CHINESE LITERATURE

November-December

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1958

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No. 6, 1958

CHINESE LITERATURE

BI-MONTHLY

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Published by the Foreign Languages Press
Pai Wan Chuang, Peking (37), China
Printed in the People's Republic of China

HOPES FOR THE ASIAN-AFRICAN WRITERS' CONFERENCE

KUO MO-JO

At the Asian Writers' Conference held in New Delhi in 1956 it was proposed a second gathering of similar nature be convened in Tashkent in the near future. This proposal came to materialization in a decision reached early this year at the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference at Cairo. Now it is formally announced by the preparation committee for this conference that it will take place in October in the capital of Uzbek SSR this year, with writers from both Asian and African countries participating. Here we publish an interview given by Kuo Mo-jo to the editors of the Soviet magazine Sovriemiennin Vostok (*Modern Orient*). His views also express the best wishes and hopes of Chinese writers for this conference.

QUESTION: What are your hopes for the Conference of Asian and African Writers to be held at Tashkent?

ANSWER: First, allow me to convey my best wishes to this conference. I wish it every success.

The convening of this conference was decided upon at the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference held at Cairo. It will play a decisive part in strengthening the friendship among writers of different Asian and African countries. I hope such conferences will be held every few years in different lands of Asia and Africa. This will enable writers to meet each other and see conditions in other countries for themselves; it will also increase their mutual understanding and friendship, and enable them to learn from each other.

It is my sincere hope that this conference will make it possible for us to do more in the way of introducing and translating works from different parts of Asia and Africa. Good works of literature are a clear mirror of the life of different nations: Through them we gain an insight into conditions there and the noble minds of their great writers, and this serves not only to increase mutual understanding between writers but also between nations.

Mutual understanding between different nations is the foundation of friendship and co-operation. This is the basis on which the unity of Asian and African countries and, indeed, of all countries of the world must be established. When Asian and African writers exchange frequent visits and works of literature are introduced and

translated in each other's countries, this cannot fail to strengthen the unity among their peoples, helping men of different lands in their struggle against colonialism and fight for the preservation of national independence.

Colonialism is the root of war. So long as colonialism exists, there can be no enduring peace in the world. This is why the movement against colonialism and the peace movement are inseparable. The present solidarity of the Asian and African peoples may well be called a development of the peace movement. We therefore believe that this conference of Asian and African writers will without any doubt make an important contribution to the preservation of peace in Asia and the world, and to the happiness of humankind.

QUESTION: In your view what is the role of literature in the struggle for peace and social progress?

ANSWER: Literature is a reflection and criticism of life. It must serve the great majority of the people. It explains human situations and aspirations by using specific images, hence its power to move and influence its readers.

In order to serve the great majority of the people, writers must share the common man's love and hate, and express his feelings and wishes. This means that we must distinguish clearly between friend and foe, love and hate. What should we love? We should love what benefits the people. We should love truth and peace because these benefit the people. What should we hate? We should hate what harms the people. We should hate all untruths and all wars of aggression, for these are harmful to the people. With all our hearts we should praise what ordinary men and women love, while with all our hearts we denounce what ordinary men and women hate. Such literature deserves the name of people's literature, literature that shares the fate of the people.

In order to know what the people love and hate, we must be close to the people, must learn from them and from life. We must gather rich material from life itself, and analyse and distil the essence of this to create something new from it. Only so can our writing have a rich educational significance for our people and all humanity.

Men and women the whole world over share virtually the same sense of love and hate. All literature based on a deep understanding of the feelings of one nation will have common, international characteristics, and the power to move the people of other nations. Such works enable men of different lands to understand each other, learn from each other, respect each other and attain the aim of peaceful co-existence and common progress.

These are my views. I believe that literature has an important role in the struggle for peace and social progress.

MAO TUN'S REPLY TO THE LETTER FROM THE WRITERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ

Union of Chinese Writers, Peking
August 5, 1958

Dear Mr. Salih Jawad Al-toma and
fellow writers of the Republic of Iraq:

We were exceedingly delighted to receive your letter. For the past two weeks and more we Chinese writers together with the Chinese people have rejoiced at the great victory of the Iraqi people. For your victory will further inspire the Arab people in their just struggle against imperialism and for national independence. Your victory is the victory of the Arab people and also the victory of peace-loving people throughout the world.

