

THE SHEPHERD BOY HAI WA

Hua Shan



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THIS is a story that took place in the Taihang Mountains of China's Shansi Province during the country's War of Resistance Against Japan.

The shepherd boy Hai Wa, on his way with his sheep to deliver an important message to the Eighth Route Army, falls into the hands of the enemy, out plundering the people's grain. Hai Wa struggles against the enemy time and again with courage and forethought, and succeeds in delivering the letter. The Eighth Route Army and the local guerrillas fight in close co-ordination, take the enemy stronghold and wipe the predators out completely.

The story will hold young readers' interest with its complexities of plot.

The Shepherd Boy
Hai Wa

Hua Shan

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Leader of the Children's Corps

AT the time our story begins, Hai Wa was 14 years old and had been a shepherd already for six.

He started out herding sheep together with his father. But then the Japanese invaded the country and his father joined the guerrillas, going to fight the invaders as a railway scout.

Hai Wa was active too, and became the leader of his village Children's Corps for Resisting Japan and Saving the Country.

Every day he went up Lungmen Hill to stand guard while herding his sheep, carrying the red-tasselled spear which his mother had given him.



Mother told him one night: "You must keep your eyes open while standing guard! The Japanese aggressors are right there in the plains and may raid our village by surprise. Last time they came pillaging grain they set fire to our house and I was nearly burned to death. Those who didn't escape in time were all killed by the devils."

"Mamma! Don't worry about me! I'm already a leader of the Children's Corps." Then Hai Wa fell asleep.

Next morning when Hai Wa awoke and saw his mother sitting by the stove spinning, he said, "Ma! Why still stay home spinning? Let's go and hide in the hills."

Mother replied, "My good child, then what would we live on? You just do a good job of standing guard on the hill, and don't get into quarrels. Then I won't worry while spinning at home."

Getting into his clothes, Hai Wa said, "How could a Children's Corps leader do that? When I was

little I was naughty sometimes, but now I'm on good terms with the shepherd boys from the plain and we never quarrel. I've taught them to sing *The Red-Tasselled Spear* and told them how our Night Tiger Company destroyed the enemy fort. The shepherd boy from Houchou Village told me that his master is a vile landlord and traitor that the Japanese have made head of the village. Day before yesterday the landlord forced him to make the rounds of the village on an empty stomach, beating the gong to collect horses from the peasants for the devils..."

"So!" exclaimed Hai Wa's mother. "Doesn't that mean the enemy's coming to steal grain? You should have reported earlier. Hurry and tell our village head!"

"I've already told him!" Hai Wa replied. "I told him as soon as I got back last evening. That's why he asked every family to cache their grain last night." Hai Wa was proud of what he had done. Picking up his red-tasselled spear, he drove the sheep out of the sheep-fold and was gone.

Meanwhile the village was bustling, with people threshing wheat, grinding it into flour and pouring the flour into bags. . . . Even the children were helping the grown-ups carry grain to the hills and conceal it everywhere. Hai Wa cracked his whip and began to sing:

Last time the devils came "mopping up,"
They wolfed down all the food we had,
Carted away our grain,
Burned our houses down —
And broke the pipe of this old man. . . .



Suddenly, the bell on the old locust tree at the village entrance sounded and the village head, who was ringing the bell, shouted: "The devils are coming! Militiamen, take up your guns and spears, bring your mines and grenades and fall in at the locust tree! Old people, children and any in poor health go

to the hills first! Wind up your spinning or threshing, put whatever you're doing in order and prepare to leave at once!"

The militia was soon assembled under the old locust, and the village head told Hai Wa to go up the hill and stand guard. "You're the eyes of our village. Be careful not to let the traitors catch you! Here, take this grenade with you!"

Hai Wa put the grenade in his belt under his jacket and sang again:

This time the devils come "mopping up,"
They'll find nothing but explosions all around,
Grenade bursts from sorghum stocks,
Mine blasts from cellars.
If they're mad enough to kick this broken chamber pot,
There goes off another mine!

Hai Wa sang merrily as he climbed Lungmen Hill behind the village.





The Signal Tree

AS soon as Hai Wa got to the top of the hill, he stuck his shepherd's whip into his belt and squatted down under a small tree.

Now this tree was bare, without a single leaf on its branches. The wheat crop had been harvested and the millet was golden, but this tree had not budded at all and could give shelter neither from the sun nor from the rain. Yet Hai Wa stayed by this tree all day. Squatting under it and shading his eyes with his hand, he watched the plain far beyond.

A stream twisted and flashed in the distance like a silvery snake, and beyond the stream stretched a railway line. Hai Wa narrowed his eyes. Along the track were several grey dots, like so many clods of earth. Daddy had told Hai Wa that these grey dots were the Japanese devils' strongholds. He said that each was big enough to hold several dozen devils. Daddy often went to fight the devils in these strongholds but did not allow Hai Wa to go with him, which made the boy feel very unhappy indeed.

Far beyond West Mountain came sporadic cannon fire—the enemy “mopping up” in our Taihang Mountains base area. Devils! You've gone to our rear, the heart of our base areas, to rob our people of their grain, but you'll never get back. We'll wipe you out!

Still quiet there. Not a whisper could be heard from the plain.

Where was the shepherd boy from Houchou Village? Why hadn't the other shepherds come?

Hai Wa ate the meal he had brought with him and then hummed some of his favourite songs; still everything on the plain below was quiet.

Again, Hai Wa squatted under the small tree and watched the plain more carefully. New long lines of black specks streamed out of the grey mounds of earth.

What could they be?

Hai Wa rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand and saw very clearly that the black specks were crawling like long lines of ants towards Lungmen Hill.

So! The devils were coming out of their forts! A long line of specks here... another there... and another.

Hai Wa grabbed the slender tree and pulled it down with force.

The tree was not really growing there, but was dead and had been stuck in the rocks on top of the hill. People in Lungmen Village called it the "signal tree." Located strategically, it could be seen by the villagers either from the village or from West Mountain. When the "tree" was down, they knew immediately that the enemy would soon be there.

The bell in Lungmen Village sounded and the villagers ran into the hills, taking with them what they could. The



militia also went to the hills, they with their guns and a wooden cannon.

All was done quickly. The bell stopped ringing, leaving the village silent and vacant.



Letter from the Guerrillas

HAI WA was alerted by a man climbing up the slope towards him, his gaze upward at the hilltop. Now the villagers seldom took this path except when tending sheep or collecting firewood, and Hai Wa suspected the man to be a traitor.

He quickly drove his sheep into a thicket.

Crouching behind a rock shrouded in bushes, Hai Wa hid too, and carefully watched the man. He unscrewed the cap of his grenade.

As the man neared the hilltop, he shouted, "Hey there, Hai Wa!"

When Hai Wa did not answer the man shouted again, "Hai Wa! Hai Wa!"

Now Hai Wa recognized the voice as his father's. Yes! Father had returned from the plain, with his gun on his shoulder!

Hai Wa was delighted. "Daddy!" he cried.

"Where are you?"

"In here!"

Hai Wa emerged from some date brambles, his head covered with dry leaves.

Father was angry to see him like that and shouted at him, "Do you call that standing guard? The devils're coming and here you are, crawling all over the place!"

"I've seen them already!" Hai Wa answered and, pointing at the tree on the ground, said, "Look! If I wasn't keeping a good lookout how did I give the signal?"

"But why were you squatting there?"

Hai Wa looked very unhappy. He replaced the cap on his grenade and said pouting, "How was I to know it was you? Suppose it was a traitor, what would I have done then?"

"What a strong sense of vigilance you have!" his father said laughing. "But hiding there in the bushes, how could you throw your grenade? How could you jump out quickly and catch the traitor? And how could you get away after the fight, with no path behind you? — Ha!"

Both father and son laughed. The man patted his son on the head and said, "In dealing with

devils, we must prepare fully. Half measures will not do."

Father took a letter from his inside pocket. This made Hai Wa exclaim with joy, his eyes lighting up, "Feather letter!"

