanghai and Peking and young people who grew up in the Inner Mongolia grasslands. Some of them are geologists, others work in the leagues or banners. When they pass this way they eat and sleep in my yurt. Han or Mongolian, it's all the same to me. I know that they're working for the revolution and so I treat them as I would my own children."

I took the pictures and glanced at them as I listened. When I returned them to her, I eyed the red chest filled with noodles and asked:

"What are all these noodles for, granny? And those clothes hanging there?..."

"I've stocked up with noodles for years, child. Each time I go to the store, as long as I have money in my pocket I buy a fresh supply. More and more youngsters like you are coming this way. Some

of them are not used to mutton as their staple food, so I cook them noodles." Putting more dried cow-dung into the stove, she continued, "Those clothes belong to comrades making geological or meteorological surveys as well as to cadres from the leagues and banners. I'm no good at other jobs, but I can at least do some mending and washing for them so that they can concentrate on their work and do it well. I bought this sewing-machine with the money given me by the delegation from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region which came to visit the people of our old revolutionary base area."

By now I felt great respect for the old woman.

"But here I am running on, forgetting how tired you must be," she exclaimed. "It's time you went to bed, child."

"Tell me, granny, why you've put sticks in the pockets of those clothes," I asked.

"Oh, those are to remind me when they'll be wanted. I'm old and have a bad memory, so I thought up this way to remember the date. You see, my comrades are all very busy. When they give me clothes to mend, they tell me when they will be coming to fetch them, and in this way I can get them ready on time."

"You should go to bed too, granny," I urged, adding more cow-dung to the stove. "It's very late now, and you'll have a busy day tomorrow."

The next morning, as we prepared to leave, the girl with me told me eagerly that she wanted to write a song about this fine old revolutionary. After a busy night looking after us, the old woman's face glowed with contentment. We were about to plunge deeper into the grassland. As she pointed out the road which we should take, she insisted that we must visit her on our way back. I noticed that her brows which had been knitted when she told me her bitter story the night before had now smoothed out and a smile lit up her face. We said goodbye with deep admiration for her in our hearts.

Illustrated by Kao Keng

Marching Towards the Tungpai Mountains

We publish below an excerpt from *The Heroes of the Tungpai Mountains*, a novel published by the Tientsin People's Publishing House in 1972. The author, Chien Sheh, works in the cultural department of the Engineers' Corps of the People's Liberation Army.

The novel depicts the battles in the Tungpai Mountains during the War of Liberation from 1946 to 1949. In the autumn of 1947, after breaking through heavy enemy encirclement and crossing the Yellow River, our Second Field Army reached the Tapih Mountains on the borders of Anhwei and Hupeh and sent a detachment to fight in the Tungpai Mountains to enlarge the battle zone in central China. The heroic fighters of the People's Liberation Army, closely united and concerned for each other, all ready to give their lives for the revolution, are vividly described; and the stirring, exciting plot has made the novel popular with young people.

The following excerpt is taken from the beginning part of the novel.

— The Editors

6

Tung Hsiang-kun, the regiment's political commissar, sat down again on the big boulder on the southern slope of the north mountain. Sporadic shots rang out as he recorded the battle in his diary. His bodyguard Kuo Fu-wang was dozing nearby.

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"Here's a letter for you from our regiment commander, political commissar."

Tung looked up at Ku Ching-chung, commander of the second battalion, and asked, "Well, how did you get here? What's the situation like in your part?"

Ku spoke slowly, "The Kuomintang troops are fighting close behind us. Seems like they don't realize our main force has broken through their encirclement and is already far away. They've been chasing us madly and are tightening up their encirclement. We fought as we retreated, leading them into the east end of the Big Gully."

Tung opened the letter. It read:

Dec. 7, 1947

Dear Tung,

Ku Ching-chung and Lu Fan have led the second battalion here with an order from the brigade that the second battalion is to remain to pin down the enemy. The rest of our regiment will march on when the second battalion arrives and will follow the route taken by our main force. We will stop at Chianghsitien to regroup. On my orders, Lu Fan and the fifth company have taken over the position held by the third battalion and Ku Ching-chung and the sixth company are to take over from the first battalion. I want you to come here with the first battalion. There is something important I want to discuss with you.

Chiang

After reading it, Tung burnt the letter.

"Regiment commander wants you to return to headquarters. He's waiting for you," said Ku.

Tung didn't answer, for he was considering not leaving at all. It had been decided earlier by the regiment Party committee that he was to supervise the second battalion. He therefore felt he should not leave it at such a crucial moment. He felt that Commander Chiang Heng-tai and several other Party committee members were able to see to things at regimental headquarters without him. Tearing a leaf from his diary, Tung wrote:

45

Dear Chiang,

I hope you'll break through the Kuomintang encirclement with our whole regiment and go west as ordered by our higher command. After dark, the second battalion and I will try to shake off the enemy and head for Chianghsitien to join you.

Tung Hsiang-kun

He handed the note to Yu Teh-shui, head of the second battalion's signal squad, who was standing beside Ku and told him to deliver it at once.

Yu looked at Ku and then left.

Standing up, Tung put his diary into his pocket and turned to Ku. "Come with me. I'll brief you on the situation here."

Ku woke up Tung's guard Kuo Fu-wang and then they both went with Tung to the north slope.

"You were dead to the world," Ku nudged Kuo. "Under the circumstances, how can you sleep?"

"Nonsense," Kuo protested. "I heard every word."

"What did you hear?"

"You said that the commander wanted him to go back to headquarters."

"That's right. Well, you've got quite a responsibility taking care of the commissar and ensuring his safety."

"I know, but it's difficult."

"Still, do your best. It's your job."

Kuo quickened his pace to catch up with Tung. "Commissar, we should leave with the first battalion."

Turning to Kuo, Tung demanded sharply, "Should! What do you mean 'should'?"

Abashed, Kuo stammered, "W-w-well, I...er...honestly, I don't want to go either."

Ku came to his rescue, adding, "The commander must have a good reason for asking you to go back to headquarters. Off you go and leave things here to me. We can hold out here until dark. There's no question about that."

Tung was troubled. "Look, you people think you're probably

going to die here. But it doesn't have to be so. Why not try to work out a plan to shake off the enemy after dark?"

Reaching the summit, they saw in the east the first battalion already some distance away. Ku and Kuo were at a loss as to what to do, because once Tung dug his heels in, no amount of persuasion could make him budge. And to stop further discussion, Tung began to tell Ku in detail about the fourth company's position and the situation.

Tien Yung-kang, the head of the cooks' squad, approached with two buckets of water. Tung stopped him and asked, "Have you got water in those buckets?"

Tien hesitated before answering, "Yes, but I'm afraid it's cold."

"That's all right. These two have made me so thirsty with all their talking."

Tien put down his buckets and then filled an enamel mug which had been attached to one of the buckets. Giving it to Tung, he said apologetically, "I'm so sorry I can't offer you boiled water but our cauldron was smashed."

Tung took the mug and inquired, "How did that happen?"

"It was all my fault. It was nearing supper time and I thought that after a hard day's fighting and having only dry rations to eat, the men might like to have a hot meal. But the enemy bombardment began as soon as I had filled the cauldron with water and lit a fire."

Raising his eyebrows, Tung asked, "Did the enemy spot you because you used damp firewood which smokes a lot?"

"That's just it."

"Sol" Tung was silent for a moment as he thought it over and then suddenly he exclaimed, "That's it! Marvellous!"

Puzzled, Tien stared at him. "What's so marvellous?"

Not answering his question, Tung said, "Yes, that's the way to do it. Go and light another fire."

"Another fire?"

"Yes. Fires, lots of fires. Get all your men working and light ten, twenty fires. But be careful not to have too much smoke. Just enough to make the enemy take notice. You understand?"

"Er...I..." Tien wondered for a moment and then realizing what Tung meant, he cried, "Of course! Yes. I see."

Tung chuckled, "Then off you go and be quick about it. As soon as the fires are lit, leave them."

Giving him the thumbs-up sign, Tien said admiringly, "No doubt about it, commissar. You've got brains."

Tien started to pick up his carrying-pole, when Tung took it from him. "Hurry. Go and light those fires. I'll take the water to the men."

With a glance at Ku and Kuo, Tien nodded and made off for the southern slope. Kuo went to take the carrying-pole and buckets from Tung, who waved him aside, saying, "Come on. Let's get this water to the men."

Tung was in high spirits, pleased with his plan. He'd found a way to pin down the enemy and then escape after dark.

7

From more than twenty fires smoke arose in the gully, as if meals were being prepared for a large army. In vain the Kuomintang rained U.S. imported shells into the gully. After dark, the first and third battalions led by Regiment Commander Chiang Heng-tai had broken through the enemy's encirclement. Only Tung and the second battalion remained on North Mountain and Five-peak Mountain to keep the enemy pinned down.

From a hill top, Tung surveyed the action. His weather-beaten face had a calm and determined look. The enemy forces greatly outnumbered the second battalion. Tung, however, intended to strike them a severe blow before retreating, and so he issued an order.

Two divisions of enemy soldiers were attacking the second battalion's position and the situation was extremely difficult. All contact with the fourth company had been cut off, and when Tung had sent three batches of men over to them to make contact, the men had been killed.

On a ridge remained only the fourth company commander, Keng Ta-kuei, his squad leader, Chao Yung-sheng, a young soldier, Yu Chun-yuan, and two of four soldiers who had delivered ammunition to them.

Firing at the enemy with his tommy-gun, Chao Yung-sheng looked up at the sky and thought, "Our main force must have covered dozens of li by now, so we've accomplished our task. Now we must beat a retreat with our company. But the enemy is still attacking. . . . Somebody has to remain here to cover the comrades' retreat." After another burst of fire, he worried, "What can I do to cover my comrades' retreat?" Seeing some grenades at the edge of a crater, a risky plan occurred to him. "Yes. That's what I'll do," he said to himself. Then he remembered that he still had Yu Chun-yuan's application to join the Party. Taking his diary in which he kept the application from his pocket, he threw a grenade at the enemy. During a lull in the firing, he quickly wrote his name as Yu's sponsor on the application.

Chao crawled over to Yu. "Take this," he said.

Yu, occupied with taking aim, didn't look. "Take what?" he asked.

"Your application. I've written my comments, so you just hand it over to the Party branch."

"Me hand it over?" Yu exclaimed in surprise. Then realizing what was in Chao's mind he protested, "No. You go. I'll stay behind."

"Ssh! Not so loud. If Keng hears us, neither of us will remain and we certainly can't let him stay here."

"Then we'll both stay here."

"And have two do the work of one? No. Anyway, Keng would never agree to that."

"But he. . . ."

Putting the application back into his diary, Chao thrust it into Yu's hand. "Now take this and just listen," he urged him. "Keep the diary as a memento."

Keng's voice broke into Chao's words. "Chao, retreat with the comrades."

"Right, men. Retreat," Chao ordered. "But Keng, someone has to stay here to cover the others."

"Just obey orders and retreat. And make it snappy," Keng said.

But Chao and Yu knew that Keng meant to remain and cover

their retreat himself. They couldn't allow this and so they remonstrated, "No. We'll stay. . . ."

"You stay? . . ." At this Keng suddenly stopped and heaved a grenade with all his strength. "Take this, you swine!"

More than twenty enemy soldiers were advancing up the mountain, shouting, "At them, men. There're only a few left on the ridge. Take them alive."

Another comrade died beside Chao.

This is it, Chao thought. He shoved his tommy-gun further back and grabbed four grenades. He stood up and shouted to Yu, "You and Keng get out of here."

Wrenching the pins from the grenades, Chao dashed into the midst of the enemy.

8

Throughout the night the fighting continued and became more intense, with bullets cracking like pop-corn roasting.

The Kuomintang tenth division was descending Five-peak Mountain and by mistake was attacking the Kuomintang 56th division, which had just ascended the mountain's northern slope. Thus the two Kuomintang divisions were locked in a fierce battle.

Slowly Chao came to. With a great effort he pushed aside the bodies of the enemy soldiers lying on top of him. As he glanced up at the stars, faintness once again overcame him.

A group of Kuomintang soldiers passed by.

"Which unit's up there?" asked one of them.

"The ninth company," answered a voice from the ridge.

"Well, what are you hanging about here for then? Go on up the mountain."

Chao surfaced into consciousness again. Opening his eyes, he saw a group of enemy soldiers and an officer skirting the ridge and, with the help of torches, heading towards the northern slope. He wondered with concern if the Kuomintang had captured the northern slope and what had happened to his comrades. Had they escaped or were they trapped or worse? And what about Keng and

Yu? Unable to contain these doubts any longer, he forced himself to make the effort to get up.