But on the very occasion of the birth of your Republic, the U.S. imperialists had the impudence to land troops in Lebanon in an armed intervention, while the British imperialists also dispatched troops to Jordan. By these acts of aggression, the U.S. and British imperialists hope not only to destroy the movement for national independence of the Lebanese and Jordanian peoples, but also to strangle your new-born Republic.

The Chinese people and all Chinese writers are greatly enraged at the heinous, undisguised crimes of aggression committed by U.S. and British imperialism. In Peking, as in all other parts of China, tens of millions of people immediately held demonstrations in protest on an unprecedentedly large scale. Chinese writers and artists have already produced many poems, essays, posters and short plays to hail your victory and express our deep-rooted hatred for the aggressive crimes of the U.S. and British imperialists. Once victims of imperialist aggression ourselves, we are familiar with the savagery of imperialism, we are also well aware that seemingly powerful imperialism is nothing but a paper

tiger, strong in appearance but weak in actual fact. The united strength of the peoples of the world are immensely powerful. If the aggressors dare unleash war, they will simply hasten their own death.

Dear brothers and colleagues, the Chinese people and Chinese writers, together with all peace-loving people throughout the world, will spare no effort to support with action the just struggle of all the Arab people. We will fight with our pens. Our hearts are linked closely with yours. The peoples of all the world are standing by you. Justice is on your side. And victory will be yours!

Mao Tun,
Chairman of the Union
of Chinese Writers

LETTER FROM THE WRITERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ

July 30, 1958

Union of Chinese Writers, Peking, China
Writers of the World

On behalf of the free Iraqi writers in our new-born Republic we greet you as responsible writers whose ultimate objective lies in the discovery of truth and the service of humanity. It is our belief that one of your and our major tasks is to eliminate all the obstacles and evils leading to the destruction of man's civilization. Therefore, you strive as we strive in our Republic to protect human rights, to propagate social justice and to eradicate slavery imposed on nations and men under any pretext by reactionary and colonial powers. Our new Republic is a manifestation of such a strife. It is a sincere expression of our people's will and determination to live in peace with all peace-loving peoples and to secure all the conditions necessary for a civilized living including the exploitation of our national resources and human potentialities not for the interest of a small greedy minority but for the general welfare of the country and the world. We are eager to ensure our independence and freedom, democ-

racy and social justice, which were practically meaningless words under the previous royalist reactionary regime. Therefore we appeal to you to support our Republic in its legitimate struggle for a better future and to stop the Anglo-American aggression in our sister Arab states, Lebanon and Jordan. We believe it is your responsibility as it is ours to help your people understand the just aspirations of our Republic which enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of our people and to help them understand that the Republic is an outcome of a continuous struggle and several unsuccessful revolutions staged by our people against the old regime in 1941, 1948, 1952 and 1956. It is your obligation to denounce with us any foreign interference in our internal affairs and in the affairs of our sister Arab states. If such interference and aggression should be unleashed against us, we will meet it with all the forces and means at our disposal and with the support of the peace-loving nations of the world. We sincerely hope that common sense and simple human decency will prevail and will curb the aggressive circles in some Western capitals, who seem to be insistent on drawing the world into the abyss. We sincerely hope that world peace and our freedom will be saved.

For the Writers of the Republic of Iraq,
Salih Jawad Al-toma, Salah Khalis,
Abdul Malik Nuri, Mahdi
Murtadha Ali Al-hilli

New Folk Songs Blaze A New Trail In Poetry

CHOU YANG

We measure songs in bushels now;
Ten thousand bushels fill a barn;
Don't laugh if we use homely speech —
Out in the fields it turns to grain.

You need a proper hoe to farm,
You need a proper voice to sing;
Each one of us is a singer now —
We'll sing till the Yangtse flows upstream!

This is the first poem in the collection *Folk Songs of the "Great Leap Forward"* Vol. I, recently published in Anhwei, and a good folk song itself. Here the people have passed fair and confident judgement on the new burst of singing and song writing. Following the "great leap forward" in socialist production, countless folk songs have appeared all over the country, literally "ten thousand bushels" of them. The people's revolutionary drive to build socialism, to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results, is bound to find expression in the realm of ideas, in their oral compositions and writing. It cannot be otherwise. The folk songs of this period reflect the labouring people's ever-growing revolutionary enthusiasm and keenness in their work, and have in turn done much to stimulate this enthusiasm and to speed up the development of the productive forces. They have become a mode of political agitation in factories and farms. Weapons in the struggle to increase output, and the creation of the labouring people themselves, they are at the same time works of art the people can appreciate. The spirit of socialism pervades them. They are new, socialist folk songs. They mark the beginning of a new age in folk poetry, and have blazed a new trail in Chinese poetry too.