It was really a feather letter, for three chicken feathers were stuck in the flap of the envelope! Father had brought it from the guerrillas on the plain! Hai Wa knew that one feather meant "no delay"; two meant "urgent"; and three meant "extra urgent." How important this letter must be!

Hai Wa was anxious to take over the letter. But his father was even more anxious and, as Hai Wa reached out for it, his father said, "Go at once to the Joint Command Headquarters in Sanwang Village and hand this letter to Company Commander Chang!"

"Company Commander Chang! Isn't he the leader of the Night Tiger Company?"

"Yes!" his father replied. "It was he who directed the battle when we destroyed the devils' stronghold and burned down their railway station."

"What does the letter say that's so urgent? Is there going to be another big battle?"

"Again, you're asking about such things!" Father waved his hand and said, "Military secrets can't be leaked out. Anyway..." With a wink his father went on, "The main thing is that military secrets must not be lost, exposed or delayed!"

"Why? You're telling me!" Hai Wa touched the peak of his cap, winked back, and said, "Anyway, when the Night Tiger Company goes into action, look out!"

Hai Wa gave a long shrill whistle and the sheep came running to him out of the thicket.

Holding out his whip to his father, Hai Wa said, "Here, take over the sheep, and the guard post is yours too."

Father did not take Hai Wa's herding whip. "You'd better take the sheep with you. Be careful. The enemy's on the prowl now. They've come into the hills by several routes, so it'll be difficult for you to deliver the letter. If you run into the devils, just tell them you're a shepherd from the plain."

A wonderful idea. He'd send the letter while herding the sheep! This was not the first letter



Hai Wa had delivered. But before, he had only his red-tasselled spear for company, and he ran as fast as he could. Now he had to deliver a letter with a flock of sheep. Hai Wa wondered when he would ever get it to its destination.

Father said, "The letter must arrive before sunset tomorrow. Is that clear? Tomorrow! And it must not be lost!"

"How could the letter be lost? Don't worry about it, Daddy. I'll get it there on time even if it costs me my life!"

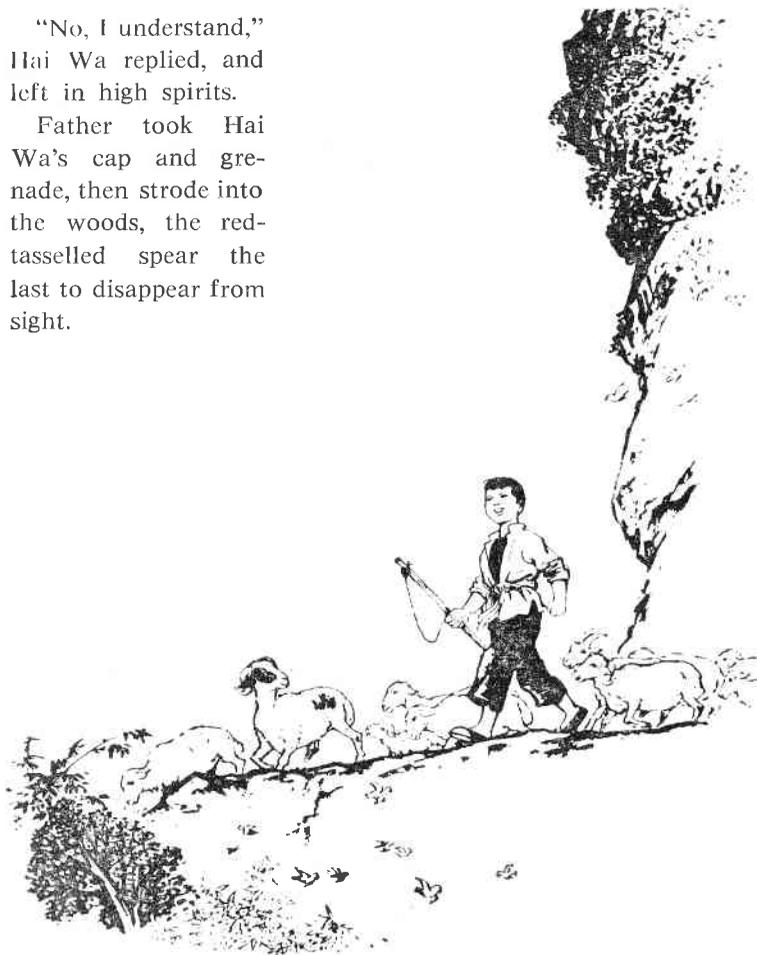
Just then enemy machine-guns opened up and the bullets whizzed over their heads. Father said, "The devils are saying they're coming and that we should leave." He took a baked sweet potato from his pocket and handed it to Hai Wa, saying, "Eat it on the way. Now, think. Is there anything else?"

"Nothing else!" Hai Wa replied, urging his sheep onto the path.

But his father stopped him with the question: "What's this?" Taking off Hai Wa's cap, a worn-out Eighth Route Army one, he said, "Wearing a cap like this and armed with a grenade, how would anyone believe you're a shepherd from the plain? Ha-ha! In fighting the enemy, you need a cool mind, bravery and caution, and thorough preparation against any emergency. This time you can't go as the crow flies to Sanwang Village either...."

"No, I understand," Hai Wa replied, and left in high spirits.

Father took Hai Wa's cap and grenade, then strode into the woods, the red-tasselled spear the last to disappear from sight.



The Old Ram's Tail

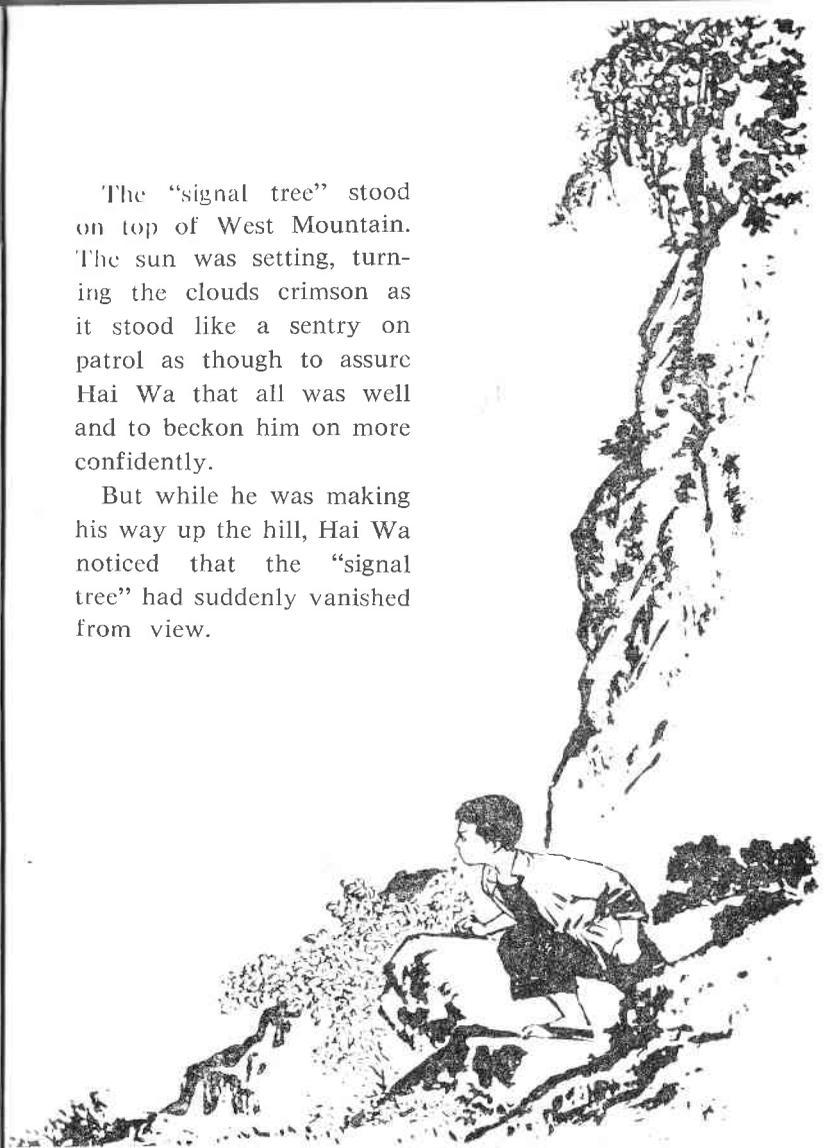
HAI WA drove his sheep down the narrow path.