He tried out his legs. They felt strong enough. But when he sat up his head swam. There was a sharp pain at the back of his head which a brief investigation showed was caused by a piece of shrapnel, which he removed. There were other parts of his body wet and sticky with blood but they gave him no pain.

"It seems my life's worth more than these few dead enemies," he thought. "Our commissar put it very well when he said, 'Live and die for the revolution.' I must find my unit." There were no more bullets left in his tommy-gun, which was still slung behind his back. Searching the bodies beside him for ammunition, he found a pistol and a few grenades. This is even better, he thought. Slowly he began to crawl up the ridge to the northern slope to join in the action there.

On the ridge he spotted the outline of a man. Was he a comrade or one of the enemy? He decided not to shoot, but instead sprang at the figure. Before he had time to demand his identity, Chao was grabbed from behind and a voice whispered, "Who are you?"

"Well, I'll be damned," thought Chao. "That's our commissar's voice."

Chao relaxed his hold and answered, "I'm Chao Yung-sheng," and felt the arms pinioning him relax too. The comrade he had grabbed said, "It's me, Hsiao Kuo."

"What on earth! . . ."

Chao wanted to shout for joy, but Tung quickly covered his mouth. Kuo asked Chao, "Who else is here?"

"Keng and Yu were here. Perhaps they've reached our forces by now."

"Are you by yourself?" asked Tung.

"Our comrades fought fiercely," Chao replied.

"The people will always remember those who sacrificed their lives for Liberation." Tung paused and then continued, "Come on. Let's go."

"Go where? The battle's raging on the northern slope," protested Chao.

"Oh that. That's only two Kuomintang divisions fighting each other," replied Kuo.

"Yes, let's leave them to it," Tung laughed.

It had been Tung's brain-wave. The smoke from the fires lit by the cooks' squad had tricked the Kuomintang into thinking that only a small group of the People's Liberation Army had escaped their encirclement, and that its main force still remained in the gully. As they closed in, Tung had sent his men away in small groups of two or three with instructions to regroup at Chianghsitien. At the time when Chao had charged the enemy with his hand-grenades to protect Keng and Yu, the second battalion's political instructor, Lu Fan, had led the fifth company away from Five-peak Mountain, and had succeeded in tricking the vanguard of the Kuomintang tenth division into attacking the northern slope from the south. Meanwhile two companies under the leadership of Battalion Commander Ku had drawn the Kuomintang 56th division to the scene. As darkness fell, the second battalion after attacking the enemy on both flanks dispersed. Thus the two enemy divisions fought each other without realizing it. His plan working out well, Tung had begun his retreat with young Kuo when he had come across Chao.

The enemy were moving noisily from both sides of the ridge in the direction of Hsishuangho Village. Tung led Chao to the south.

"No. Too many of them over there. We can't go that way," said Chao pulling Tung back.

Tung, Chao and Kuo scrambled down the ridge towards the west. Pausing occasionally when the enemy passed by, within half an hour they had evaded them completely. Looking back, they saw only the lights from torches and the firing had died down.

They continued on their way until Tung suddenly put his hands on Chao and Kuo's shoulders and forced them to crouch low in the grass. At first they heard only footsteps, then voices.

"Trust our rotten luck to have to search the mountains at night for those Reds. If we should run into them, it's curtains for us and you can bet our officer will pocket our wages tomorrow."

"Don't be such a pessimist. The officers said that the Reds have scattered and that we'd get five silver dollars a prisoner."

"Money! That's all you ever think of. Do you really believe them? What a fool! They're just a pack of bloody liars. Before any dollars reach your pockets, a bullet'll reach your heart first."

Somebody behind them reprimanded them, "You silly idiots! What the hell are you making such a fuss about? If the Reds hear you, they'll lie low. You poor slobs, only fit for cannon-fodder. Just shut up and keep searching."

One by one the enemy soldiers passed.

Once they were some distance away, the three comrades carried on towards the west. Chao was worried about Tung's safety and so he whispered to Kuo to go in front of the political commissar while he walked behind. Kuo agreed.

Ten *li* later they came to a mountain that was sparsely dotted with trees. They had no idea which it was or its height, as they climbed to the top. Here the summit seemed flat and barren.

It was still pitch dark. Walking ahead, Kuo suddenly cried out as he stepped out into space. Tung froze and peered into the darkness. Then squatting down he stretched out his hand and felt the edge of a cliff.

"Oh hell! Hsiao Kuo has fallen over the edge."

"Get back, commissar," Chao spoke as he pulled him back. Then he lay down and tried to peer over the edge, but he could see nothing. "I can't see a thing. I wonder how deep it is."

Tung said, "Try calling him."

"Hsiao Kuo! Can you hear me?" shouted Chao. "Hsiao Kuo."

"I'm down here," his voice came faintly from below.

Tung was relieved to hear him but worried about getting him out. He called out again into the darkness, "Where are you, Hsiao Kuo?"

"Over here."

"Have you hurt yourself?"

"No. I'm O.K."

"Are you very far down? Do you think you can climb back up?"

"I don't know how far down I am. I'm dangling in mid-air and I don't think I can get back up."

"Dangling in mid-air?" asked Chao.

"Yes. My fall was broken by a small tree."

Chao undid his puttees. Tung did the same and called out to Kuo, "Just hang on, Kuo. We'll pull you up."

Kuo meanwhile was clinging to a small tree that was growing out of a crevice. He tried to get a foothold on the rock surface to ease the strain on his arms, but it was sheer and his feet only dislodged some loose bits of rock. They crashed to the bottom after a long time. Kuo drew in his breath and thought, "Goodness, the ground's a long way down."

Tung and Chao tied their four puttees together and shouted to Kuo again, "Don't worry, we'll soon have you up here. You just hold on to that tree."

After tying a stone to the end of their improvised rope, Chao lowered it.

Kuo strained his eyes to make out the rope in the darkness. Then spotting it he made a grab for the stone with one hand, jerking the rope and nearly pulling Chao over the edge. Tung luckily caught Chao in time and held on to him.

They began to haul Kuo up. It was hard work.

Finally Kuo reached the top and, sweating with the exertion, he threw himself down on the ground and lay there panting. "Oh boy! It was so easy going down that wretched cliff, but getting back up was. . . ."

Before he could finish, a voice shouted, "Which unit do you belong to?" Chao immediately pushed Tung behind him. Half a dozen flashlights shone on them from three directions. They were surrounded by enemy soldiers. Pulling out his pistol, Chao fired. All the flashlights went out.

"Only three of them. We'll take them alive."

Then a command came, "Damn you, what are you waiting for? They were using pistols, so they must be officers. Get them alive and there'll be a reward."

"Wait a minute," another voice spoke. "Explain the situation to them and tell them to surrender."

Tung almost burst out laughing.

In anger and hatred, Chao shouted, "You're crazy! We're proletarian fighters."



Bang! Bang! Chao fired some more shots.

The voice called again, "Even a tiger can't beat a pack of wolves. There're only three of you. We're a whole company."

"So what?" Chao replied. "We're revolutionaries and we live and die for the revolution."

"That's the spirit," Tung shouted. "Use all our weapons for the sake of the revolution and kill as many of those bastards as we can."

None of the Kuomintang soldiers dared approach them.

"Damn you! Get them!" yelled the officer. "If you don't, I'll have you all shot when we get back."

The soldiers took a few tentative steps forward in the darkness and then drew back. The officer was enraged. "Blast you! Turn on your torches. I'll shoot anyone who doesn't."

Dozens of torches shone on them. The soldiers with bayonets fixed advanced towards them, shouting, "You can't escape. Surrender."

Tung laughed scornfully. "Fire!" he cried. Three grenades exploded amidst the enemy.

No one dared to turn on the torches again. Crouching on the ground, Tung, Chao and Kuo fired at the enemy.

Many were killed, but then there was silence. The three men had run out of ammunition.

With torches beaming, the Kuomintang soldiers closed in once again. Tung hurled himself at the oncoming soldiers and grabbed a man. The enemy soldier and Tung fell to the ground. Tung rolled with his captive towards the edge of the cliff, shouting, "Long live Chairman Mao! Long live the proletarian revolution!" His voice died into silence as he and the Kuomintang soldier fell into the darkness.

His heroism stirred Chao and Kuo, who rushed at the enemy.

Grenades were rained on them.

Staggering, Kuo fell over the edge with an enemy soldier locked in his arms.

Chao reeled and clasping a Kuomintang soldier collapsed on the ground.

9

Deep in the Cat Mountain forest, a robust young girl with short hair was staggering under the weight of an unconscious, badly wounded PLA soldier, whom she carried on her back. His uniform was soaked with blood. Deftly evading the branches, she finally reached the door of a thatched hut and hurried inside.

"Quick! Give me a hand, granny."

An old white-haired woman immediately stopped cooking the breakfast and, after wiping her hands on her apron, tidied the bed and puffed up the pillows. Then she helped the girl to put the man on the bed. She gently touched him. "Do you think it's serious?" she asked.

The girl frowned. Wiping the sweat from her forehead with her sleeve, she answered, "I can't say yet. Let's hurry and clean his wounds."

As if she had been ordered by her captain, the old woman went away quickly, but soon returned with a bag containing gauze, bandages and medicine.

Both knew something about first aid. They carefully snipped open the front of the man's cotton-padded coat, and then cleaned his wounds with antiseptic. When that was finished, they applied some ointment and bandaged them. He had multiple injuries. "He's a tough fellow," the old woman nodded in satisfaction.

The soldier, who had been unconscious for some time, moved his parched lips slightly. Delighted, the girl said to him softly, "Comrade!"

His dried lips parted and he tried to lick them.

"Get some water, granny," the girl told the old woman.

"Why not give him some of the rice broth in the pot?"

"Good idea."

Getting a soup spoon from a container on the wall near the stove, the girl took a bowl of the hot broth from the old woman and went to the bed. Sipping a spoonful first, she found it too hot and so stirred the bowl vigorously. After the girl had blown on it and stirred it, the broth soon became cool enough for her to give to the man. Tenderly, she fed him a spoonful.

He'd gulped down about half a bowl, when he suddenly opened his eyes and started raving, "Come on! Come on! Use all your bullets." Then he closed his eyes again.

"He's coming round," said the old woman smiling.

The soldier was Chao Yung-sheng.

Hearing someone speak, he slowly opened his eyes.

"Hsiao Kuo, where are you?" he asked deliriously. "Where's the commissar?"

The girl tried to soothe him, saying, "There, there. Just rest, comrade. Everything's all right."

"Get him, Hsiao Kuo!" he burst out. "Charge!" Then he mumbled faintly, "Live... and... die for the revolution..." With that he became unconscious again.

The girl sighed, "I'm afraid he's still fighting his battle."

She gave him some more rice broth. It warmed and nourished him, so that gradually his delirium passed and his mind became clearer. Opening his eyes, he felt dizzy and light-headed. As he focused and looked around, he saw that he was lying in a hut. A girl was beside him holding a bowl and behind her was an old woman.

"Where am I?" he faltered.

The girl's anxious look faded when she saw that he was lucid. Smiling she said to him, "Think of this as your home, comrade."

The old woman continued, "Yes and don't worry about a thing. You just take it easy. She's your comrade."

"Comrade," Chao repeated weakly as he felt the bandages. He looked at the bowl, the spoon and then at her sparkling eyes and he was touched. He forced himself to talk. "Comrade..." he began. There were no other words to express his feelings, only "comrade" was appropriate.

With a contented smile, the girl covered him with a quilt. "Now ssh!" she said. "Don't try to talk too much. You need all the rest you can get."

She turned to collect her shoulder-pole and axe from behind the door.

"Granny," she said to the old woman. "You look after him while I go and scout around to see if there are any others. Father said we mustn't miss even one."

After she had left, Chao asked, "What unit does she belong to?"

"I've no idea," the old woman replied.

"But she's your grand-daughter, isn't she?"

"I wish she was. Her name's Ho Tsui-ku and she's with the guerrillas."

"Ho Tsui-ku?"

"Yes. Does that ring a bell? She's old Ho's daughter."

"Old Ho? Who's he?"

"Haven't you heard about him? Everyone knows about him round here. He's the political commissar of the guerrillas and a veteran soldier."

"Old Ho... the political commissar..." His voice faltered, his head spun. He lapsed once more into unconsciousness.

He awoke to find the sunlight dancing on the wall through a latticed window. Ho Tsui-ku, dressed in peasant clothes, was putting a cold, wet towel on his forehead. "You've got a high fever," she explained to him, "and we must get you to hospital tonight."

He heard another woman's voice ask, "Have you got a stretcher?"