It is well known that Comrade Mao Tse-tung sets great store by folk songs. Over thirty years ago, when he was organizing classes on the

peasant movement, he collected some folk songs. But not till after the *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* did we begin to collect and edit folk literature and art seriously. Some good work was done in this field, though by no means enough. Recently, at Comrade Mao Tse-tung's suggestion, a great movement for collecting folk songs has started throughout the country. This is an important event in our social and cultural life today, and one to inspire us all.

Early in Chinese history, officials were appointed to collect songs. But those were the folk songs of slave and feudal society, and the life of the people engaged in productive labour under the exploitation and oppression of slave-owners and feudal lords was a very hard one. Our new folk songs represent the age of socialism, the new life, ideas, moral values and customs of men living under a socialist system. Now that the toiling people have become the masters of the country, their labour and their creation are respected by all. Hence the scope and significance of the collecting of folk songs today is incomparably greater than ever before.

China has always been a treasure-house of folk literature and art, and today literature created by the masses is developing by such leaps and bounds that it is no exaggeration to say that everyone can sing and songs are heard everywhere — the country is becoming a land of poets. Not a few of these new folk songs have high ideological and artistic value. While encouraging the people to compose more, we must make a systematic and large-scale collection of the songs, old and new, of every nationality and every district in the country; for the compilation and publication of these will have a decisive effect on our literature, making it more distinctively Chinese and appreciated by the masses. A new age of poetry will be ushered in. A radical change will be seen in Chinese poetry.

The new poetry written after the May the Fourth Movement broke the fetters of classical poetry, introducing freer poetic forms and bringing forth not a few good revolutionary poets, of whom Kuo Mo-jo is an outstanding example. This new poetry has much to its credit. And although the revolutionary poets endeavoured to draw closer to the people, the new poetry still had serious shortcomings. The most fundamental of these was that it failed to integrate itself adequately with the masses, and the ordinary man felt that many new poems did not give a truthful picture of his life, thoughts and feelings. These poems neither speak with the voice of the labouring people nor reveal their outlook, style or spirit. And the ordinary man does not like poetry which does not read well, particularly verses so artificial and abstruse that they are difficult to understand. In brief, the ordinary man dislikes foreign jargon divorced from popular speech. Yet some poets took special pleasure in imitating the forms of Western poetry, instead of continuing the best Chinese traditions and creatively carrying them forward. This was the main reason for the gulf betweeen the new poetry and the people.

Poets must learn from the people and from folk songs — especially the new folk songs — if they want to open up a new vista for our poetry.

In striking contrast to the old folk songs, the new have ceased to be a reflection of the suffering of the exploited, or of the narrow, self-sufficient mode of life of small individual producers.

The strongest impression made on us by the new folk songs is that the labouring people are now the masters in our national life, and brimming over with pride. These millions of workers and peasants have thrown off the chains of class oppression and won such emancipation in their political life and in their ideas that they dare rise up to overthrow all the shibboleths which were weighing upon them. They have raised their heads to gaze fearlessly at all the forces of reaction. They have stopped believing in ghosts and deities, and are confident that they have the strength to overcome every difficulty. They no longer shrink like slaves before the elements, but are determined to conquer Nature and are boldly challenging it. Not a few new folk songs give powerful expression to this heroic determination of the working class and labouring people to transform the world and conquer Nature. They recall with admiration the stories of Great Yu* who curbed the flood and Yu Kung** who moved the mountain, with many other heroes of history and legend. But the men of today are not overawed by these ancient heroes. Their proud conclusion is: "Each member of our co-op is better than the men of old!"

A fine spirit is shown in the struggle to harness China's rivers:

> There's no Jade Emperor in heaven now,
> On earth no Dragon King;
> I'm the Jade Emperor,
> I'm the Dragon King!
> I order the Three Mountains and Five Peaks:
> "Make way there!
> Here I come!"

Naturally the "I" here refers to the peasant collective, and this is why it has such mighty and irresistible strength. Another song with the same spirit explains the source of this strength:

> We work at such white heat
> If we bump the sky it will break,
> If we kick the earth it will crack;
> Seas can be tamed,
> Great mountains moved;
> If the sky falls our co-op will mend it,

*One of the great legendary kings in ancient Chinese history.