It was ten miles from Lungmen Hill to Sanwang Village by the regular road, but less than seven by the mountain path Hai Wa had taken several times before when carrying letters to the Command Headquarters under cover of night.



The "signal tree" stood on top of West Mountain. The sun was setting, turning the clouds crimson as it stood like a sentry on patrol as though to assure Hai Wa that all was well and to beckon him on more confidently.

But while he was making his way up the hill, Hai Wa noticed that the "signal tree" had suddenly vanished from view.



What luck! There must be Japanese soldiers on the other side of the hill, thought Hai Wa. Was there ever such a fool as I, to throw myself, and the letter, into the enemy's clutches by taking this path? He immediately herded his sheep downhill and made for Tachuankou Pass. Since I can't take the foot path I'll have to go by the big road. That'll take me straight to Sanwang Village. Once out of the valley and turning north, I'll be behind the enemy at West Mountain—you go ahead, I'll keep my distance behind, and nobody will get in anybody's way, thought Hai Wa. That should do it!

Hai Wa made two turns in the valley and was near Tachuankou Pass when he saw lines of men and horses snaking their way along the far end of the pass. Eighth Route Army men? Not likely! He focussed his gaze into the distance and saw a cavalcade of horses without packs trailing behind—a clear indication that the Japanese soldiers were out to grab grain!

What was Hai Wa to do? The Japanese were at Lungmen Hill, on West Mountain, and here at Tachuankou Pass too!

Shall I avoid the enemy? Hai Wa thought. But on both sides were sharp cliffs he couldn't climb with the sheep.

Would he keep on anyway? And here was the important letter from the guerrillas he must send to the Eighth Route Army!

Could he throw the letter away? No, he would never do that. Not to deliver this "three feather" letter would be to spoil the whole guerrilla plan.

Hai Wa quickly hid the letter under some stones. Then he dug it out again, thinking to himself: I can't do that. There are stones everywhere here, how can I find the letter after dark?

As the Japanese got nearer and nearer, the "crunch, crunch" of their boots became louder and more distinct.

Hai Wa was really worried.

Only the sheep went along entirely indifferent—gambolling, cropping the grass, shaking their tails...

Hai Wa got an idea. He took the bellwether by the horns and, pulling a tuft of the long wool from its tail, twisted two strong threads with which he tied the letter under the ram's tail. How relieved Hai Wa was, for the letter would be carried along without being discovered.

The old bellwether, irritated by the letter there, rushed forward with its big tail pressed down hard, holding the message securely. And the faster it ran the tighter the letter was held.



Afraid of nothing now, Hai Wa cracked his whip smartly over his sheep and drove them right into the enemy, almost bowling some Japanese over!

"Halt!" shouted one of the enemy band. He cocked his gun and pointed it at Hai Wa's head while blocking his way.

All right. Hai Wa would stop. Just the chance he wanted to size up the strength of the enemy — number of officers, soldiers and guns. He would report all this to Company Commander Chang.

Hai Wa fixed his eyes on the enemy.

The sheep also came to a halt in a jostling mass, pushing the bellwether into their midst.



The Baked Sweet Potato

A puppet soldier in black uniform came up, seized Hai Wa by the collar and pushed him over to a yellow-uniformed Japanese officer.

A big sabre hung at the side of the Japanese, whose nose was bulbous like an onion and had a little moustache under it.

"You — Eighth Route Army scout!" rasped the Japanese, staring hard at Hai Wa. Two huge gold teeth flashed, and a pair of cruel, thick lips added to his hideousness.

But Hai Wa wasn't a bit afraid. Deliberately cocking his head and with mouth gaping, he stared

at the Japanese with the little moustache as though too stupid to understand what he meant.

"Why don't you speak, you little bastard!" shouted a puppet soldier with a crooked mouth. "His Excellency is asking you if you're an Eighth Route Army scout!" To reinforce his prompting, he gave Hai Wa a sharp rap on the bottom with his rifle butt.

Japanese hireling as he was, he had the gall to mouth such filth! Calling the enemy exalted names!



Hai Wa wanted to shout back at him "Black dog," but remembered the letter and thought better of it. "No! I'm not. I'm a shepherd," he said instead.

Little Moustache drew his sabre and, placing it over Hai Wa's neck, hissed, "If you don't tell the truth it'll be off with your head!"

Crooked Mouth also threw his weight around, aping his Japanese superior. Kicking Hai Wa, he echoed, "If you don't tell the truth, I'll kill you!"

"I'm only a shepherd boy, just a shepherd from Houchou Village!" Hai Wa insisted.

Hai Wa pretended to cry. But through tears and rubbing his eyes with his fists he counted the enemy, both those in mustard yellow and those in black. But Hai Wa's crying irritated Little Moustache, who ordered the boy searched. Crooked Mouth began fumbling under the patches on Hai Wa's clothes and ended up taking off his worn-out shoes and looking into them.

But the baked sweet potato given Hai Wa by his father was the only result of the search.

His eyes lighting on the potato, golden and fragrant, Crooked Mouth grabbed it and was about to thrust it into his mouth when Little Moustache snatched it away from him.

"What nice food is this?" The Japanese sniffed at the sweet potato with his onion nose, then gulped it down with great relish. "Very, very good!" he said to Hai Wa. "This from the hills, very good

indeed! Imperial Army soon mop up, get all the sweet potatoes.”

“But sweet potatoes don’t grow in the hills,” Crooked Mouth humbly corrected the Japanese. “Where are we going to launch the mopping-up operation anyway? We’re sure to find plenty on the plain!”

But Hai Wa had an answer. “This sweet potato is baked. Baked sweet potatoes taste good. When I take my sheep to the hills to graze I always eat baked sweet potatoes—just make a fire with faggots.” His story made it appear he really was a shepherd boy from the plain.

The baked sweet potato whetted the appetite of Little Moustache, and he smacked his lips over it disgustingly. Then screwing up his beady eyes in a grin and showing his glittering gold teeth, he asked, “You, what business?”

Hai Wa realized what the Japanese officer was driving at and replied with something he already wanted to say. “Mine citizen’s business—herding sheep,” he said, mimicking the Japanese.

“Show your ‘good citizen’ identity card!”

“I’m only 14, how can I have any ‘identity card.’ If you don’t believe me, go to Houchou Village and ask Village Chief Chou. These sheep are all his.”

But the Japanese had no time to give this a thought—he was more anxious to go into the hills to loot grain! Showing Hai Wa the remnants

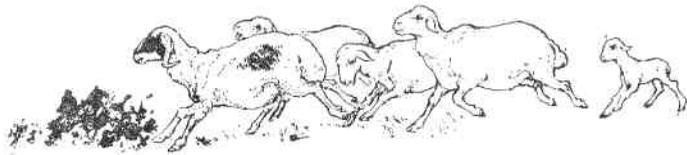
of the sweet potato in his hand, he asked, “This, have got?”

“Sure,” Hai Wa replied. “Lots. Just go to Houchou Village. Houchou Village chief grows plenty sweet potatoes, and they’ve just been gathered in.”

“Your this,” said the Japanese, still indicating the potato, “you give Imperial Army for present! Understand?” His two gold teeth flashed in the sun.

“I understand,” said Hai Wa. “When you come back I’ll give you two basketfuls of them.” He spread his arms in a large circle to describe the size of the offer he was making. But to himself he cursed instead, “You’ll never get back alive. You’re doomed to fall into our trap and bite the dust!” And Hai Wa laughed heartily.