"Yes. We'll set off as soon as it's dark."

"Are you going?"

"Yes," Ho Tsui-ku replied. "Father is worried in case they run into a Kuomintang Peace Preservation Corps on the way, so he suggested that I lead them through Dragon Valley."

"Good idea. It's much safer and nobody would ever suspect that route. By the way, have you got any ginger?"

"Yes, Uncle Cheng has some."

On hearing this, Chao suddenly sat bolt upright. The two women rushed to him.

"Comrade," said the girl, "you're running a high fever. Lie down now. Just tell us what you want and we'll get it for you."

"Tsui-ku, where am I? Where are the Tungpai Mountains and Chianghsitien? Is it far from here? And what about our forces?"

"Now there, you must rest and not worry so much," she said, helping him to lie down again. Speaking slowly, she explained, "You're on Cat Mountain, which is a part of the Tungpai Mountains stretching towards the west. Our forces have reached the Tungpai area safely and the district Party committee has sent us to help you, so don't worry."

"What about the battalion that covered the main force during the break through?"

"Regiment Commander Chiang and his men made the break through last night, and he said they still had a battalion behind, but so far there has been no news."

Chao anxiously said to himself, "So they haven't got clear of the enemy?"

"Be patient," Ho smiled. "At the moment the enemy has returned to the railway for no apparent reason. I've heard that they fought each other for a long time but that none of our men were involved. So your battalion may have got away by another way."

"No, that's not possible," said Chao, "because we split the men up into small groups."

"Anyway the enemy haven't captured anyone. Some enemy deserters we caught this morning told us so."

Discussing the fighting made Chao think of the faces of his comrades, Keng and Yu. How he missed them and the others! Had they managed to break through the enemy's encirclement? And the commissar. He pictured him again grabbing the enemy soldier and rolling over the edge of the cliff. Tears came to Chao's eyes. He wanted to sit up, get up, search the valley below the cliff. But Ho wouldn't let him move.

"Please, comrade," he pleaded in frustration. "Let me get up. I must go and look for the commissar and Hsiao Kuo. They... they both..."

The girl cut him short, "You mean Tung Hsiang-kun?"

"Yes, that's him?" Chao exclaimed in surprise. "Why, have you seen him? Where is he?"

Ho shook her head. "No, I haven't seen him. The drop was so great that no one could have survived such a fall. But I learnt about him when I found this."

She pointed to an army coat which covered Chao's quilt and produced from one of the pockets a red diary. Chao recognized both the coat and the diary.

Then she continued, "When you were fighting on Tiger Cliff last night, we guessed that your battalion was on its way. My father went with some of the guerrillas to help you, but they ran across the Kuomintang Peace Preservation Corps and the fighting went on

until morning. They chased them as far as Tiger Cliff, which was how they found you and I brought you here. I spotted the coat but couldn't carry it then, so I hid it in some bushes. You were coming round when I went back there to fetch it and found his diary in one of the pockets."

"But didn't you go down to the bottom of the cliff to search?"

"No, because it's at least ten kilometres away. When I told the leadership about it, they decided to ask the people who live in the valley to look for him, and said that I should get you to Chianghsitie hospital as soon as possible today."

"I won't go. We've got to find the commissar first."

As he struggled to sit up, he blacked out again.

10

It was late that night that Ho Tsui-ku and Old Cheng entered Dragon Valley carrying the unconscious Chao.

There was an air of mystery about the valley, with its towering cliffs, and water cascading down, forming a fast flowing river, which twisted and turned along the valley, forming big pools and streams. There was a local song about this:

Dragon Valley is mysterious.
Water and rock are entwined;
Falls cascade from the skies;
Monkeys dare not scale the cliffs.
So we ask you, Old Man Heaven:
Did you forget the path, when you made the stream?
The precious flowers and herbs, they die unseen.
Hey nonny no! Hey nonny no!
The precious flowers and herbs, they die unseen.

The local people loved to sing this song, though no one knew its origin. It showed that there had never been a path there since ancient times, so that Ho and Cheng were following a trail made by Ho's father and his guerrillas.

The route they took covered several waterfalls and eighteen fords. In some parts the river crossings were almost impassable.

Ho and Cheng carrying the stretcher struggled on, hugging the cliff. Then they came to a difficult part where the water swirled at their feet.

A gust of chilly wind made Chao wake with a shiver. Instead of the ceiling of the hut, he saw a thin strip of sky and the pale moon. The rough edges of the strip kept changing, for they were the mountain peaks on either side of the valley. He wasn't sure which was moving — he or the mountains. The stars were dancing among the tree tops. With a beating of wings, a startled eagle flew across to the other side of the valley. Chao watched some withered leaves being blown through the air till they settled on the water. This was the first that Chao had seen of the river and he turned his head to have a closer look. Trudging along beside the water was a foot. Only then did Chao realize that he was on a stretcher.

He was deeply touched. Wherever we PLA men go, he thought, our people help us.

"Is Comrade Ho here?" he asked.

"Thank goodness! You're awake at last," she replied, stopping. The stretcher was lowered to the ground.

She bent down. "Would you like some water?"

"No, thank you. So you've been carrying me all this way." Chao was surprised.

Cheng explained, "There were three of us to begin with, but our other comrade got a bad pain in his chest and had to return home. We didn't try to find anyone else in case it disturbed the villagers too much."

"But. . . ." Chao began, too moved for words.

"It's nothing," said Ho. "We comrades should stick together and help each other in difficulties."

"But it's an awful path and you're just a girl and. . . ."

"Nonsense! Don't you worry about me," said Ho smiling. "Really, I'm as strong as an ox."

"She is too," the old man agreed.

"Well, we'd better get a move on, Uncle Cheng. We're going to have to ford another bend in the river, so have your pole ready."

They both picked up thick tree branches from the stretcher and then tied on their bodies the straps of the stretcher. Off they moved once more, keeping close to the cliff.

Here the river lapped at the cliff side and there was no visible trail. Ho stopped and turned to Cheng, "Have a piece of ginger before we cross. Hold on tightly to your pole and do be careful of each step. If we fall down, we're finished."

Chao moved his head and looked at the water. In the pale moonlight, the river was rushing and turbulent.

Sucking their ginger, Ho and Cheng felt warm. Sweat broke out on Ho's forehead.

"Look over here, Uncle Cheng," she pointed with her stick to a spot where the water splashed. "That's where the first stepping-stone is. We'll cross over by them."

She prodded with her stick at the place and then waded out into the water which lapped at her ankles.

Moving to the next stone, she asked Cheng, "Have you found the stepping-stone?"

Cheng with the help of his stick found it.

"Fine," said Ho. "Now I'll say 'one, two' and we'll move together at the same time. O.K.?"

"Right."

In this way they crossed the river.

Then they stopped for a rest. Cheng looked at the river and smiled, "People say you guerrillas can walk on water, but it's really all those stepping-stones."

"Didn't you know about them before?"

"No. I'd heard about some Kuomintang Peace Preservation soldiers who once came into this area and were ambushed. Many were killed, and when the rest tried to escape, the guerrillas ran across the stream and captured them. The swine surrendered their weapons and then they were set free."

Ho laughed. "But all the local people know about those stones, because it was they and the guerrillas who put them there in the first place. Practice makes perfect. Since we're always using them, we don't need poles in the day-time, because the water splashes against

them and we just leap across following the spray. It terrified the Kuomintang and so they made up that story about us.”

They moved off again. Lying on the stretcher, Chao was enthralled by the beautiful scene of moonlight playing on the cascading falls. Water sprayed on to his face and a moment later they were behind a small waterfall. The clear sheet of water flowed down as if it would engulf everything beneath it. There was a cool current of air. The girl and the old man kept close to the rock, stepping with great care.

After two more river crossings and three more waterfalls, they reached a rock named Windmill Rock by Ho's father because of its huge windmill-like shape. Half of it jutted out of the water dangerously while near it were several whirlpools. The guerrillas had found that there was no other way but to climb over it, so they had cut some small steps into the rock.

There were about one hundred and eighty steps on each side, and so it was difficult enough for anyone to climb it, let alone two people encumbered with a sick man on a stretcher. Because of this, Ho had asked Cheng, a strong and experienced man, to accompany her.

Ho began to pick her way up the rock. As she came to the third step, the stretcher was almost vertical.

“Stop!” Cheng yelled to her. “This won't do.”

He had hardly finished speaking when Ho knelt down and the stretcher became level again.

“You can't. . . .” Cheng shouted.

Chao had no idea what was happening. Clenching his teeth, he propped himself up on his elbows and saw Ho kneeling on the step, her hands gripping the sides of the stretcher. She said to Cheng, “Come on. Hurry up!”

Chao's eyes were blurred with tears at the sight of the girl on her knees. He shook the stretcher, yelling, “Hey, stop it! Put me down. I'll climb by myself.”

He tried to get off. On his right there was a sheer drop and on his left no foothold.

Without turning her head, Ho steadied the stretcher and then ordered, “Lie still and don't move. If you carry on like this, we'll

all fall and be killed for nothing. Surely you want to live to carry on the revolution. What's the point of risking your life for this?”

Chao pleaded with her, “Please, Ho, put me down. I can't bear to lie here while you carry me up on your knees. You go first and I'll crawl up on my hands and knees behind you.”

“Sorry.” Her tone was firm. “You're badly wounded and running a high fever. Be reasonable. How can I possibly let you do it by yourself? So don't let's waste time arguing about it now.”

It hurt Chao to see her there on her knees. “Oh, Ho. . . .” he cried out and then buried his face in the stretcher as sobs racked his body.

11

Dawn broke to a gale blowing gusts of frosty air through the Tungpai Mountains.

Ku Ching-chung and Lu Fan had lain awake all night. Not bothering to wash, they immediately walked to the southern entrance to the village. Even the bitter cold could not distract them as they paced up and down anxiously awaiting the fourth company and the old commissar, Tung.

The previous night, on Tung's instructions, they had tricked the Kuomintang into fighting each other, while Ku's men in twos and threes had seized the opportunity to retreat from the mountain. Most of the battalion had now reassembled at Chiangsitien Village, except for the fourth company and Tung. Ku was sick with worry. During the retreat he had been with Tung to begin with, but then they had got separated when the enemy charged them. He had been unable to shout to Tung and, after the danger had passed, Tung and his bodyguard were nowhere to be found. A day and a night had passed since then and as time went on fears for Tung's safety grew in Ku's mind.

Reaching Chiangsitien at noon the day before, Ku had bumped into Lu Fan, who had just arrived with some men of the fifth company. The main force of the regiment had already left, a staff officer remaining only to pass on Commander Chiang Heng-tai's instructions.

These said that in accordance with Chairman Mao's directive, the Tungpai Military Area had been formally established. In order to wipe out the Kuomintang local forces and open up the new military area, the troops should pursue a policy of strategic expansion. Chiang was leading the regiment towards Tungpai City, having left orders that Ku and the second battalion should catch up with the main force without delay so as to join in the offensive. But if the fourth company and Tung didn't show up by noon, Ku's battalion would be unable to take part in the battle. Their eagerness to see their comrades and Tung combined with their longing to take part in the battle disinclined them to eat breakfast. The whole morning passed without any sign of new arrivals. A bugle sounded from the village and a messenger from the battalion summoned them for a meal.

Just as they were about to go, Ku suddenly pointed to the small woods in front of them and said, "Look over there, Lu. Aren't those some people with a wounded soldier?"

Lu followed the direction of Ku's finger and saw two figures and a stretcher among the trees. "Come on, let's go and give them a hand," he said.

They hurried to the trees and soon reached the stretcher. Lifting the collar of the army greatcoat which covered the wounded man, Ku exclaimed, "Heavens! It's Chao Yung-sheng."

Chao was in a coma — his eyes tightly closed, his lips blue and his face ashen.

"Comrades," Ho began, "this is an emergency. Where's the hospital?"

Lu and the messenger taking the stretcher from the girl and the old man set off for the village. As Ku tucked the greatcoat around Chao, he suddenly turned to Lu, startled, "Hey, Lu! Isn't this like the commissar's coat?"

Lu, who was holding the back end of the stretcher, examined the coat and agreed, "Yes, there's no doubt. It's his all right."

Ku then spoke in a loud voice to Chao, "Chao! Chao! Do you hear me? What happened to the commissar? Was he..."

Ho cut in, "Comrade, he was..." She stopped and going up to the stretcher fished in the pockets of the greatcoat for Tung's

diary. Then she told them how she had found Chao and the greatcoat beside the edge of Tiger Cliff and how, according to Chao, Tung had thrown himself over the edge with an enemy soldier in his grip. Ku without a word took off his cap.