**A character in ancient Chinese fable.

If the earth splits our co-op will patch it.
With the Party to lead us
There's nothing we can't achieve!

There are similar descriptions in many songs about water conservancy. One shows peasants digging down to the river bed till the Dragon King in his crystal palace trembles and hastens to promise: "All right! You shall have your water!" In another poem the mountain spirits lose their way because there are more reservoirs on earth than stars in heaven. "Where did all those great rivers come from?" they ask in amazement.

One song challenges the sun:

Hey, Sun!
Dare you take us on?
We're out at work for hours
While you're still snug abed;
We grope our way home in the dark
Long after you down tools and hide your head.
Hey, Sun!
Dare you take us on?

The new folk songs are filled with audacious fancies like this, with red-hot enthusiasm and light-hearted humour. The authors give free rein to their imagination as they visualize the bright world of the future. Their experience in the revolution and in their work convinces them that the world can be changed. And they are labouring with their own hands to achieve this great task. Their humour is a sign of confidence in their own strength and the rightness of their cause, as well as contempt for the enemy and all difficulties. They dare dream, and with their labour translate their dreams into reality. This is why we find a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism in these songs.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung's recommendation that our literature should be a synthesis of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism is a scientific summary of the experience of the whole history of literature, and an entirely correct proposal based on the distinctive features and needs of this age. All our writers and artists should work in this direction. Comrade Mao Tse-tung's own poems are excellent models for us in this respect. We are living in the age of a great socialist revolution, when the labouring people's physical and mental powers have been given an unprecedented degree of free play, and the communist spirit is in the ascendant as never before. During the revolution and the struggle to build up the country, our people have combined realistic thinking with far-reaching ideals. Without a high sense of revolutionary romanticism we cannot express the spirit of our age, our people, and the communist style of our working class. In the past, realism and romanticism were often considered as mutually exclusive; but we regard them as opposites

which complement each other. Without romanticism, realism may easily degenerate into short-sighted naturalism which is a distortion and vulgarization of realism, and certainly not what we want. Of course, if romanticism is not linked with realism it may easily turn into an empty display of revolutionary fervour and the wild flights of fancy in which intellectuals love to indulge; and this is not what we want either. Our approval of the socialist realist method of writing is based on this understanding. Gorky had very sound views on this question, holding that in the history of literature revolutionary romanticism is an undying flame. One of the greatest poets in our history, Chu Yuan, was a splendid romanticist, and so was Li Po in the Tang dynasty. Their poetry had the closest affinity to folk literature. Over a thousand years ago Liu Hsieh commented on Chu Yuan's style by saying that a true poet "dips into the marvellous without losing the truth, and appreciates the fanciful without sacrificing the substance." This simple statement is the earliest view expressed in China on the integration of fantasy and reality. We must learn from the rich experience of previous Chinese writers and artists in integrating realism and romanticism, and carry this tradition forward on the basis of our new communist ideas. These new folk songs are specially valuable because they possess this characteristic.

The forty-point National Programme for Agricultural Development, the Party's policy and Comrade Mao Tse-tung's teachings are a force inspiring our people to create. The forty-point programme embodies the wishes of all Chinese peasants; but we find this expressed in the folk songs not in dry statements of policy but in the vivid, artistic language of the masses themselves. Here is one example:

> The magpies chatter shrill and clear,
> The old man grins from ear to ear.
>
> "These forty points that I've just read
> Are forty suns right overhead.
>
> The sun is not so warm and bright;
> In every spot they shed their light.
>
> You hold them close against your ear:
> Isn't that Chairman Mao you hear?
>
> You press them hard against your chest,
> They warm the heart within your breast."
>
> The old man laughs. "Our farm today
> Has a bright lamp to light its way!"

This conjures up a delightful picture of a grey-beard chuckling over the forty-point programme, now holding it to his ear, now clasping it to his heart. These few lines give profound expression to the labouring

people's deep love for the Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung. The forty-point programme has inspired five hundred million peasants to make superhuman efforts.

The workers are showing revolutionary drive too. Their watchword is: "Race with the rocket! Measure up to the sun and moon!" They compare the upsweeping graph marking increase in output to the rocket carrying the sputnik up to heaven, and they sing proudly: "Know who makes the rocket? The whole fighting force of our plant!"