Little Moustache laughed too. He patted Hai Wa on the head and said, “You, good citizen! Good citizen for Imperial Army! Get going now!” And Hai Wa left happily, driving his sheep before him.



Hai Wa's Sheep

HAI WA cracked his whip so it sounded like fire-crackers. He wanted to break into a run, but since he didn't dare to he only walked faster.

"Stop! Stop!" Crooked Mouth suddenly yelled running after him and followed by other puppet soldiers. They closed in on Hai Wa, stopped his flock and started grabbing the sheep.

"What are you doing?" Hai Wa protested, worried.

"You ask what we're doing? Why, the Imperial Army hasn't had supper yet! Your sheep will make us several meals!" grinned Crooked Mouth. With that he seized Hai Wa's whip and, cracking it over the sheep, drove them back into the valley.

This took Hai Wa completely by surprise. The Japanese would get hold of the letter! Hai Wa lunged forward and threw himself on Crooked Mouth.

"What are you doing?" exclaimed Hai Wa, reaching for his whip and beginning to cry. "The sheep



belong to my master, the village chief! Let go of my whip! . . .”

“Vicious bastard! Do you want to eat me up?” said the puppet. “Go home quick and tell your master that his sheep have all been taken for the Imperial Army. It’s got nothing to do with you! Go! . . .” Crooked Mouth more coaxed than threatened the boy for fear he might take a bite out of him or throw a stone.

“I won’t go! Give me back my whip!” In trying again to get the whip, Hai Wa seized Crooked Mouth by the arm. “The sheep belong to my master. If I lose them, he’ll skin me alive.”

The puppet soldiers ignored all this, for Hai Wa’s master, the landlord Chou, was another traitor hireling like them, crawling before the Japanese. And as to whether the shepherd boy was skinned alive or not, they couldn’t care less. So they only laughed loudly at the idea.

“Ha! Ha! Ha!” guffawed the black-coated puppets, whipping the sheep on with their leather belts.

Hai Wa clung to his whip and, gathering all his strength, heaved the whole weight of his body upon Crooked Mouth.

“Get away! If you make me mad I’ll kill you!” gasped Crooked Mouth, throwing Hai Wa roughly to the ground and threatening him with his gun. Then Crooked Mouth began driving the sheep away as if he owned them.

Hai Wa lay on the ground, heart-broken over the loss of his sheep, more so over the loss of the letter. The crack of the whip in Crooked Mouth’s hand made the earth and sky revolve before Hai Wa so that everything kept turning upside down. Whip lashes stung and seared his heart. Hai Wa! Hai Wa! How can you let the Japanese get hold of the letter that should be sent to Command Headquarters! And you a leader of the Children’s Corps! Suddenly Hai Wa forgot to cry, forgot his pain, and picked himself up.

He set his teeth and started off, following on the heels of the Japanese and their puppets.



At every step Hai Wa searched the ground in case the letter should have dropped. In his mind's eye Hai Wa saw himself pick it up without being noticed, then look for the chance to get away and carry it directly to Sanwang Village.

But the letter was nowhere on the ground. It could not have fallen. Hai Wa recalled the two tight knots he had tied it with, and the extra knot he'd made for good measure. He was dreaming to think of finding the letter on the ground!

Still Hai Wa kept on, for he must not be separated from the letter! The Japanese must never get hold of it! No. He must have it back!



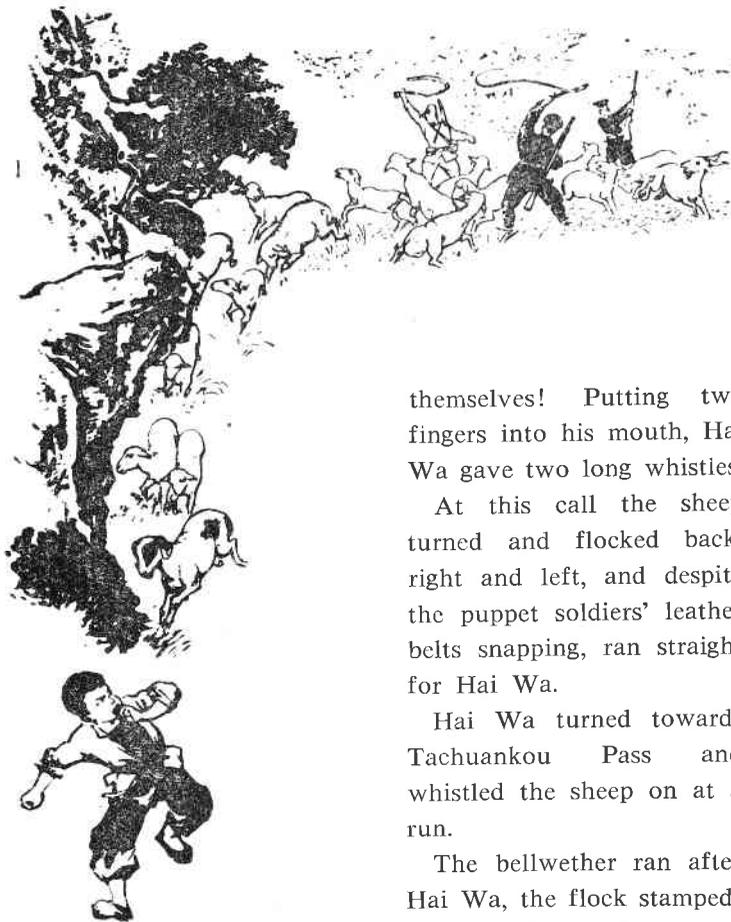
In a Mountain Village

CROOKED Mouth suddenly caught sight of Hai Wa following them and roared savagely, "If you don't go away I'll roast you together with your sheep!"

Another puppet soldier laughed raucously. "Let him come. We'll ask our Imperial Army officer to throw him a bone to gnaw!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" Other puppet soldiers joined in the ridicule, and the Japanese also hee-hawed at the boy.

Hai Wa's eyes blazed with anger at these taunts. Well, let them eat the sheep then! Let them gorge



themselves! Putting two fingers into his mouth, Hai Wa gave two long whistles.

At this call the sheep turned and flocked back, right and left, and despite the puppet soldiers' leather belts snapping, ran straight for Hai Wa.

Hai Wa turned towards Tachuankou Pass and whistled the sheep on at a run.

The bellwether ran after Hai Wa, the flock stampeding behind and the puppet soldiers chasing after them.

Hai Wa was interested in getting away with that bellwether! If the other sheep fall under the enemy's knife, I can take that. If the bellwether could only run faster! If it wouldn't keep turning back to look after the lambs! I know you're worried about them. So am I. But run! When we get to Sanwang Village the people there will avenge us!

Suddenly the soldiers began chasing Hai Wa instead of the sheep, and as their legs were much longer than his, crooked Mouth caught hold of him.

"Go on, drive the sheep for the officer!" ordered Crooked Mouth giving Hai Wa a vicious knock.

"Right! That's the idea! Let him do the driving for us! That way we don't have to sweat."

Hai Wa's heart missed a beat, whether of joy or fear. "Anyway, here's my chance!" he said to himself.

But aloud Hai Wa cried, "No, I won't do it!"

Hai Wa pretended to drive the sheep under protest and, under the blows of the puppet soldiers, trailed behind the enemy on his way to the hills.

"You, Imperial Army guide. Understand?" Little Moustache beamed broadly, exposing his gold teeth.

"I understand," said Hai Wa, actually not listening at all. Hai Wa was making his own plan.

They would soon reach the hilltop; the day was over. After dark Hai Wa would take the letter and run into the hills to hide. The enemy would not be able to track him down!

Soon the whole kit and boodle came to a small mountain village where the Japanese and puppet soldiers halted. Hai Wa and his sheep halted too.

It was a village of only six or seven households, and the doors were all barred. The enemy broke into every house looking for plunder, but every house was empty—not a pot on any stove, not a quilt on any *kang*,* not a single jar of rice in any of the houses. Everything had been hidden away in the hills! Piles of straw and twigs were all that was left on the threshing ground.