Taking the diary, he suddenly remembered that Tung's wife, Dr. Chou Chieh, worked in the hospital. What could they say to her? He asked Lu, "How can we break the news to Dr. Chou? Wouldn't it be better to consult the leadership first? They said there's a deputy director of the health department in the village."

Lu nodded in agreement.

Everyone helped to carry the stretcher to the village until they finally reached a large compound at the northeastern end where the hospital was located.

Several nurses in white took Chao to the temporary first-aid room, while one of the staff showed Ho and Cheng where to eat and rest. Meanwhile Ku and Lu went to look for the deputy director, carrying Tung's greatcoat.

The deputy director lived in a small courtyard adjacent to the hospital. His bodyguard went to inform him of Ku and Lu's visit and soon afterwards a grey-haired, bespectacled man appeared at the doorway and invited them into his room. He casually flipped through the pages of Tung's diary and then returned it to the men. Before they had time to explain in detail their problem, he said, "Dr. Chou's in the east yard. I think you should go and tell her yourselves."

Returning to the hospital, they found that Dr. Chou was in the operating room attending to Chao's injuries. As they felt they couldn't face food, they decided to wait in one of the rooms until the operation was finished and then tell Dr. Chou the tragic news about her husband.

Cheng lay snoring on the bed. Ku and Lu sat down on some tree stumps and began to discuss how to break the news to Tung's wife.

Time passed and then they heard people talking in the yard. As Dr. Chou and Ho entered, Ku and Lu jumped to their feet and found themselves at a loss for words. It was Dr. Chou who smiled and broke the silence.



"Hello. I've heard about you two. You're Commander Ku and Political Instructor Lu from the second battalion, right?"

"Dr. Chou..." Ku and Lu began at the same time.

"Now I know you're worried about Comrade Chao, but he's doing fine. He's a tough fellow. There were sixteen pieces of shrapnel in him and some of the wounds are so badly infected that I can't suture them for the time being. But he's in good shape and out of danger now."

The two men stood silent.

"What's the matter?" Dr. Chou asked in surprise.

Finally mustering up their courage, Ku and Lu handed the greatcoat and diary to Chou. Indicating Ho, they began to explain sorrowfully, "Ho told us that Tung had thrown himself over a cliff holding on to an enemy soldier..."

Ho butted in, "I heard it from Chao."

Dr. Chou looked at Ku and Lu, and then at the greatcoat and diary in her hands. She started to laugh.

With tears in her eyes Ho gazed at Chou and embraced her.

Dr. Chou lifted Ho's head and wiped away her tears. "Just look at you," she said. "Now all of you come to my room and let's have a chat, but you mustn't make too much noise."

Taking the girl's hand, she led the way, Ku and Lu following.

When they were in the main hall, Dr. Chou lifted the cotton curtain to her room and invited them in. Pointing to the bed, she said, "Look who's there."

Fast asleep on the bed lay her husband. "The commissar!" they all exclaimed in astonishment.

"Shh! Not so loud," Dr. Chou smiled. "He's probably only

just dropped off. I'm afraid he's got a high fever and a heavy cold."

After a moment, Dr. Chou continued, "So no more worries now."

At this moment the deputy director walked in, his eyes twinkling. "I'm sure you've sorted out your problem," he joked. "We entrusted this special patient to Dr. Chou."

12

The night Tung had fallen over the cliff with the enemy soldier, he had landed on some thorny bushes and creepers. It was dawn the next day before he regained consciousness. The mountain was shrouded in mist. The sun's rays pierced the clouds and formed a rainbow. It was like waking up in an enchanted world.

The birds singing joyfully in the valley indicated that the storms of war had passed. He thought of Chao and Kuo and wanted to get up and look for them and then continue on his way to Chianghsitien.

But his body ached all over and he felt fearfully weak, as if all his joints had been loosened. The thorns had cut him on the face, neck and hands and they were stuck to his skin with congealed blood.

He winced at the pain as he strained to sit up, and found that he was perched on a heap of soft thorny creepers. Below came the sound of a brook gurgling. With a great effort he managed to crawl towards the edge of the valley, picking off the thorns that caught in his clothing. He was soaked with sweat. "Life is complicated," he thought. "If we aren't fighting class enemies, we're struggling against nature." Gritting his teeth, he strained to get clear of the thorn patch.

Soon he came to the body of a Kuomintang soldier, whose skull had been crushed. From the location of the corpse, Tung realized that this was the man he had seized. As they had rolled over the cliff edge, the man had been strong enough to break free and crash to the ground where he now lay lifeless.

"Ah, weapons," Tung said to himself as he caught sight of two grenades tucked into the man's belt. "Just what I need." He crawled over and took the grenades, putting them into his own belt.

The call to battle and the desire to find his comrades forced him on. Marshalling all his energy, he stood up. "Oh heavens!" he

suddenly cried out in horror. A few feet away lay Kuo among some stones. Tung staggered over and bending down found that Kuo was dead. His hands were still tightly gripped around the body of the enemy soldier. Tung prized Kuo's hands open and shoved the other corpse far away. Then he returned to Kuo and removed his leather satchel and water flask which had been badly dented in the fall, and slung both across his shoulder. Then he undid his own towel from his satchel strap and emptied the last drops of water from the flask on to it. He wiped Kuo's face clean with the damp towel and looked at his youthful face.

Tung took off his cap and mourned for Kuo. "Dear comrade, we held the enemy at bay so that our regiment could advance into the Tungpai area without mishap. Rest in peace, my dear friend. Our red flag will fly over the Tungpai region and throughout China."

Then he thought of Chao and he staggered to his feet to search the area, but there was no sign of him. He considered climbing up the cliff, but there was no way. In the end he gave up and returned to where Kuo lay.

He couldn't leave Kuo lying there and so he decided to bury him. Without any implements, he would have to use his bare hands in the traditional way. He looked at some stones, pines and cypresses on the opposite slope.

To begin with he broke off many branches and carried them over to Kuo's body. Then he brought stones to form a mound.

As the mound grew higher, Tung sweated profusely. By the time he had finished, his shirt was wringing wet.

Exhausted he lay down to rest. He wondered where their main force was. What about the regiment and his comrades? Had all the men broken through the enemy's encirclement and reached Chianghsitien? Well, the Tungpai region would soon be liberated, so that they had not been wounded or sacrificed their lives in vain. More than thirty thousand men entering the region would spark off a huge revolutionary flame.

Under Chairman Mao's leadership and command, the revolution had developed rapidly and the men could face and overcome every difficulty. Tung's face flushed with excitement.

A gust of cold wind pressed his wet shirt against his hot skin and, feeling shivery, he put his padded coat around his shoulders.

Then he made his way out of the valley till he reached a spot near Chianghsitien, where some villagers caught sight of him and brought him to the village. He had caught a heavy cold removing his coat to make Kuo's grave, and so he was rushed to the hospital late at night. The deputy director of the health department had arranged for him to be with his wife, and had intended informing his comrades in the second battalion after breakfast. But when Ku and Lu came to him first, he had decided to play a joke on them.

13

Ku and Lu were both amazed and delighted as they gazed at Tung.

Adjusting his spectacles, the deputy director told them, "Leave him to sleep. That's the best medicine for him."

"There's nothing to worry about," Dr. Chou assured them. "I gave him a thorough examination and there's nothing seriously wrong with him."

"It's incredible!" exclaimed Ho.

Suddenly two shots rang out from beyond the village. "Something's happened!" a voice shouted from the courtyard.

Ku and Lu turned and dashed off in the direction of the firing. On the way, they met Yu Teh-shui, head of the battalion's signal squad running towards them waving his pistol.

"What's up?" Ku quickly asked him. "Who fired those shots?"

"Me," replied Yu Teh-shui. "As I was waiting at the southern end of the village for some comrades a moment ago, I saw some Kuomintang soldiers coming down the slope of the south hill."

"Kuomintang?" Lu wondered. "How many of them were there?"

"More than a company and they were all in U.S. army uniforms."

"What about our patrol on the south hill?" asked Ku.

"Goodness knows," Yu answered. "That's why I fired to warn our men. The fifth company is already defending the entrance to the village."

"It's very odd." Ku was puzzled. "Where could the enemy regular troops be coming from? Let's go and have a look."

As they reached the south end of the village, the sound of laughter could be heard, and Yu Chun-yuan appeared in U.S. army uniform with a Kuomintang cap in his hand. As he ran into the village he waved and shouted, "Commander Ku and Instructor Lu! It's me! The whole company's here and we've got a few prisoners too."

Beside himself with joy, Ku rushed forward and hugged Yu.

Meanwhile Keng Ta-kuei, the company commander, Ke Shih-ying, the political instructor, and the others of the fourth company stripped off their U.S. uniforms and threw away the Kuomintang caps. Then dressed in their Red Army clothes, they marched triumphantly into Chianghsitien.

Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng



Yang Shuo

Lichee Honey

Flowers, birds, grass and insects which are popular with painters are usually delightful things. Yet I never had much liking for bees though they often appear in paintings. The reason is laughable. One day when I was a child, I climbed a cherry-tree to pick some blossom and got stung by a bee — the pain nearly made me fall off. Grown-ups told me that bees never sting unless they were afraid you were going to hurt them, and stinging someone would cost a bee its own life. When I heard that, I felt sorry for the bee and forgave it. Still, after that the sight of a bee always filled me with misgivings.

Last April, I went for a short stay at the Tsunghua Warm Springs in Kwangtung. Beautiful as a traditional blue-and-green landscape painting, the pool of clear spring water was surrounded on all sides by verdant mountains. I arrived one overcast evening. Happening to look out of the window, I was astonished to see undulating dark hills looming tier after tier before me. The view from the guest house, as I remembered it, was of a level garden, not of hills. Had

my eyes played me false? I had to laugh the next morning when I looked again and saw a wide stretch of lichee trees with dense foliage. They had resembled small hills in the dark.

Lichee is perhaps the most delicious fruit in the world. Su Tung-po, an ancient Chinese poet, wrote, "I would gladly stay for ever in Lingnan, eating three hundred lichees a day." This indicates how much the fruit was sought after. I had come at a time when the small yellow flowers, less attractive than the pink new leaves, were just beginning to blossom. It would take another three months for the fruit to ripen, so I wouldn't be eating fresh lichees here this time.

It was the best time for lichee honey though. Maybe some people have not heard of this rarity? At this time of year, when the Tsunghua lichee trees seem a sea of blossom, there is humming and buzzing everywhere as bees gather nectar from dawn till dusk and under the moonlight too. The honey they produce is pure and nutritious. The local people take it as a tonic. A warm-hearted friend got me two bottles too, and as soon as I opened one it scented the air. Mixed with water it tasted as fragrant and delicate as fresh lichee, a heavenly drink like nectar.

I decided to overcome my old prejudice and have a look at the bees.

Half hidden in the depths of the lichee orchard was a white apiary run by the Warm Springs Commune which they referred to jokingly as the Bees' Mansion. It was spring then and the blossom was at its best. As I approached the "mansion", swarms of bees were flying in and out, as hard at work as if they too were in a hurry to build themselves a new society.

The bee-keeper Old Liang showed me around. He was not in fact an old man but a deft young one. To show me how this colony of bees lived, he carefully opened up a wooden hive. The various partitions in it were covered with crawling bees. They were all supplying the nectar they had gathered to the dark brown queen bee, who had a long narrow body.

Old Liang said softly, "Look at the little creatures. Aren't they well-disciplined?"

"How much honey can you extract from a hive this size per year?"

"Dozens of catties. The bees are industrious while our province



has good weather and plenty of flowers. They work the whole year round, and eat only a fraction of the honey they produce. Each time we extract it we leave them a little sugar. They never argue or complain, just go on producing honey day after day.”

“Are there any pests you have to guard against?”

“Yes. Beetles and hornets too. The hornets are the worst — they often lurk outside the hives to rob the bees.”

“How do you cope then with these insect marauders?”

“We kill them when they come. Otherwise they’d kill the bees.”

“How long does a bee live?” I asked.

“A queen may live three years, a worker no more than six months at the most.”

“Such a short life span? You must spend a lot of time clearing dead bees out of the hives.”

“Never. Bees are considerate that way. When the time comes, they fly off quietly to die outside — they don’t come back.”

I was very touched by these lovable little creatures who make no demands on men but give them of their best. While producing honey, they are also adding such sweetness to human life. Though so small, there is something very fine about bees.

I gazed thoughtfully at the field behind the lichee groves where commune members were hard at work. With their labour they were building themselves a new life. Actually, they were producing sweetness too — for themselves as well as for others. They were creating a life sweet as honey for their posterity.

That night, I had an odd dream. I dreamt that I too had turned into a bee.