This is how the workers in a steel mill describe the stupendous sight of a stream of molten iron:

> Molten steel as red as flame
> Binds the sun and holds it tame;
> Crimson light, a soaring jet,
> Holds the sun, won't let it set!

Labour is the dominant central theme of new folk songs. Poetry has been integrated with work, while work has become poetry. What poets of the past, including the composers of folk songs, ever sang of such tasks as collecting manure? But today these form the theme of poems both lyrical and picturesque. *The Little Boat* is an example:

> The little boat loaded with dung
> Has frightened the moorhens away,
> Has shattered the stars in the stream
> In smoke that is misty and grey.
>
> The little boat loaded with dung,
> Its sculls creaking merrily still,
> Is passing the willow-clad shore
> To melt into Peach Blossom Hill.

Love songs have gained a new freshness from their association with labour:

> He carries earth as swiftly as the wind,
> And with her load she follows close behind.
> "Though past the fleecy clouds you fly away,
> I mean to catch you up, cost what it may!"

These folk songs give an accurate picture of the new relations into which men have entered in the course of their work, relations of mutual love, mutual aid, mutual criticism and mutual emulation. The functionaries lead by the force of example, and reliance is placed in the masses. And the ethical foundation of these qualities is socialist collectivism:

> If our leaders hold the ladder,
> Then we can scale the sky;
> If our leaders dive into the sea,

Then we can capture dragons where they lie;
If our leaders can move mountains,
Then we can fill in seas and make them dry!

This verse not only expresses the dynamic energy of the people, but the correct relation between government functionaries and the rank and file.

The people write songs to praise good persons and good work and others to criticize wrongdoers and abuses. The *Tatsepao** include a number of excellent satirical songs on bureaucracy, conservatism and other follies. The labouring people possess a clear sense of right and wrong as well as strong likes and dislikes. They have very decided opinions.

The thousands of songs written since the Rectification Movement and the struggle against the rightists, and particularly since the "great leap forward" in production, reflect the magnificent panorama of China's socialist revolution and socialist construction, and the growth among the working people of a communist outlook on life. Of course we should pay the greatest attention to these folk songs. But we must not forget that the Chinese people's victory was won at the cost of a cruel and protracted struggle. Every period of revolutionary history, whether the First and Second Revolutionary Civil Wars, the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation, or the Opium War, the Taiping Uprising and the Boxer Rising, gave birth to countless stories and songs about heroes which have been handed down by word of mouth. To collect and classify these is just as necessary as collecting material on revolutionary history in different localities. Indeed the two tasks are closely related. The anthology of folk songs printed in Hupeh contains some dating from the time of the Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei revolutionary base, while the folk songs published in Kirin include a number from the period of the United Anti-Japanese Army. All these have great significance. Our people have written their history in blood, and sung it in their own words:

The Yangtse's billows may be stopped,
The mouths of singers never!
The Hunghu's waters may go down,
Red songs will live for ever.

We sing and sing to vent our rage
Of hate that will not die;
Our songs awaken earth and heaven,
Our throats are never dry.

*Opinions and criticisms written out in bold Chinese characters on large sheets of paper and posted freely for everybody to see. It was first used during the Party's Rectification Movement in 1957, and has become an effective medium for criticism and self-criticism.

This song from the Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei revolutionary base reflects quite a different age and situation from the poem I quoted at the start; but the people's iron determination and revolutionary optimism are enough to make even the weakest straighten up.

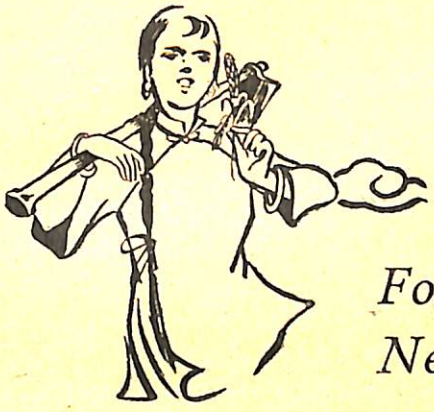
Here is another equally inspiring song made during the Shanghai workers' uprising in 1927:

We fear neither
Earth nor Heaven,
Not though blood spurts from under our chains.
We stake our lives
To drag the emperor down from his horse.
Death? A head rolled in the dust,
Just a gash the size of a bowl.
Hang us or torture us —
We grit our teeth.
The stones in the ditch are rising up,
The seeds of the revolution are starting to sprout.
We wrench off our bones
For weapons,
And not till victory
Shall we lay them down!