The Japanese set the straw and twigs afire, tore the window-frames and doors out of the houses and threw them into the flames. The blaze lit up the hillside.

Instantly other fires were seen rising on several distant hills in the west and in the south. The Japanese cheered, flung their arms in the air and howled. Cries were soon echoed from the west and south.

The Japanese were exchanging messages by these signals, and they jumped and stomped for joy. Flying their flags and flourishing banners and fancy pennants, they shouted to high heaven. The enemy was now on three hilltops and would start their looting at daybreak. Pleased with themselves, the Japanese forgot Hai Wa, and his chance came. He got hold of the old bellwether....

* A heated platform-bed common in northern China.

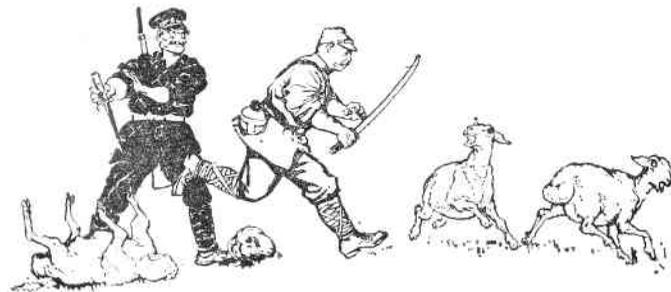
The Old Bellwether

NO sooner had Hai Wa grabbed the bellwether than Little Moustache cursed loudly:

“Fools!”

Hai Wa got a scare and turned his head only to hear “fools!” once again. But the Japanese was addressing his own men and not Hai Wa at all. “Mishi-mishi!” he yelled, which obviously meant “eat,” for the Japanese and puppets threw themselves on the sheep.

Hai Wa loosened his grip on the bellwether and stared hard at the Japanese, who made for the sheep



without giving Hai Wa so much as a glance. One grabbed a lamb by its hind legs; another slung his belt around a sheep's neck and dragged it off with that, while a third simply hacked off a sheep's head with his dagger.

Crooked Mouth looked around for a while and then seized the bellwether by the horns.

Hai Wa shivered and almost cried out. What would happen to his precious letter! Was all to be lost, and the enemy to find out who he was? At this crucial moment Hai Wa kept very quiet and didn't even blink. If exposed he must run with the letter out of sight; if cornered he would simply swallow it. No bayonet could prize his mouth open to say a word!

Crooked Mouth pulled at the old ram's horns till sweat streamed down his forehead; still the animal wouldn't budge but planted its legs four-square like pegs driven into the ground. The Japanese started to laugh at Crooked Mouth who, for all his tugging and pushing, couldn't get the better of the ram. Flushed, he retorted, "What are you laughing at? It's got more than 30 *jin** of meat on its carcass — more than three of the others. What an animal! Come and give a hand, you guys!"

But nobody did. Instead, they mocked Crooked Mouth. "Can't eat such old ram. Keep it for your mother!"

* One *jin* = 0.5 kilogramme.

Hai Wa's heart was pounding, but he was quick to echo, "Can't eat old mutton in hot weather! The meat's tough and nauseating."

Angry and disappointed, Crooked Mouth gave the ram a swift kick and said to Hai Wa, "Keep it for *your* mother!" Giving up the ram, he ran after the sheep.

Hai Wa felt relieved, but his teeth were still set and he had cold sweat all over, including in his tightly closed fists. "Make all the fun of me you like. I won't take you on just now," Hai Wa said to himself. "But one fine day you'll have to pay for this. There's no hope of saving the sheep, so I'd better escape with the message at night."



What a sorry sight the sheep were! On the threshing ground Japanese bayonets shone against the flames. Some were skinning the animals with their sabres; others were ripping open their bellies, the sheep's heads and entrails spattering blood everywhere. Hai Wa thought it looked like wolves out on a raid.

He had once seen a pack of hungry wolves steal into the sheep-fold, pounce on their prey and snatch the sheep away to a wilderness to eat them where there were no human beings around. But this was worse. These two-legged predators did their gory business right before people's eyes. Very soon only a couple of dozen sheep were left.

The old bellwether nuzzled Hai Wa and bleated, tears trickling down its face. Hai Wa could do nothing but hold it closely and fondle it. The old ram eyed the flock and the flashing sabres dripping blood, now and again turning its head to Hai Wa.

"My old ram, I'll soon have to leave you too!" Hai Wa whispered in the bellwether's ear. "I've got to deliver the message alone."

Tears were in Hai Wa's eyes too as he fondly stroked the ram. Then, quietly lifting its tail, he found the letter still there!

"These monsters will soon be finished," said Hai Wa, patting the ram.

He was just about to remove the letter when Crooked Mouth came up and asked, "Any well around here?"

"How can there be a well around here? If there was the villagers wouldn't have moved away!" answered Hai Wa, pretending just to be fondling the ram.

In fact, there was a well back of the village where Hai Wa used to water his sheep. But how could he tell the enemy about that? The puppets had asked for cooking pots too, but had found none. With neither water nor cooking pots, the robbers would have some trouble eating, Hai Wa had thought. He didn't imagine them just hacking the sheep to pieces, roasting the bloody chunks, and eating like that.

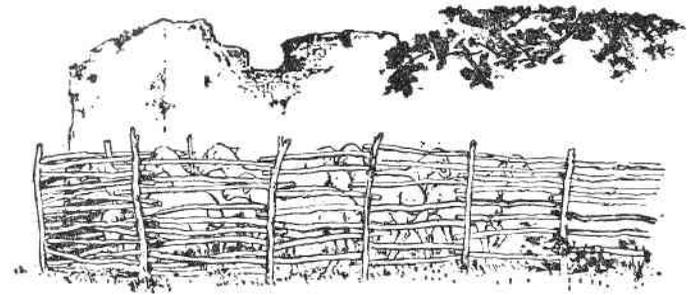
The sizzling and scorching smell made Hai Wa's heart ache. After all his care and work raising those sheep into a flock, here they were, slaughtered and eaten before his eyes! Like wolves they fed on the bloody hinds of the sheep, the grease coating their mouths till they shone.

When Crooked Mouth had gnawed all the meat off a bone, he wiped his mouth with his hand and held it up. "Come, you little pauper, here's something for you!" he cried, waving the bone at Hai Wa.

Hai Wa's heart chilled and he said with a long face, "I won't eat it!" With that he turned and threw himself upon the ram.

"So, you won't eat! Come here, you little rat spittle, you won't get away this time!" And the black puppet dog tormented Hai Wa endlessly.

When Hai Wa finally got to his feet and made his way to the threshing ground, he could only sit there watching the enemy eat their fill of his sheep.



In the Corner of a Room

SATED, the Japanese belched, hung the leftovers on their belts and then, massaging their distended bellies, they headed for the village to sleep it off. Only Crooked Mouth didn't go with the others. He ordered Hai Wa to drive the remaining sheep into the dilapidated sheep-fold behind the village.

After Hai Wa got the sheep into the pen, he placed a stone against the gate, then fetched some straw and spread it on the ground just inside the gate.

"What are you doing there?" demanded Crooked Mouth.

"I'm going to sleep."

"Go to the village to sleep!" Crooked Mouth said, upsetting Hai Wa's plan.

"But who'll watch the sheep?" said Hai Wa. "There are a lot of wolves in these hills!"

"But... but..." Exasperated, Crooked Mouth blustered, "None of your tricks with me, you little bastard. You're trying to get away, aren't you? Come along!" And he dragged Hai Wa off to the village.

Crooked Mouth pushed Hai Wa into a one-room house and flung him into a corner.

The dirt floor of the room was strewn with straw, and the Japanese and their hirelings, rifles clasped in their arms, flopped down on the straw, pushing Hai Wa against the wall.

Soon they were snoring, all except the guard posted at the door, who stared dully into space.

Hai Wa could not sleep. It would be difficult escaping by daylight; he must get away tonight! But how could he, blocked in the corner? The "feather" letter must not be delayed!