1960

Illustrated by Chao Chih-kuang

The Camellia

Living abroad for a long time, I sometimes felt homesick, so much so that I longed for a painting of our motherland to hang in my room. I confided this wish of mine to an artist friend and asked her to paint one for me. "That's a tall order," she said. "What should I paint? A solitary mountain and stream, or a figure or two wouldn't do. And the choice of colours would be difficult. Even if I used all the colours of the rainbow, how could I do justice to our motherland?" What she said rang true. I gave up the idea.

Last February, returning from abroad, I felt quite intoxicated the moment I set foot in Kunming. In my home town in the north, this was the month when rivers were frozen over and mountains snow-bound. But spring comes early to Yunnan, urging the flowers to bloom.

Huating Temple in the Western Hills was wreathed with flowers, their fragrance wafted to greet all who approached. Plum-blossom — red, white, green and vermilion — covered each tree; each tree was a poem in itself. The white magnolia was just beginning to fade but the yellow jasmine was at its best. The Tienchih Lake southwest of Kunming is deep, but the spell cast by spring here is far deeper.

The glory of spring came home to me more strongly when I saw the tree reaching to the eaves of the temple, its luxuriant green foliage interspersed with hundreds of huge scarlet blossoms like balls of

flame. This was the well-known camellia which enables one to grasp the meaning of the line "Spring as fathomless as the sea".

This was the camellia season. In a fine drizzle I left Huating Temple and made my way to Black Dragon Pool, also known for its camellia. I had thought this plant a rare one, but to my surprise I saw its scarlet blooms flashing out from nearly all the bamboo fences and thatched cottages I passed. A friend told me, "This is quite common. Most families here grow camellia. When the different varieties are in bloom together, it is a magnificent sight."

The blossoms set me thinking. Everything beautiful in life is created by labour. We owe thanks to those who watered these plants with their sweat the whole year round, caring for them as if they were their own children and making life beautiful for us.

Pu Chih-jen whom I met beside Lake Tsuihu was a skilled horticulturist of this kind. Leading me through the grove of camellias in full blossom by the lake, he told me the names of the different varieties: Large Cornelian, Snowy Lion's Head, Butterfly Wing, Purple Gown. . . . Then, laying one hand on a tree he said, "This is Baby Face. As it blooms late, it's only just in bud. Its flowers are a deep red, most attractive."

"As the saying goes, 'Growing flowers is difficult but to enjoy them is easy,' " I remarked. "It must be hard to grow these."

"Yes and no. They thrive only in suitable soil and a temperate climate. They're afraid of wind and hot sun and, above all, of insect pests. There's a grub that kills them by boring into the flower. So they need careful attention all the year round."

"How long does a tree live?" I inquired.

"A long, long time. The Pine Cone Scale in Huating Temple is more than five hundred years old. It has over a thousand blossoms when it flowers."

I exclaimed in amazement.

Misunderstanding me, Pu hurried to reply, "You don't believe me? There is another one which the old people claim has lived for a thousand years, called Ten Thousand Flowers because it has so many blossoms. Its trunk is so massive, it takes quite a few people to encircle it." He stretched out both arms by way of demonstration.

I looked intently at his calloused hands covered with fresh mud, then at his face and the deep lines around his eyes. He was a middle-aged man who had obviously known hard times. It would be difficult to single him out in a crowd — he was one of so many common labourers. But it is precisely men like these who toil year after year, devoting all their energies to growing flowers and trees to beautify our life.

Just then, up came a troop of children, laughing and chattering. They raised their rosy faces to look at the flowers.

“Baby Face is in bloom,” I remarked.

Pu looked blank for a second, then laughed when he grasped what I meant. “It’s true. No flowers are lovelier than children’s faces.”

That suddenly gave me an idea for a painting. A big Baby Face camellia in full bloom, painted in bright vermilion with dew on its petals, would surely be a good symbol of our country. I made a note of this, meaning to pass on the suggestion to my artist friend abroad. Maybe she would consider doing such a painting for me.

1961

Illustrated by Chao Chih-kuang

In Memory of Yang Shuo

In early spring of 1938, the second year of the War of Resistance Against Japan, the editorial board of the newspaper *The Salvation Daily* run by Kuo Mo-jo moved from Shanghai to Canton. I then worked in the editorial office and one day Comrade Yang Shuo came to see us. That was the first occasion on which I met him. He told us that he had come from the Japanese-occupied northeast, travelled through north China and finally made his way with difficulty to Canton. At that time our policy was to unite with writers and help them. Yang Shuo struck me as a lone wild goose which had winged its way south, and so I made friends with him. We asked him to write for our paper and he complied, taking the war of resistance as his theme. In our supplement we serialized his topical novel *The Rolling Pamir Plateau*. At that time he had rented a house in the eastern suburb of Canton. One day I went to call on him and in the clump of bamboos in his courtyard picked up a piece of shrapnel, for in those days Japanese planes kept coming over and sometimes there was very heavy bombing. But Yang Shuo always ignored it and quietly, all by himself, went on

writing. The next year this short novel — his first — was published in book form.

In mid October 1938 when Canton too fell into the hands of the enemy, *The Salvation Daily* moved to Kweilin in Kwangsi and resumed publishing there in the spring of 1939. Kweilin's beautiful mountains and rivers are world-famed but how could we enjoy its entrancing landscapes in those war years? One day Yang Shuo came to my office to ask me in secret to go with him to the revolutionary base Yen-an. But as my work would not let me leave, I told him that I could not go with him to our great mutual regret. I bid him a warm farewell when he set off on his long journey, urging him to go on writing for our daily as our special correspondent. I remember his first report from the front, *Fenglingtu*, which marked the start of his life as a war correspondent.

After Yang Shuo's departure, both of us were so busy with our own work, he in the north, I in the south, that for many years there was no correspondence between us. I learned from others that after he arrived at the resistance base, he was educated by the Party and acquired a better understanding of the need for literature and art to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. He often went into the heat of mass struggles and together with the people's army he battled from Shansi to Hopei. He also worked in an iron mine and learned from the miners. His short novel *Red-stone Mountain* was about how the miners fought against the Japanese invaders, and he read it to the workers, revising it again and again in accordance with their suggestions before it was published. In the process of writing, Yang Shuo realized that the fine qualities of the working class had helped him a great deal in transforming his own world outlook. Later he made a point of keeping close to workers and writing about them. In 1949, soon after Peking was liberated, he was transferred to the China Railway Workers' Union and wrote a number of stories describing how the railway workers in northeast China repaired the railways there.

In 1950, at the outbreak of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, Yang Shuo went to Korea with some volunteer railway workers and fought together with them there for more than one year. Under dangerous conditions, the thatched hut where he lived

shaken by enemy bombing, he completed his novel *A Thousand Miles of Lovely Land* one summer night in 1952. This novel portrayed many splendid patriots and internationalists, but Yang Shuo felt dissatisfied with it and said: "I regret that I'm too poor a writer to bring out all the fine qualities of our people's heroes." Still, he dedicated this novel to the Chinese railway-worker volunteers in Korea whom he loved so dearly.

During the War of Resistance Against Japan and the War of Liberation, Yang Shuo had gone with the army to the front. He climbed mountains, waded through rivers, and even went through the "depopulated zone" created by the Japanese invaders. He ate wild herbs and slept in the open, feared neither hardships nor fatigue and went to wherever the battle was the fiercest to interview commanders, fighters and villagers. Several times he took part in the fighting himself and he had profound feeling for the people's soldiers. He said: "These fine young fighters, fit and lively as tigers, love their comrades and hate the enemy. Honest and selfless, they are dauntless in fight. When a battle is over, even if the casualties have been heavy, those who have come through never lose heart. Only the truly selfless can be so fearless and so devoted to the cause of the Party."

Yang Shuo also paid great attention to the letters soldiers wrote to him. When asked for his works by frontier guards or coastguards, he always carefully packed and posted the books at once, going to the bookstore to buy copies if he had none at hand.

In 1956 Yang Shuo started to do foreign affairs work. In the years which followed he visited many Asian and African countries and wrote many accounts of their beautiful scenery, the life and aspirations of their peoples, and especially their struggles for independence and liberation.

Regarding Yang Shuo's writings, I prefer his essays to his novels. His work gradually matured as he remoulded his world outlook and improved his writing technique. His essays, which cover a wide range of subjects, are not rambling disquisitions; for he focuses on one theme and his description of beautiful scenery only serves to bring out the characters' mental outlook. These works are distinguished

by their compact construction, clear reasoning, discriminating use of words and poetic imagination.

Indeed, Yang Shuo wrote essays in a poetic vein. *Lickee Honey* published in this issue concludes: "While producing honey, they are also adding such sweetness to human life. . . . I dreamt that I too had turned into a bee." This is a portrayal of Yang Shuo himself, and the noble ideals in the depth of his soul.

Unfortunately, this honest, kindly and talented comrade died on August 3, 1968. During his final illness he still talked of going back to live among the workers, peasants and soldiers and writing more about them. But this last wish was never realized.

Han-Dynasty Verse Essays

Chia Yi

The Owl

In the year Chan-o,*
The fourth month in early summer,
On the Keng-tzu day at sunset
An owl came to my house and stopped by my seat,
Looking thoroughly at ease.
Amazed by this strange apparition,
I opened the book of oracles
To learn what this portended,
And there I read:
"A wild bird's entry into a house
Foretells the master's departure."
I asked the owl then:
"Where am I to go?
Tell me, pray, if good fortune awaits me

* 174 BC.

Or some calamity, if I am ill-fated,
 Will it come soon or late?
 Let me know the date!"
 Sighing, the owl raised its head and flapped its wings.
 As it could not speak, I could only guess its meaning:
 All creation changes, nothing is at rest;
 Ceaseless the flux — progression and retrogression —
 Matter becoming immaterial in endless transformations,
 Their infinite subtlety defying description!
 In calamity lies good fortune
 And in good fortune lurks calamity,
 Grief and joy knocking together at the door,
 Good luck and ill inhabiting the same realm.
 Wu was powerful yet Fu Chai lost the kingdom;
 The Yuchs fled to Kuaichi yet Kou Chien ruled supreme;*
 Li Ssu's travels were crowned with success,
 Yet he was tortured to death,**
 Fu Yuch, a shackled slave,
 Became Wu-ting's chief minister,**
 Thus good fortune and bad are interlaced;
 Fate is unpredictable,
 And none knows what the end will be.
 Water forced will spurt out,

* Fu Chai (?-473 BC), the king of Wu, first defeated the Kingdom of Yueh but later was conquered by the king of Yueh, Kou Chien.

**Li Ssu (?-208 BC), a statesman of Chin, helped Chin Shih Huang to subdue other states and unify China. After Chin Shih Huang's death, his rival Chao Kao had Li Ssu torn limb from limb.

*** According to a legend, Fu Yuch was a slave before becoming a high official in the Shang Dynasty (16th-11th century BC).

An arrow drawn taut will fly far;
 Nature is a ceaseless cycle
 With everything transmuted, interacting.
 Clouds gather and rain falls;
 Endless the universal evolution;
 None can fathom Heaven or make plans for the future.
 Who knows how soon or late he must meet his fate?
 The universe is a furnace stoked by Nature,
 With the *yin* and *yang** as fuel,
 The myriad things as metal;
 Gathering, scattering and vanishing,
 Nothing is ever constant;
 Countless the permutations
 Continuing without end.
 If one chances to be born a man,
 Why cling to life?
 And why feel dismay
 If reborn in a different form?
 Small minds take a selfish view,
 Regarding all else but themselves as worthless;
 Men of understanding take a broader view,
 Not caring into what form they may turn.
 The greedy will die for wealth, the gallant for fame,
 And the ambitious for power;
 But the vulgar value their lives.
 Those under stress may race now east, now west,
 But a great man will not bend
 And remains constant through vicissitudes.

* The dual principles — female and male, negative and positive — of ancient Chinese philosophy.

A hide-bound pedant is fettered by tradition,
But a pure man spurns all things
And clings to the Truth alone.
The confused multitude are biased
With a million prejudices;
A true man is tranquil
And rests alone with the Truth,
Renouncing intellect and spurning material things,
Remaining aloof and unconcerned for himself,
He roams at will in the infinite with the Truth.
He will flow with the current,
Stop when he reaches a bank,
And abandon himself to fate with no thought of self.
His life is like drifting
And his death like resting,
Tranquil as a calm, deep pool,
Untrammelled as a boat adrift;
For instead of prizing his life
He floats in a void.
The truly good man has no impediments
But accepts his fate undismayed,
As nothing matters a straw,
Why should he have misgivings?