China has a rich revolutionary tradition, and an old and brilliant civilization. Since some of the finest flowers of our cultural heritage are preserved among the people, in addition to making every effort to collect revolutionary songs we must systematically collect and compile all the folk songs, folk literature and art and folk dramas that have come down to us. This is one of the most important tasks in our construction of a new socialist culture. As the national minorities are particularly rich in folk literature and art, we should spare no pains to search out and compile these works too. The long narrative poems *Ashma* and *The Song of the Ah-hsi People* have already become a part of the world treasure-house of literature.

To make a complete collection of folk songs and other forms of folk literature and art should be the task of the entire Party and people, and all writers and artists must be encouraged to join in this work. Folk songs are the fountain-head of literature, like a spring which wells up deep in the mountain and flows quietly and ceaselessly to give new life to the poetry of each age and nurture poets of genius in each generation. Our folk songs today are the creation of our new peasants, workers and soldiers. They are no longer purely oral compositions, for some of them are written by men of considerable culture; hence in content and style they differ from the old songs. While retaining the form of folk songs and further carrying forward the fine traditions of our classical poetry,

they are absorbing the best features of the new. Surging forward like the Yellow River or the Yangtse to break over the new poetry, they will inevitably transform it. More and better poems will be written by the people, and innumerable folk singers and poets will appear, the most brilliant among them becoming the guiding stars in the realm of poetry. Gradually the distinction between folk singers and intellectual poets will disappear until everyone is a poet, and poetry is appreciated by all. That time will soon be here. Our poets must identify themselves with the workers and peasants, labouring and writing among them, and learning from folk songs and China's best traditions. Only so can we ensure our poetry a splendid future. We need to reform and emancipate our literature and art thoroughly. And the time has now come, under the leadership of the Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung, to put this programme into action.



Forty-Three New Folk Songs

I

All Hearts Turn Towards the Party

from Szechuan

SUNFLOWER, sunflower, bright as gold,
All your blossoms face the sun;
All our hearts have turned like you —
By the Party they are won!

As readers will see, part one of these songs are those composed by peasants while part two come from the pen of workers.

Folk Songs

from Kiangsu

TINY seeds through space are winging,
Endless songs our folk are singing;
We can cross the Yangtse River
Singing on and on for ever.

Songs unsung are soon forgotten,
Paths grow weedy if untrodden;
Knives unwhetted rust and dent,
Backs unstraightened soon grow bent.

We Make Water Fly

by Chang Tao-hung of Hupeh

WE split the cliff to set the fountain free,
From peak to peak we make its water fly;
The streamlet chuckles as it leaps through space,
Like silken strings that angels pluck on high.

Today We Have the Party

from Kwangsi

WE'RE through counting on old Heaven, I'd have you know,
We're at work on irrigation down below;
And if Heaven sends no rain down,
And if Heaven sends no rain down,
Why, our tender seedlings they'll still sprout and grow!

Oh, the drought it used to fill us with dismay,
All we knew to do was sacrifice and pray.
But today we have the Party,
But today we have the Party,
Irrigation means a bumper crop today!
We shall reap a record harvest any way!

Spring Rain Is Precious as Oil

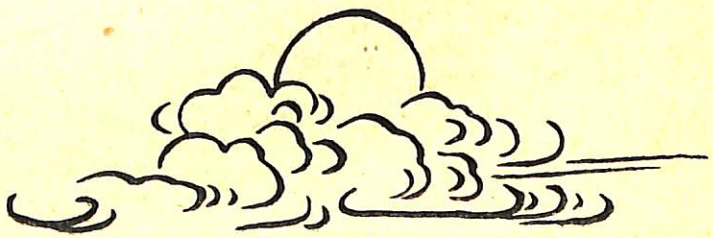
by Chao Yuan of Shantung

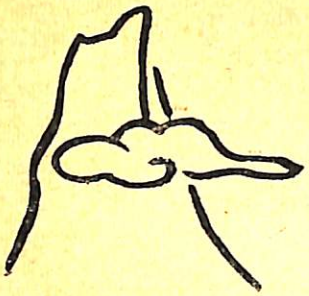
SPRING rain is precious as oil,
Well water fine as wine;
With this wine we quench the thirst of the fields
Till our wheat, grown drunk, becomes a glossy green.