Hai Wa opened his eyes and took a peep at the door. The moon was just over the hill, its light falling on the doorway. It must be very late. The guard, sitting woodenly by the door, blocked the exit with his legs. Closing his eyes again, Hai Wa heard snores coming from the next courtyard and

the munching of hay by horses behind the house. Enemy soldiers were there too!

Suddenly a challenge was shouted from the end of the village lane: "Who goes there?" telling Hai Wa a sentry was posted there too.

"The groom!" came the answer, and the sentry asked no more.

Hai Wa was really worried. How could he get away? A rooster was already crowing in the distance. It would soon be dawn!

Unable to lie still, Hai Wa sat up. The guard at the door was slumped against the wall, his head lolling, his rifle lying across his lap.

The enemy, bloated with their meal, lay every which way—one with his head on another's legs, which were up on the belly of a third. Crooked Mouth's arm was between two others' heads. There seemed no way for Hai Wa to get out!

Undaunted however, Hai Wa rose to his feet, gently pushed Crooked Mouth's arm aside with the toe of his worn-out shoe, stood firm on his left foot, then with his right moved another leg aside. The remaining obstacle between Hai Wa and the door was the snoring Japanese with the little moustache, who was sleeping on his back, arms and legs sprawled.

Daylight began to show through the door. Little Moustache snored on, his nostrils flaring rhythmically. Hai Wa picked up a bit of earth, crushed it and let the dust fall on his moustache.

The Japanese stopped snoring and his nostrils stopped flaring. Then suddenly he sneezed violently twice, shaking his whole body.

Still Little Moustache did not awaken. He just rubbed his nose, turned over and began snoring again. Hai Wa's way was now clear! How light he felt, as though a weight was off his heart. He sprang over Little Moustache's belly and edged his way to the door.



The guard was still dozing. Hai Wa had cautiously picked his way out of the room and would soon reach the road by the village when a "Who goes there?" sounded forth.

"The groom," Hai Wa replied, imitating the voice he had heard in the night.

The sentry seemed satisfied and Hai Wa strode to the stable as the real groom had done.



From there he jumped over a tumbledown wall and made his way to the sheep-fold outside the village. The sheep bleated and nuzzled Hai Wa with their cold noses. It was their feeding time, and they were restless.

Hai Wa had no time to tend them, only to get hold of the old ram and take the letter from under its tail.

The bronze bell tied to the bellwether tinkled gloomily. After six years of tending the sheep Hai Wa had to part with them today! It pained him, but he must be off. Putting the letter into his pocket and tightening his trousers belt, he made for the crest of the hill behind the village.



The White Flag

HAI Wa ran up to a small pass, then slowed down at a fork in the footpath when he heard the shout of a man some distance away.

Hai Wa could not hear what the man said, but he caught sight of a little white flag being waved at the other end of the hill ridge. Who was that waving the flag at him, now over his head, now to either side? Hai Wa couldn't make out what

he was shouting, but it sounded like the challenge last night.

Must be the Japanese devil that made the fire on West Mountain last night, thought Hai Wa. The flag-waving stopped and the waver held up what could only be a gun.

Hai Wa was not scared of that. With the rocks along the pass to get behind he could avoid shots all right. But he didn't run. Suppose there were other enemy soldiers with him. A gunshot would alert them and jeopardize his escape.

Hai Wa took off his white shirt and waved it, now over his head, now to either side, as the other did.

The Japanese lowered his gun and raised his flag again as though in recognition of one of his own. And so Hai Wa got by again! Still waving his shirt, he rounded the hill and ran as fast as he could.

The wind whistled past his ears. Cocks crowed cheerily far away. Birds twittered and chirped in the grove. Hai Wa was merrier than any of them, so pleased that he seemed to have wings and was flying with the wind! Around a cliff and down into the valley he went, then up the next hill.

He sat down on a rock, tired and out of breath. Needn't run so fast now, he thought, for Sanwang Hill was right ahead, and beyond it lay Sanwang Village. Then he suddenly remembered the letter. He would soon be delivering it!

Without bothering to wipe off his sweat, he happily put his hand into his pocket to touch the letter, to look at it again. But a sudden cold shiver swept over his body. Where was the letter?

He felt in his pocket once more; it was not there. He stood up, took off his shirt and turned it inside



out. He searched every crack and cranny in the rocks around: no letter!

Another chill ran down Hai Wa's spine. He remembered clearly putting the letter into his pocket. There was no hole in the pocket. What had happened to the letter?

Without thinking further Hai Wa quickly retraced his steps down the slope, his eyes fixed on the ground.

But the letter was neither in the valley nor by the cliff.

Hai Wa was so sad he couldn't raise his head. Forgetting all danger, he mounted the ridge and headed straight for the hill pass.

There he got a start. The letter was lying at the very spot where he had waved his shirt! The sight almost took his breath away. He leapt and flung himself upon it, bursting with joy.

Looking at the threshing ground, he saw men there with bayonets flashing above their heads. Enemy soldiers were assembling!



In Enemy Hands Again

HAI WA had no sooner put the letter back into his pocket than he heard someone shouting behind him.

It was Crooked Mouth, scurrying towards him from another ridge. "Trying to get away, eh? I'll kill you yet, you turtle's spawn!" he cursed.

It was too late for Hai Wa to run away, so he retorted calmly, "Who's trying to get away? I'm looking for my sheep." But Crooked Mouth was not so easily taken in and struck Hai Wa viciously with the butt of his gun.

"What sheep are you looking for? Who asked you to look for sheep? Where are your sheep?"

he rasped angrily. With that he gave Hai Wa a staggering blow. Hai Wa bent over and pressed his arms to his belly.

"I haven't found any of them yet." Hai Wa's belly tingled and beads of sweat rolled from his forehead. He desperately pressed his hand against his pocket to be sure the letter was still there. "When I went to the sheep-fold this morning I found the gate down," Hai Wa said. "I've looked and looked for the sheep. If I'd found them, would I still be looking for them?..."

"That's a lie!" Crooked Mouth blurted. "You're just trying to run away!... I'll kill you!" Crooked Mouth brutally struck Hai Wa again and again, as if he were a wooden dummy.

Hai Wa was by no means made of wood, and he cried out in his agony. Desperately pressing his belly, he shrieked, "Why should I run away? Would I have come back then? Better just beat me to death! The sheep belong to my master, the landlord Chou, but now some have been killed and the rest lost. How can I face him? And who will hire me to tend sheep any more? I can't go back... You had better kill me!..."

Hai Wa kept crying as he spun this yarn. And he didn't stop crying, but finally sat down on the ground and sobbed his heart out. Covering his face with his hands, his head drooping, he pressed his elbows against his pocket lest the letter should drop out. That letter must never fall into the enemy's

hands! We're finished if Crooked Mouth discovers it.

But Crooked Mouth did not search Hai Wa's pocket, nor even think of doing so. It was this puppet that was really made a fool of by Hai Wa.

The Japanese soldiers were ready to leave the village and they needed a guide. Crooked Mouth grabbed Hai Wa by his collar and said, "Stop blubbering! Lead the way for the Imperial Army! I'll shoot you dead if you keep on like this!"

Actually, it was not Hai Wa's habit to cry, and after walking some distance he stopped. Then, looking up at Crooked Mouth, he said, "Officer, please beg the Japanese officer to let me join up. I can't go home now."

Crooked Mouth snorted. "All you're good for is eating, isn't it? You want to join up! The weight of a gun would crush you to death, you turtle's spawn."

Hai Wa put on his gloomiest look as he pleaded, "Save me, kind officer. Please put in a good word for me to the landlord; ask him not to dismiss me."

Crooked Mouth was in no mood to discuss such matters, but pulled Hai Wa into the sheep-fold. A few puppet soldiers were coming out of the village, and when they saw Crooked Mouth they yelled, "Hullo! How did you find him? Where did the little bastard run to? Report to the Japanese officer without delay. They're ready to set off."