Plum Blossom (traditional Chinese
painting) by *Wu Chang-shuo*

古雪
德與仁兒屬畫
庚申首夏吳昌碩年



Han-Dynasty Ballads

A Song in Slow Time

Green the mallow in the garden,
Waiting for sunlight to dry the morning dew;
Bright spring diffuses virtue,
Adding fresh lustre to all living things.
Yet I dread the coming of autumn
When leaves turn yellow and the flowers fade.
A hundred streams flow eastwards to the ocean,
Nevermore to turn west again;
And one who mis-spends his youth
In old age will grieve in vain.

East of Pingling

East of Pingling,
Pines, cedars and plane trees.
Who has carried off our good man?
Carried him off to the high hall
And demanded from him one million cash and two horses.
Two horses — that is certainly hard!
His heart sinks at sight of the officers pressing him.
His heart sinks, his blood runs cold.
“I must go home and tell them to sell the young bullock.”

Pingling, near present-day Sian, was the burial place of Emperor Chao-ti who reigned from 86-74 BC.

Fighting South of the City

There is fighting south of the city,
Slaughter on the northern outskirts;
The dead lie unburied in the wilds,
Serving as carrion for crows.
Beg the crows for me:
“Lament these strangers first!
Dead in the wilds, not likely to be buried,
How can their carrion escape you?”
Deep and clear the water, dark the reeds:
Brave horsemen fought here and died;
Their jaded steeds linger on, neighing.
If houses are built on the bridge,
Who can cross to north or south?
If crops are left unharvested,
What food will there be for our lord?
And his would-be subjects —
How can they remain loyal?
Take thought indeed for them,
These loyal subjects are worthy of remembrance;
They went out in the morning to fight,
But in the evening did not return.

Captain of the Guard

The Ho family had a slave,
Feng Tzu-tu by name;
Relying on the power of the High Marshal,
He ogled a Hunnish maid serving in a tavern.
This girl just turned fifteen
Was alone in the tavern one spring day
In a long gown with double girdle,
Wide sleeves and a jacket with mimosa design.
In her hair she wore jade from Lantien;
Behind her ears, pearls from Byzantium;
And so charming her two tresses,
Their like could nowhere be found,
For one tress alone was worth five million cash,
The two of them more than ten.
Who would have thought this young captain of the guard,
So debonair, would drop in!
Dazzling his silver saddle,
His carriage with kingfisher canopy waiting outside.

He asked me for clear wine,
And I raised the jade wine-pot by its silken cord;
Then he asked for a tasty dish,
And I gave him sliced carp on a golden plate.
Presenting me with a bronze mirror,
He tried to fasten it to my red silk gown;
But I would rather have my red silk torn
Than let anybody touch my worthless body!
A man will always love a second woman,
But a girl must respect her husband;
And though one has old friends and new in life,
High and low should never mix.
So thank you, captain of the guard,
Your love for me is quite worthless!

The Ailing Wife

A wife, ill for many years,
Calls her husband to her;
Unable at first to speak,
Tears course down her cheeks.
“Take good care, sir, of our children;
Don’t let them go hungry or cold,
And if they do wrong don’t beat them with a bamboo,
Or their lives will be cut short —
Remember!”

Envoi

I want to carry the child but he has no gown;
His short jacket is unpadded.
I close the door and window
To go to market, leaving him behind.
On the way I meet a friend

And sit weeping, unable to rise,
Begging him to buy my motherless child a cake,
Speaking to him I cannot stop my tears.
“How can I get the better of my grief?”
I take money from my pocket for my friend.
Home again, I see my little son
Crying for his mother to hold him,
Toddling in the empty room.
“He will come to this too in the end.
Better leave him and forget him!”

Prominent Cultural Figures Meet in Peking

The China Federation of Literature and Art Circles, suppressed for many years by the "gang of four", held its third enlarged national committee meeting in Peking from May 27 to June 5. More than three hundred literary and art workers from different parts of the country attended this conference, the first of its kind since the downfall of the gang. Its aim was to mobilize writers and artists throughout the country to develop socialist literature and art.

The China Federation of Literature and Art Circles and organizations affiliated to it were set up in 1949 and the ensuing years, and Chairman Mao Tsetung and Premier Chou En-lai showed kindly concern for them. Guided by Chairman Mao's revolutionary line on literature and art, they did much useful work, fostering the production of new literature and art, training new writers and artists, and promoting cultural exchange with other countries. The "gang of four", however, viciously suppressed all revolutionary literary and art work, disbanded this contingent of writers and artists, and forced the federation and its affiliated unions and societies to suspend all their activities; thus it was

only after their downfall that these writers and artists could meet again in Peking. It was announced at the conference that the China Federation of Literature and Art Circles and the unions of Chinese writers, dramatists, musicians, film artists and dancers had resumed activity, while preparations were being made to reactivate four other affiliated organizations to promote art, balladry, folk literature and art, and photography. The national gazette of literature and art *Wenyi Bao* would also soon resume publication.

Mao Tun, vice-chairman of the federation gave the opening address. The late Kuo Mo-jo, chairman of the federation, sent a message from hospital, *My Heartfelt Wishes*, which was read at the conference. In his message, Kuo Mo-jo called on all writers and artists who want to create socialist literature and art to work boldly to give us penetrating and brilliant portrayals of our great era.

Ulanfu, member of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee, and Chang Ping-hua, head of the Propaganda Department of the Party Central Committee also made important speeches.

Huang Chen, deputy head of the Propaganda Department and Minister of Culture, gave a talk entitled *Under the Guidance of Chairman Mao's Revolutionary Line on Literature and Art, Strive to Bring About the Flourishing of Our Socialist Literature and Art*. In this speech he called on Chinese writers and artists to deepen the exposure and criticism of the "gang of four" and further clarify issues regarding political line, ideology and theory; persist in the principle "Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend"; and get real life experience in the thick of the struggle in order to create a wealth of literature and art. He also urged writers and artists to unite, add to their numbers, train young novices, and develop lively exchanges with progressive writers and artists in other countries. All who attended the conference expressed their determination to revive and strengthen the federation and its affiliated organizations, so that they have a new working style and serve as effective assistants of the Party in the field of literature and art.

Many speakers condemned the "gang of four's" fascist persecution of writers and artists. They expressed sympathy for those victimized and mourned for those who had been hounded to death, including the

famous writers Lao Sheh and Chao Shu-li, the poet Kuo Hsiao-chuan, the well-known Peking opera artists Kai Chiao-tien and Chou Hsin-fang, the stage director Sun Wei-shih, and the Mongolian singer and poet Saiyinchaketu.

The conference denounced the "gang of four's" subversive propaganda, their banning of progressive culture, their vandalism, and their pernicious influence on the younger generation. It stressed the need to continue debunking the fallacies spread by the gang, in order to bring about an upsurge in socialist literature and art.

It was also announced that the fourth national congress of Chinese writers and artists will be convened next year to sum up the experience, both positive and negative, of the last twenty-eight years, discuss the tasks and plans for literature and art in this new period of China's socialist revolution and construction, revise the constitutions of the federation and its affiliated unions and societies, and elect new leading bodies for them.

Pa Chin, another vice-chairman of the federation, who made the closing speech, called for vigorous efforts to create new works to welcome the convening of the fourth national congress of Chinese writers and artists.

Notes on Art

Chung Shu-chih

Tibetan Songs and Dances

Tibetans love to sing and dance, and their autonomous region abounds with songs and dances. There are many kinds of Tibetan folk dances, including the *Tod Zhai*, a lively tap-dance with changing rhythms; the slow and graceful *Nang Ma*; the *Gor Zhai*, a round dance; the *String Dance*, with its effective sweeping of sleeves; the spirited *Hearth Dance*; and the *Ral Pa*, with its great variety of movements. A distinctive feature of these folk dances is that they all combine dancing and singing.

To develop this traditional art, the Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe was set up in Tibet in 1958 to collect, revise, compose and perform Tibetan dances and songs. It has carried out these tasks successfully.

Since Liberation, Tibet has undergone profound changes. Those who were serfs in the old society have now become their own masters. The Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe has created many new items to reflect these changes. *Rejoicing over Liberation*, for example, sung and danced by three spirited Tibetan youngsters, conveys the happiness of

the liberated serfs. *Washing Clothes*, a humorous depiction of some Tibetan girls who trick a PLA man into letting them wash his clothes, shows the friendship between the People's Liberation Army and the local people. *The Qabdo Dance* has young men and girls on lovely stretches of level land presenting each other with flowers as tokens of love. The theme of *Night of the Harvest* is the bumper harvest the liberated serfs have won after learning from the example of Tachai, the well-known model agricultural brigade. Raising high their cups of newly brewed wine, they sing and dance among sheaves of *chingko* barley one fine autumn night. *On the Threshing-ground* shows threshers hard at work after their first success in growing winter wheat on a large scale four thousand metres above sea-level. These two dances convey the Tibetan people's love for labour, their enthusiasm forming a striking contrast to their hatred for the drudgery enforced on them by the serf-owners.

All these items retain the style of traditional folk dances, but have further developed it to create something new. Thus *Night of the Harvest* combines the original movements of the traditional *Tod Zhai* and *Gor Zhai* and introduces acrobatic movements to liven the atmosphere. *On the Threshing-ground* owes much of its vigour and local

The Qabdo Dance



Tsetan Drolma

colour to the use of bells and drums as in the traditional *Ral Pa*, the men ringing bells and the women beating drums to a lively rhythm. The traditional combination of dancing and singing is retained in all these new dances, and sometimes — a new development — songs are used as accompaniments.

In addition to performing folk dances, the Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe also presents solo singing and instrumental music.

The Tibetans are great singers with a wealth of folk songs, drinking

songs and boat songs as well as songs for sowing, herding, weaving and every kind of work. In the old society, they sang to express their indignation and grief; since Liberation, they have sung to show their love for their new life. Most of their songs are short lyrics, simply worded. One folk song begins:

Deep in the mountains of our home,
Rises a golden spring.
Wherever its waters flow
We harvest good crops.

Other songs such as *Chairman Mao's Splendour* and *On Peking's Golden Hill*, which are popular throughout China, show with simple words and a beautiful melody the boundless love of the Tibetan people for Chairman Mao, who led them to emancipation.

Good songs call for good singers, and there is no lack of these in the Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe. Tsetan Drolma, whose songs are loved by all our people, was born in a serf's family and liked to sing while still a child. But in old Tibet the serfs were worked like beasts of burden and had no right to sing. It was only in the new society that she was able to develop her talent and become a well-known artist. In 1958 she was sent to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music for vocal training and after graduation she joined the Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe. Her voice is clear and enchanting, full of feeling. Her renderings of *Chairman Mao's Splendour* and *On Peking's Golden Hill* delight audiences in China, and she has toured many times abroad to perform for foreign friends.

The Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe's repertoire of music includes one distinctively Tibetan item, *The Six-stringed Fiddle Ballad*. This type of fiddle, traditionally used by folksingers, was generally slung over the shoulder of the artist who plucked its strings while singing and dancing. Now it is played by many artists singing and dancing together. The varying melody and movements make this ballad very lively and expressive.

The Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe has composed and performed so many short but excellent items, it is now one of the best known art troupes in China.



Boatloads of Sugar-cane (woodcut)

by Ou Tse-yuan



Herding Deer (woodcut)

by Chao Mei



Post-girls at the Border (woodcut)

by Wang Lan

Puppetry in China

Puppet shows have a history of more than two thousand years in China, and were already popular between the seventh and thirteenth century in the T'ang and Sung Dynasties. It is said that after watching a puppet show the T'ang Emperor Hsuan-tsung (712-756) wrote the following verse:

An old man carved from wood with strings attached
Has wrinkled skin and white hair true to life.
Soon the dance ends and all is still again:
Such is the life of man, a fleeting dream.

This shows that by his time puppetry had already attained a high level of skill. There were many varieties of puppet shows in ancient China, but during the past few centuries this art gradually declined, its repertoire diminishing, and puppeteers suffered privations, leading a vagrant life. It was only after the founding of New China in 1949, when our Party and our government carried out Chairman Mao's directives to let a hundred flowers bloom and new things emerge from the old that this art was resuscitated. In many provinces and cities, new puppet





Hand puppets

companies were formed and puppet theatres built. Frequent puppet festivals and exhibitions were organized, and training classes were set up in different localities. Thus today a new generation of puppet artists has emerged and this ancient art has taken on a new lease of life.

Chinese puppets include hand puppets, string puppets and rod puppets.