Crooked Mouth was about to say something back when the whistle sounded from the threshing ground. The enemy troops were assembling. The puppets hastily shouldered their rifles and ran off to the assembly point. Crooked Mouth howled at Hai Wa, "Drive the sheep out quickly! I'll kill you if you run away again!" So saying, he adjusted his cap and ran off too.

Hai Wa was alone in the sheep-fold. There was no chance of running away now so he decided to conceal the letter again. "Little Moustache may search my pocket," he said to himself. He again tied the letter under the ram's tail and drove the flock to the threshing ground without a hitch.

The enemy soldiers were milling about, their bayonets flashing in the sun. All stared at Hai Wa. Crooked Mouth stood stiff as a ramrod before Little Moustache, whose legs were planted wide apart, his hand gripping his sword. He was cursing Crooked Mouth but stopped, when Hai Wa appeared, to stare at the boy.

It looked to Hai Wa as though he were in for another beating, and he said as though to Crooked Mouth: If you must hit me, hit me on the bottom. I'll deliver the letter anyway!



Sanwang Hill

TOO hard-pressed by time to beat Hai Wa or search his pocket, the Japanese officer could only bellow, "Take us to Sanwang Hill! Double quick!"

Hai Wa's reply was instant, but his heart was pounding. "I know. This way."

The Japanese flourished his sword and the enemy soldiers started off.

Driving his sheep before him, Hai Wa walked in the midst of the marching ranks. The puppets were in front and the Japanese, with their horses, brought up the rear.

"You're in for a good clobbering by Company Commander Chang and his men!" Hai Wa said as though to them. "And I hope they hit you hard, or there's no hope for this letter!"

Little Moustache pestered Hai Wa with endless questions about this hill or that mountain road, or else asked him to crack his whip. "Hurry up!" he yelled.

Hai Wa was really worried when the sheep started lifting their fat tails and dropping their black bean-like manure on the path. Suppose the old ram did that! The letter would be exposed!

In fact, the ram was about to lift its tail when Hai Wa discovered it and quickly picked up a clod of earth, shouted "shoo," and aimed it nicely at the tail. Startled, the ram lowered its tail and rushed forward at top speed. Hai Wa still cracked his whip.

Little Moustache was delighted at this and kept shouting, "Very, very good! Fast!"

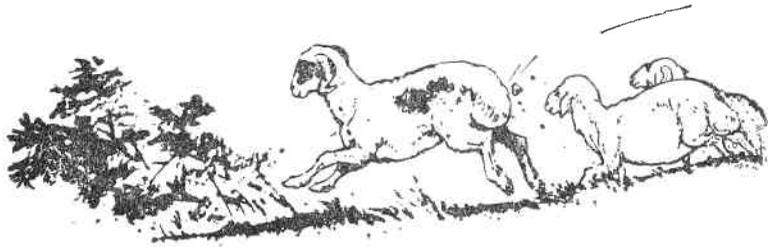
Hai Wa kept throwing clods and cracking his whip, so the poor bellwether had to keep its tail tightly down and run quickly over hill and dale till they were at the foot of Sanwang Hill.

Sanwang Hill, a good battlefield! The Japanese soldiers would run into our ambush. Our men were probably busy now on the hill. Hai Wa looked for the small "signal tree" on the hilltop. It was there all right, but no sooner had the Japanese soldiers gone down the hill than the signal tree vanished. Our Command Headquarters had discovered the enemy!

The Japanese, however, were unaware of this and were taking a rest in the valley. The Japanese officer sat on the ground smoking, while the rest were munching leftover mutton. The puppets, who were neither smoking nor eating, started climbing the hill by the narrow path.

Hai Wa kept his distance from the enemy, for it would never do for him to be hit. Who would deliver the letter then? He led the sheep out to graze, thinking it would be fine now if Company Commander Chang opened fire. Once the shooting started Hai Wa would run off and take shelter in a crack in the rock. Company Commander Chang needn't worry about him! He hoped the sheep there wouldn't stop Chang from shooting. Only by defeating the enemy could the letter be delivered!

But no shooting came from the hilltop and the puppets were already half-way up the slope. What had happened?



Hai Wa was getting anxious when all of a sudden there was a violent explosion and a pillar of black smoke shot up over the hill. The puppets had stepped on a mine, paying the price for their crimes against the people.

Only a few appeared out of the smoke and, rolling or scrambling, these tried to get behind nearby rocks as fast as they could. There was another "boom!" and soon mines were exploding one after another, shaking and rumbling through the valley. The puppets had entered the mine field prepared by Company



Commander Chang. Crooked Mouth was the first to stagger back down the hill, clutching his head and yelling, "Heavens, my brains are blown out!"

Hai Wa almost laughed. Crooked Mouth's head was still there on his shoulders, but blood from his crooked mouth was dripping onto his neck. Whether he'd been hit on the head by a mine fragment or had knocked his head against a rock in panic was not clear.

Without bothering about Crooked Mouth's head or the other wounded puppets, the Japanese pointed at the narrow path and ordered Hai Wa, "You go first, lead the way! Imperial Army will follow in rear. Understand?"

The Sheep Track

HAI WA stared vacantly, his mouth gaping for some time. Then he cocked his head questioningly at Crooked Mouth.

Crooked Mouth was sitting on the ground binding up his head with his leggings, which he had removed for the purpose. "The Japanese officer orders you to lead the way with your sheep!" he said to Hai Wa wryly from under his legging bandage.

"I won't do it," Hai Wa protested. "Not through those mines! I won't!"

"Fool!" cursed Little Moustache, drawing his sword. "Lead the way!"

Crooked Mouth reinforced his curses: "Son-of-a-bitch! You won't go ahead, so it's me that steps on the mine!"

Hai Wa looked at the Japanese, whose sword was ready; he looked around, all the rifle barrels were trained on him. Impossible not to go! Suppose the beasts shot him dead, could they drive the sheep to set off the mines?

Hai Wa looked up and saw Sanwang Hill proudly bursting with mines long planted for the enemy.

Hai Wa knew the guerrillas' letter for Command Headquarters must be protected from the mines. As leader of the anti-Japanese Children's Corps he must not step on a mine laid by the anti-Japanese guerrillas and let the enemy have their way.

Hai Wa had tended sheep on Sanwang Hill and delivered messages there too. He knew every narrow, winding path and sheep track there like the palm of his hand and could manoeuvre the twists and turns easily even at night. But today the path seemed ever so much longer than before and his feet seemed to be glued to the ground.

The Japanese officer let out an abrupt order and his soldiers howled a reply. Click, they cocked their rifles, ready to fire. The old ram shivered so that the bell on his neck tinkled.

All right, I'll go! said Hai Wa to himself. Better I go with the sheep than let you drive them onto the mines. You devils would like me to step on a mine while you're a safe distance away, but you're dreaming! I won't step on any mine; it's you that won't get back alive!

Hai Wa drove the bellwether ahead, flourishing his whip so that the sound rang out. Urging the flock on, he was saying to them under his breath:

"Follow the bellwether! Don't scatter or stampede! There are land mines on the path, stone mines in the

crag, rope mines in the grass, hanging mines in the trees, mines that go off when you sit on a rock. Just follow the bellwether!"

The Taihang Mountains loomed majestically against the blue sky; Sanwang Hill was crowned with white clouds. Hai Wa thrust forward, wielding his whip. . . .

"Faster! Faster!" Little Moustache kept prodding. Hai Wa noticed the horses walking far behind unloaded, while tagging behind the horses were the black-coated puppet soldiers followed by the Japanese, their officer bringing up the rear. Brandish-



ing his sword, Little Moustache said in a piercing tone "Faster! Faster!"

Hai Wa was thinking how vain all this haste was. In a little while this enemy band would not be able either to get up or down. "What's your hurry?" he wanted to ask them.

Hai Wa cleverly wove his way around one rock after another. Then, reaching a grove of shrubs, the sheep suddenly stopped short and began bleating. Which way should they take? There was the narrow path, and also a sheep track.

The latter had been blazed by shepherds and was practically impassable. Hai Wa could not see the Japanese at all now.

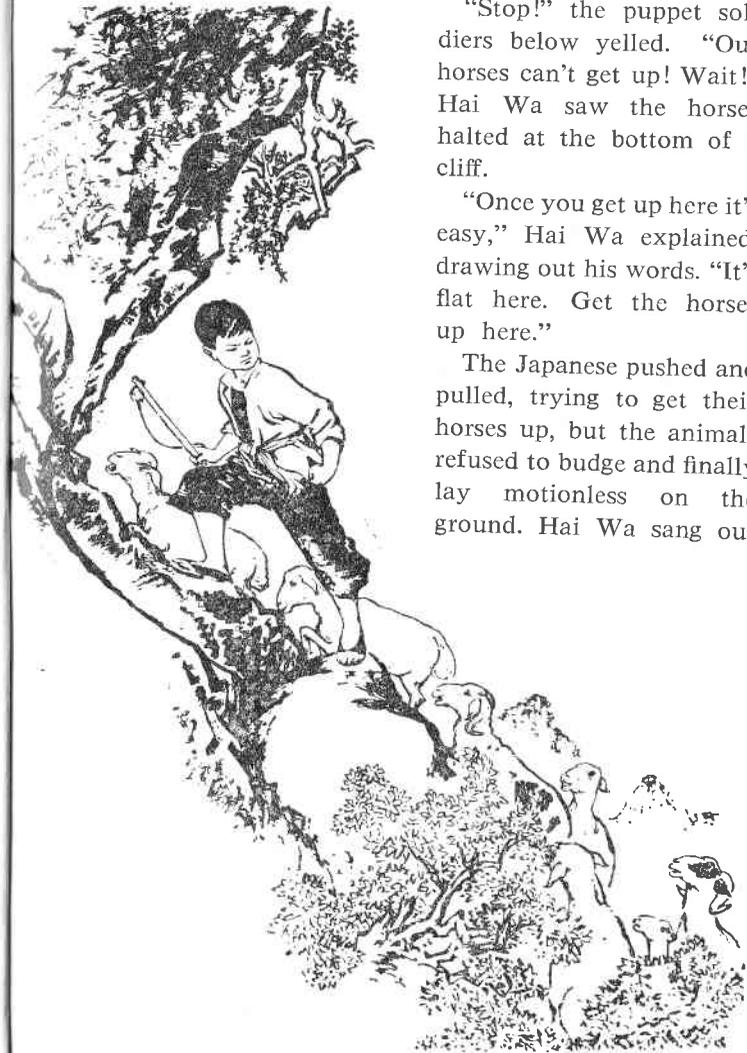
Follow me up if you've got the guts, Hai Wa felt like challenging the enemy. He had now taken the sheep onto the sheep track. They disappeared in the brush, then reappeared shortly. Just then Hai Wa heard Crooked Mouth shouting from below.

"You've taken the wrong way," exclaimed he. "Get onto the right path!"

"Nothing wrong with this one," Hai Wa shouted back at the top of his voice. "It's a short cut. Come on!"

"Can our horses get through?"

"Of course. Easy!" Hai Wa replied, cracking his whip. He clambered up a steep rock face and was through the grove as if it were plain ground. The Japanese were by now far, far behind.



"Stop!" the puppet soldiers below yelled. "Our horses can't get up! Wait!" Hai Wa saw the horses halted at the bottom of a cliff.

"Once you get up here it's easy," Hai Wa explained, drawing out his words. "It's flat here. Get the horses up here."

The Japanese pushed and pulled, trying to get their horses up, but the animals refused to budge and finally lay motionless on the ground. Hai Wa sang out

happily, "When an old nag rolls down, just pull its tail! Pull! Hurry!" Lashing and pulling on the reins, the enemy band finally got the horses up the cliff.

Hai Wa scrambled up one crag after another. But the trail became steeper and rougher, and the enemy had to stop and catch their breath after every few steps and so were left nearly out of sight.

When Hai Wa was already half-way up the slope with the sheep the loud voice of Little Moustache ordered him to slow down.

Hai Wa pretended not to hear and speeded up instead. A leader of the anti-Japanese Children's Corps could never accept the enemy's order, so he hurried along.

"Stop! Stop! We'll shoot you dead if you don't!" yelled Crooked Mouth. But Hai Wa did not stop. Then the Japanese started shooting at him, their bullets whizzing through the air past Hai Wa, hitting rocks with a burst of dust.

Hai Wa's response was to crack his whip and clamber faster up the rocks, disappearing now and again with the sheep among the brush.

The bullets came flying closer, and there was the tat-tat-tat of a round of machine-gun bullets too.

Hai Wa was exhausted and fell on the grass.

"The Japanese are coming! Open fire! Quick!" he shouted his loudest up the hill.



Hai Wa Takes a Bullet

SHOTS soon came from the top of the hill, one round and then another. The guerrillas had opened fire from the hill. Hai Wa took heart and got to his feet, flinging himself up the cliff again. But after a few steps he staggered, uttered a cry and sank to the ground.

At that moment an Eighth Route Army man in grey uniform ran down the hill, took Hai Wa in his arms and carried him to shelter on the other side of the hill, announcing, "This shepherd boy's been hit!"

Another Eighth Route Army man with a pistol in his hand came and knelt beside Hai Wa. "Isn't this

Hai Wa?" he cried. "It's the shepherd boy from Lungmen Village who used to bring up messages. How did he fall into the hands of the enemy?"

Hai Wa opened his eyes. Tears trickled down his face, for the man who was speaking was none other than Company Commander Chang.

Hai Wa, overjoyed, wanted to take the commander to the ram at once, but he couldn't raise himself, or move at all. The scene before him dimmed out and his words trailed off.

"Find... the old ram... three-feather letter..."

While dressing Hai Wa's wounds Chang asked, "What ram? . . . Where's the letter? . . ."

"The bellwether. His tail's under the letter . . . no... the letter..." At this point Hai Wa lost consciousness and did not see how Chang's men settled accounts with Little Moustache and Crooked Mouth, didn't see the Japanese stronghold on the plain blown sky high.

When he came to he felt a burning pain all over, but he was comfortably placed on a heated *kang* and covered with a soft, red blanket. The sunlight streaming through the window made the blanket look very beautiful. Beside Hai Wa were piled fancy tins of food. Chang sat beside Hai Wa, watching him and smiling.

"Are you a little better? Still hurt?"

Ignoring his pain, Hai Wa asked, "Where is this? Whose things are these?"



"They're yours," said Chang. Was Chang teasing him? Hai Wa had never seen tinned food before. "No, they're not mine!" he retorted.

Chang chuckled. "Have you forgot the letter you brought me yesterday? It's information your father sent about the plain, that the Japanese in the Chien-chou Village stronghold all went to the hills to plunder grain, leaving only a few puppets there to watch. He asked me to send troops to attack. So last night our Joint Command Headquarters led the Night Tiger Company, the militia guerrilla units in the hills and the anti-Japanese young vanguards onto the plain. First we surrounded the enemy, then fought outside the village while your father's guerrillas fought



inside. Acting in close co-ordination, we took the stronghold."

"What about Little Moustache?" asked Hai Wa.

"Who?"

"The Japanese that chased up Sanwang Hill with Crooked Mouth and his gang."

"You mean that enemy outfit that set out on a raid in the hills?" laughed Chang. "Knowing their nest was in danger, they had to turn tail to save it. They fell into our ambush and were all wiped out. . . . Without the message there'd have been no victory, and without the victory where would we have got these trophies?"

Gently patting Hai Wa on the head, Chang said, "You're really a little Eighth Route Army man, a very young hero! These tins are all given to you by Command Headquarters."

Hai Wa flushed. "Did we capture any rifles?"

"Over there!" Chang replied, pointing to a corner of the room.

There was a pile of brand-new Japanese rifles there. "I want one! Give me a rifle!" demanded Hai Wa, tossing aside the red blanket.

But as he stretched out his hand he gave a little cry, for his wound gave him another stab of pain. . . .

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