Rod puppets are usually two to three feet high, their faces about the size of a four-year-old child's. The puppeteer holds up the wooden bar under the figure's head with one hand, and with the other manipulates the two thin iron rods controlling the movements of its hands. The feet are not usually shown; but when they are, another operator is necessary. This was the case, for example, when the Peking Puppet Troupe performed the drama *Red Flowers on the Snowy Steppe* about an

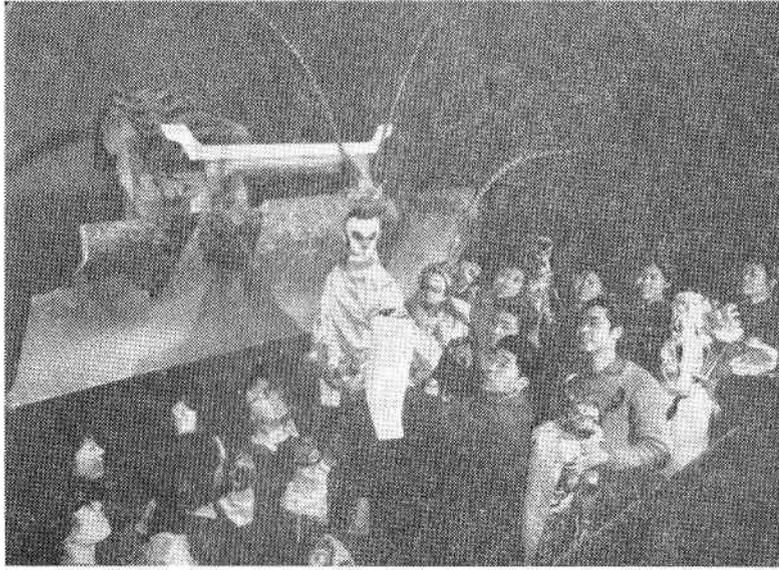
Inner Mongolian girl and her younger brother, caught in a blizzard while herding sheep, who discover that the commune's veterinary surgeon is committing sabotage. They battle against the snowstorm and the class enemy at the same time, and the little boy loses his felt boots so that his feet are frost-bitten.

The rods manipulating the hands may be hidden under loose clothing or visible outside. In the latter case the movements are more lifelike. The artists who put on shows with rod puppets in Hunan, Szechuan, Kiangsu, Kwangtung and Shensi are equally adept at imitating the slow graceful movements of ladies of old and those of intrepid border patrols on horseback. They can make puppets unbutton and take off their clothes, shoot arrows, perform on musical instruments or even play pingpong.

In recent years our puppet designers and artists have made certain bold innovations in rod puppets. In the past their features were based on those shown in traditional paintings; thus young people had plump faces, arched eyebrows and almond-shaped eyes. Now different characters of different ages have their distinctive physiognomy to indicate their personalities. The artists also use springs, nylon thread and pulleys to move their eyes, noses and lips, improving on the expressiveness of the performance.

The size of these rod puppets varies. In the southwestern province of Szechuan they are as large as life. The supporting bar is fastened to the waist of the puppeteer, who manipulates the hands with his own hands and has to exert considerable strength. In Hopei and Honan, rod puppets are much smaller, measuring only about one or two feet, so manipulating them is much easier and one operator can sometimes handle two or three at a time. Since the number of puppets in these shows varies and the stage setting can be very simple, this form of entertainment has long been widely popular and has spread to many provinces in China.

String puppets or marionettes are more complicated both regarding construction and manipulation. They have loose joints and strings are attached to their heads, shoulders, hands, waist and feet, the number of strings depending on the requirements of the performance. Usually ten to twenty are attached to each figure. The operator stands on a



Rod puppets

curtained stage above the puppets, holding the support with one hand and pulling the strings with the other. Skilled veteran artists in Fukien, Kiangsu and Kwangtung can make their marionettes wipe their tears, perform sword dances, play football, plough the fields or ride bicycles as dexterously as in real life. Their whole bodies appear on the stage and they can undertake physical feats impossible in other types of drama such as flying in planes through the air, riding on horseback or soaring on clouds. Some companies have successfully staged performances combining marionettes and rod puppets. For example, the Peking Puppet Troupe has performed *Playing Havoc in Heaven* based on the famous Chinese classical novel *Pilgrimage to the West* which describes how Monkey King defies the authority of Heaven, revealing the Chinese people's revolt against feudal oppression. In this mythological drama Monkey King takes the form of a tiger to fight the god Erh-lang who has changed himself into a fox; then Monkey reverts to his own form and rides swiftly through the air

on clouds to battle against other heavenly troops. By using marionettes, this story is successfully enacted.

Hand puppets or glove puppets are the smallest, being only about six or seven inches high. The puppeteer fits his hand inside, manipulating the head with his first finger, the hands with his thumb and middle finger, and making accessory movements with his third and little finger. The hand puppets of Fukien are famed for their lifelike expressions, beautiful costumes and distinctive regional characteristics. They can be made to hold pens and write, pour wine and pass cups, light candles and blow them out. Some artists can manipulate two figures with different characters and feelings by using both their hands. Their portrayal of acrobatics is outstanding. Thus one drama depicts a hero fighting a tiger, and after a strenuous contest the hero can be seen panting for breath.

Since Liberation, Chinese puppet troupes have given performances in many other countries. The late puppeteer Yang Sheng, noted for his skilful manipulation of hand puppets, won a first prize and two gold medals for his performance in an international puppet festival in 1960.

Hu Nien-yi

Han-Dynasty Verse Essays and Ballads

The Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) is well known for its fine literature, both prose and verse. We shall deal here with only two genres: the *fu* or verse essay and *yueh-fu* or ballad.

Origin and Development of the *Fu*

This form of writing originated towards the end of the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) and evolved from the *sao* style of verse of the State of Chu first used by China's great classical poet Chu Yuan (c. 340-278 BC). His disciple Sung Yu is believed to have written *The Wind*, *Kaotang* and other *fu* no longer extant. Hsun Ching, a younger contemporary of Sung Yu's, wrote *Rites*, *Knowledge*, *The Cloud*, *Silkworms* and *The Needle* which were known as "short *fu*". *Fu* were descriptive expositions, not unlike the *sao* in form. Thus there were no restrictions as to their length, the lines were irregular, rhymes were used and sometimes the particle *hsi* to end



Monkey King (rod puppet)

a line or divide a double line. Again, as in the case of *sao*, *fu* sometimes took the form of a dialogue. However, whereas *sao* were purely lyrical, most *fu* stressed the description of objective phenomena and paid greater attention to detailed exposition, so that they are more like verse essays.

Han-dynasty *fu* went through several stages. During the Western Han period (206 BC-AD 8), a representative writer of *fu* was Chia Yi (200-168 BC), a government official who in his younger days proposed a series of political and legal reforms, but they were rejected by Emperor Wen. Later, banished from the court, Chia Yi lamented his fate and the *fu* he wrote reflected his depression and discontent. *Lamenting Chu Yuan* and *The Owl* are among his better known works. In the former, in the name of the poet Chu Yuan, Chia Yi pours out his indignation at the iniquities of society and mourns his own sad lot. *The Owl*, based on an occasion on which an owl flew into his room at dusk, also voices his disappointment that his talents are not recognized. He asserts his indifference to the vicissitudes of fortune and to death, claiming that he will never lower himself, but this also reveals his passive attitude to life and his fatalism.

The great development of *fu* came after the reign of Emperor Wu (140-87 BC), when order was fully restored and the feudal economy flourished after decades of peace. Under court patronage, the *fu* form of verse was in vogue. Szuma Hsiang-ju (?-117 BC), the gifted *fu* writer, lived during this period. Two of his representative works are *Tzubsu* and *The Imperial Park*.

The former describes a conversation between Tzubsu (Fictitious), an envoy from the State of Chu, and Wuyu (Non-existent) of the State of Chi. Tzubsu gives an elaborate description of Yunmeng where the King of Chu's hunting grounds cover some nine hundred *li*. He paints a beautiful picture of the mountains and the surrounding countryside, listing the rich variety of trees, flowers, birds and animals that abound there. He goes on to describe the royal equipage when the King of Chu goes out, the fierce combats between brave men and wild beasts, the beautiful maidens who shoot birds on the wing, and the king's enjoyment of the hunt. Wuyu's reply is terse but to the point. Having briefly described the magnitude of the

coastal State of Chi he concludes: "Chi could swallow eight or nine Yunmeng and not turn a hair."

The Imperial Park, a sequel to *Tzubsu*, begins with Wushih (No-such-person) laughing at the two men's conversation and saying: "Chu is certainly worsted, but Chi gains nothing either." He then describes the imperial park of the Han emperor starting with the water in the lake, the fish frolicking in it, the pebbles at the bottom, the birds flitting overhead and the hills near by. Then he describes the animals roaming the park, the palaces there, the different kinds of fruit trees and the monkeys and apes gambolling across their branches. There the emperor hunts and enjoys song and dance. But in the midst of drinking and merry-making, the emperor awakes to the dangers of such a life of luxury and dissipation. He then turns the imperial park into farm land, pulling down the walls and setting the animals free. In conclusion Wushih criticizes both Chu and Chi. Much impressed, his two listeners "change colour", quite at a loss. The writer ends on a satirical note.

These two verse essays were the forerunners of many lengthy *fu*.

Yang Hsiung (53 BC-AD 18), who lived at a time when the Western Han Dynasty was drawing to an end, wrote two well-known *fu*: one on the emperor's hunt and the other on the glory of the Han Dynasty. Pan Ku (AD 32-92) wrote on the western and the eastern capitals, also in the form of a dialogue, to describe the environment, architecture, size and lay-out of Changan and Loyang, and the historical significance of the choice of the different sites. It is in fact a justification of the Eastern Han rulers' decision to move the capital to Loyang. Chang Heng (AD 78-139) wrote two similar *fu*, *The Western Capital* and *The Eastern Capital*, also in the form of a dialogue.

Fu, the main form of verse writing in the Han Dynasty, have a proud place in the history of Chinese literature; but most of them sang the praise of feudal rule while some were stereotyped in form and repetitious.

Towards the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, as the feudal ruling class grew more corrupt and the people's sufferings increased, some poets wrote short lyrical *fu* to reflect real life and the people's misery, creating a number of outstanding works. *On the Road* by Tsai Jung

(AD 132-192) describes his journey from Chenliu in present-day Honan to Loyang and how he saw fine villas and pleasure gardens being built for eunuchs while the labourers they had conscripted were dying of cold and hunger. It has these poignant lines:

Exquisite craftsmanship has raised fine pavilions,
But the artisans sleep in the open, drenched with dew;
Fine grain is thrown away on birds and beasts,
All the people have is husks.

Chao Yi, contemporary with Tsai Jung, wrote *Injustice* to vent his indignation against powerful scoundrels who rode roughshod over the people, discriminating against talented men of humble origin. He pointed out that the rulers were facing a serious crisis:

Blind to their imminent danger,
Intent on their present lust,
Are they not sailing the sea in a rudderless vessel,
Sitting on faggots about to burst into flame?

Such a critical spirit was absent from the earlier, lengthier *fu*.

Han Yueh-fu Folk-Songs

Emperor Wu of Han had set up a Music Office to compose music, train musicians and collect ballads which would enable the government to learn about local customs and the people's reactions to the political situation. This office collected songs from all over the empire and this work was continued for many years, for we have historical records mentioning the collecting of folk-songs during the reigns of Emperor Kuang-wu (AD 25-58) and Emperor Ho-ti (AD 89-105). The term *yueh-fu*, originally the name of the Music Office, later came to mean all the songs composed and collected by it. Those which interest us here are the ballads, not the songs written by the literati or those used in court ceremonies or at sacrifices.

A special feature of the *yueh-fu* songs is their spontaneity. They were composed or sung by the common people when "moved to sorrow or joy and eager to speak their minds". In this respect they follow the tradition of the *Book of Songs*, China's earliest anthology

of folk-songs, and give us a very comprehensive picture of the life of the working people. They denounce the Han-dynasty rulers and express popular discontent and opposition, revealing that the so-called golden age of the Han Dynasty was built on the bleached bones, the blood and tears, of the toilers.

Fighting South of the City written during the Western Han period is a trenchant indictment against the Han rulers. It begins with the macabre desolation on a battlefield after fierce fighting. By a swamp overgrown with weeds, crows gorge on dead warriors. The poet pleads with the crows to lament for the dead men, to summon their spirit back before savaging their carrion. This sad description is a protest against the rulers' aggressive wars. The song also conveys the people's dread of being conscripted to fight or work far from home, which makes them ask:

If crops are left unharvested,
What food will there be for our lord?

Then follows the sober warning:

And his would-be subjects —
How can they remain loyal?

This is tantamount to saying that the people will not always remain submissive "loyal subjects" but will eventually rise in revolt.

The Eastern Gate gives strong expression to the spirit of rebellion by describing a poor man driven to desperation who decides to take the law into his own hands. He sees that in his home there is:

Not a peck of rice left in the pot,
Not a coat on the peg behind.

This goads him to take action.

Sword in hand he starts back to the eastern gate,
But his wife clutches at his sleeve and weeps:
"Others may hanker after rank and riches,
I am content to share your gruel with you.
By the blue sky above,
Think of your unweaned child!
Do not do this thing!"

His wife tries to stop him from breaking the law and involving their child in trouble. However, his mind is made up and gritting his teeth he cries:

"Bah! Let me go!
Already it is too late."

Though the ballad does not say where he is going, the final lines convey the tense atmosphere and are pregnant with meaning. In depicting this tragic scene from a sympathetic viewpoint the song gives a vivid portrayal of the life of the poor, which marks a new development in our classical poetry.

Other realistic and moving songs of this kind are *The Ailing Wife* in this issue and *The Song of the Orphan*.

The Song of the Orphan depicts the wretched lot of an orphan whose elder brother and sister-in-law work him like a slave. He is sent out on long trips as a pedlar and made to do the hardest jobs at home. For him:

Winter, no warm coat,
Summer, no shirt.
Life is joyless,
Better follow the dead.

This is a realistic portrayal of millions of household slaves.

Some *yueh-fu* describe the sadness of travellers far from home, revealing the sufferings of the people from yet another angle. The first united empire in Chinese history was that of Chin (221-206 BC) just before Han, and it saw the start of large-scale migration from one part of the country to another. This was for various reasons: some men were conscripted for labour or military service, others left home to make a living, yet others in quest of fame or a fortune. These ballads reflect the conditions and feelings of people from many different walks of life. Some were obviously from the lower strata such as the wanderer in *Far from Home* whose lament runs:

I long to go home
But have no one to help me;
I long to cross the river
But there is no boat.

Again there are the three brothers far from home in *Homesick* who sigh:

Who will patch our old clothes?
Who will stitch and mend for us?

Both these songs portray the plight of wayfarers in strange parts. Another moving ballad is *Wheat Sown on the Highlands*:

Wheat sown on the highlands
Will never come to ear.
A man away from home
Cannot but waste away.

These short lines, with their juxtaposition of natural imagery and the wretchedness of a man away from home, convey the poet's deep feeling.

A good many Han *yueh-fu* deal with love and marriage. One example is *A Pledge*:

By heaven,
I shall love you
To the end of time!
Till mountains crumble,
Streams run dry,
Thunder rumbles in winter,
Snow falls in summer
And the earth mingles with the sky —
Not till then will I cease to love you!

More significant are the songs exposing the inhumanity of the feudal marriage system and expressing sympathy for the women who were its chief victims. The best known of these is the long ballad *Bride of Chiao Chung-ching** totalling more than three hundred and forty lines. The hero and heroine are deeply in love, yet their marriage ends in tragedy because Chiao Chung-ching's mother torments his bride and finally makes him send her home for good. There she finds that her brother and mother have decided to marry her off again to the son of a governor. In despair, she drowns herself on the eve

* See *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1959.

of the wedding and Chiao also hangs himself. This indictment of feudal morality shows that under the circumstances the couple have no other way out. Their death is a protest against the brutality of the feudal code of ethics. This ballad, which appeared during the Chien-an period (AD 196-220) towards the end of the Han Dynasty, was based on a true story. It was widely sung for many years, and though it may have been polished and revised by men of letters it has retained its folk-song features.

Yueh-fu had a strong influence upon the poets of succeeding dynasties, who took over and further developed the tradition of "speaking their minds". They also made improvements in the artistic form so that later many fine songs in the *yueh-fu* style came to be written.

“People’s Daily” Editorial Calls for Flourishing Literature and Art

On May 23, the *People’s Daily* carried an editorial entitled *For a Thriving Literature and Art* to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao’s *Talks at the Yen’an Forum on Literature and Art*.

The editorial says that literature and art must reflect life during the socialist period and cover a wide spectrum of themes. Different styles and trends in the arts should be allowed to develop. We should not demand perfection of works of literature and art or attack them for failing to attain it. Any work that is in line with the six criteria put forward by Chairman Mao — mainly, benefiting the socialist road and consolidating the leading role of the Party — and that is fairly good artistically may be published or produced.

The editorial stresses the need to adhere to the principle of making the past serve the present and foreign things serve China. Our cultural heritage and that of other countries should be critically assimilated, to enable the new to emerge out of the old.

Encouraging Operas on Contemporary Themes

Jointly sponsored by the Art Bureau of the Ministry of Culture and the editorial board of the journal *People’s Theatre*, a forum on opera was recently held, at which Ho Ching-chih, vice-minister of culture, stated: “First place on the Chinese opera stage should always go to productions on contemporary themes.”

At the forum, the experience of the No. 3 Troupe of the Provincial

Honan Opera Theatre was recommended. The troupe is now in Peking with the popular opera *Sunlit Valley*.

The No. 3 Troupe has written and performed more than 60 Honan operas on contemporary themes, many of which have spread far and wide in China. *Sunlit Valley*, produced in 1958 on a theme from the socialist revolution and construction in the countryside, was acclaimed by huge audiences and praised by Chairman Mao Tsetung and Premier Chou En-lai. The troupe has successfully applied the best techniques of traditional opera to works on contemporary themes, evolving its own distinctive artistic style.

Ho Ching-chih said: “The main task of literature and art workers should be to reflect our era, portray the workers, peasants and armymen and dramatize the changes in our lives today. That is the militant role of our art and literature. Fine traditional opera items should at the same time be rehabilitated, and a plan drawn up for this. We should also encourage new operas on historical themes, and they should be guided by the materialist conception of history.”

A Discussion on Children’s Literature

Nearly 100 writers, poets, translators, teachers and others interested in children’s education attended a discussion held in May this year to map out plans for writing more books for children.

On behalf of mothers throughout the country, Kang Ke-ching, vice-chairman of the National Women’s Federation, appealed to writers to “create more and better works for children — the future of our motherland”.

Speakers agreed that works should portray more heroes and heroines like Liu Hu-lan and Lei Feng and meet the growing interest of children in modernizing China. Chang Tien-yi, for 30 years a writer of juvenile books, said in a message to the meeting that writers must save the children from the intellectual famine created by the “gang of four”. Eighty-two-year-old educator and linguist Yeh Sheng-tao, known for his story *The Scarecrow*, urged “scientists and teachers to join forces with the writers of children’s literature”. Chin Chin, editor-in-chief of *Children’s Literature*, and Kao Shih-chi, a writer of science

fiction, said that the rapid development of science called for efforts to expand the children's range of knowledge, to supplement and consolidate their classroom study. Stories should deal with the wonders of science and scientists should help children foster a materialist world outlook and encourage their eagerness to understand the universe. 78-year-old Hsieh Ping-hsin, noted for her collection of letters *To Young Readers*, appealed to writers to provide our children with more and better books.

Peking Forum on How to Produce More Popular Songs

More than 70 people including the famous composers Lu Chi, Li Huan-chih and Shih Lo-meng attended a forum held recently in Peking on the question of how to write more popular songs.

At the forum, speakers stressed that diversity in themes, forms and styles should be encouraged and that songs should portray the diverse aspects of our people's lives in the new period of socialist revolution and construction. Composers should show more boldness, and the mass media should print and relay original songs promptly so that in this field a hundred flowers will blossom and a hundred schools of thought will contend.

Music workers at the forum denounced the "gang of four" for banning many songs loved by the people. They pointed out that the gang, acting counter to Chairman Mao's teaching, did not allow composers, singers and musicians to go among the workers, peasants and soldiers and laid down fixed rules for literature and art. As a result songs became stereotyped.

Music workers added that popular revolutionary songs should have a fresh appeal and be short and easy to sing. Such songs have served as effective weapons for our people in the periods of democratic revolution and socialist revolution and construction. More and better songs of this kind must be composed in the future.

"Spring in Shanghai" Music Festival for 1978

The "Spring in Shanghai" Music Festival, which was labelled as

revisionist by the "gang of four", was held again this year after its suspension for ten years since 1967.

This annual festival was first organized in May 1960 by Shanghai music and dance workers to introduce new works and encourage the development of music and dancing.

Over 2,000 artists, both veterans and new talents, took part in the two-week festival this year and presented over 250 vocal, instrumental and dance items. Among them were: *Along the Red Flag Canal*, a new piano concerto about the heroic deeds of the people in Linhsien County, Honan Province, in transforming their mountains and rivers; the *Yellow River Cantata* written by people's musician Hsien Hsing-hai; and *Zigeunerweisen* (Gypsy Air) written by the 19th century Spanish composer Pablo Sarasate. The reopening of this festival was warmly acclaimed by Shanghai music-lovers.

Japanese Higashiyama Painting Exhibition in Peking

The Japanese Higashiyama Painting Exhibition sponsored by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries was recently held in Peking. 150 paintings by Mr. Kai Higashi-



yama, a well-known Japanese landscape painter, were displayed.

The exhibition comprised four parts: first, representative works; second, works done during the artist's visits to China in 1976 and 1977; third, samples of mural paintings; fourth, scenes of Kyoto, ancient capital of Japan. These paintings, strong in national flavour and modern in style, were greatly appreciated by the Chinese visitors.

West German Pianists in Peking

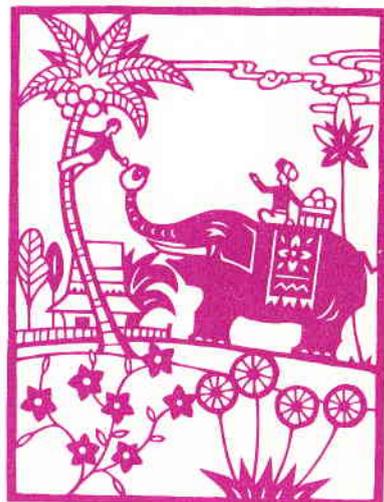
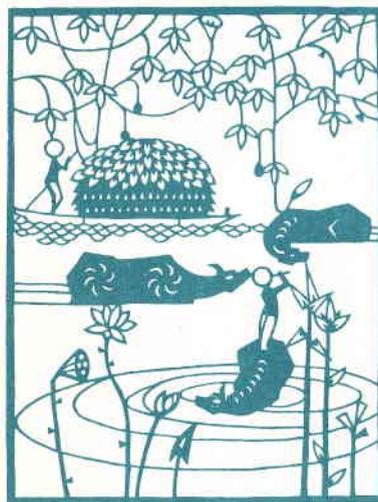
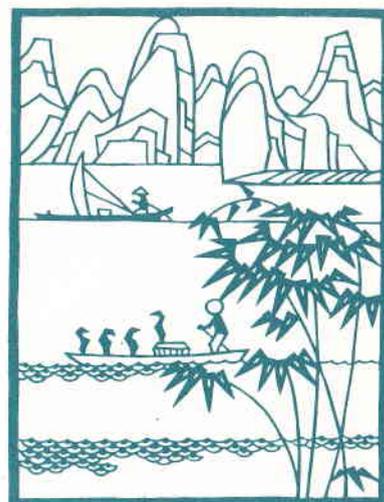
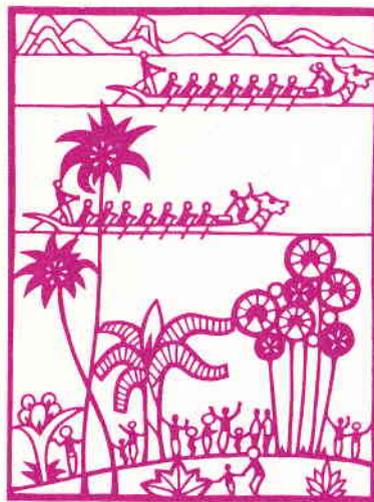
Recently, the brothers Alfons and Aloys Kontarsky, pianists from the Federal Republic of Germany, gave concerts in Peking. They played music by 18th and 19th century composers of the European classical and romantic schools. Their fine performances were appreciated by the Chinese audiences.

Performances by Ulan Muchir Cultural Teams

Recently, a festival was organized by the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble, at which Ulan Muchir Cultural Teams gave performances.

The Ulan Muchir are cultural teams working in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Since 1957, these cultural teams have been performing for herdsmen on the grasslands. Small in size and with few stage properties, these teams can put on varied programmes anywhere.

In order to develop the Ulan Muchir, the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble organized two Ulan Muchir teams in May this year and sent them to factories, mines, communes, schools and army units in Peking to perform for workers, peasants and soldiers. Their performances were warmly acclaimed.





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