Like the Stars That Gleam in the Milky Way

by Li Hsiu-fang of Shanghai

ALL the boats dredging mud are too many to count,
And like stars in the high Milky Way they're a gleam;
With our hands we have shattered the silvery moon
To dig gold from beneath the bright moon in the stream.





East Village

by Chu Ma of Hunan

YESTERDAY, passing East Village,
I found locks on each house I know,
Dogs left to bark outside,
Cocks left to crow.
And this notice on the co-op gate
Told me I'd have to wait:
"Now our target is a thousand catties a *mou*,
No one sits idle at home;
If you're looking for anyone here, friend,
Sunset's the time to come!"

White Clouds

by Chou Hsi-hai of Honan

A bank of fleecy clouds
Cover the mountain steep;
I suddenly hear bleating —
The clouds are a flock of sheep!

Clothing the Mountain Green

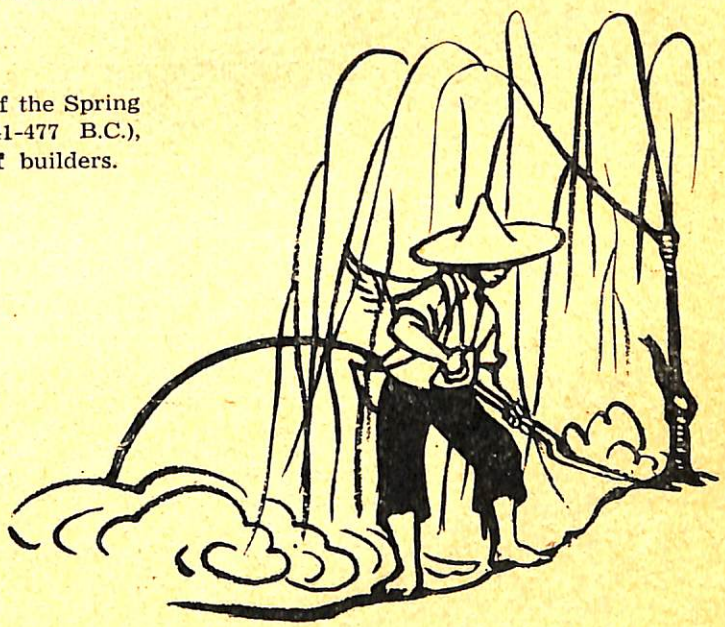
from Anhwei

THE red flag flutters on top the barren crag,
Armies of men with saplings storm the hill;
We hoe the virgin soil,
And in the virgin soil we plant our saplings;
We plant our saplings
To clothe the mountain green.

Our New Land

from Shensi

THE red sun on our shoulders,
The white clouds underfoot,
Our co-op is tilling new land.
Our hands make ladders to heaven,
Our work songs bring the mountains tumbling down;
Not even Lu Pan* can compare with us.
We fasten a crystal girdle round our fields,
Flowing ribbons round our hills,
To make our land more fair.



* A master craftsman of the Spring and Autumn period (841-477 B.C.), said to be the father of builders.

Our Sweat Is Spilt and So Our Dam Is Built

by Hsu Tsung-yao of Peking

BRIGHT beads of sweat
Have made the Ming tombs wet;
Each drop is like a star,
But brighter far.
The stars gleam coldly in the sky,
Our sweat is hot because our hopes are high;
Like pearls our sweat is spilt
And so our dam is built!

The Cocks' Mistake

by Pen Liu of Szechuan

HERE late at night
Our lamps shine bright,
The hillside shakes,
The mountain quakes;
Cocks crow to show
The day's begun,
Taking our lights
For the morning sun!

The Construction Site of the Ming Tombs Reservoir at Night

by Li Hu →

The Ming Tombs Reservoir lies north of Peking at the foot of a mountain near the tombs of thirteen emperors of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

This reservoir was originally to be built during the Third Five-Year Plan (1963-1967); but during the "great leap forward" it was decided to start work in the spring of 1958. After 160 days and nights the great dam with 2,300,000 cubic metres of earth and stones was completed. Altogether 400,000 men and women took part in the construction, all of them volunteer labourers. Among them were factory workers and peasants, soldiers and officers, government functionaries, teachers and students, workers in commercial enterprises, writers and artists, followers of different religions, and housewives. Chairman Mao and other leading members of the government also took part in the project.

The Fairy Fountain

by Feng Chun-ying of Shensi

A crystal stream spurts from the gaping cliff —
The ancient Fairy Fountain;
Sweeter than milk, its water
For centuries flowed in vain.

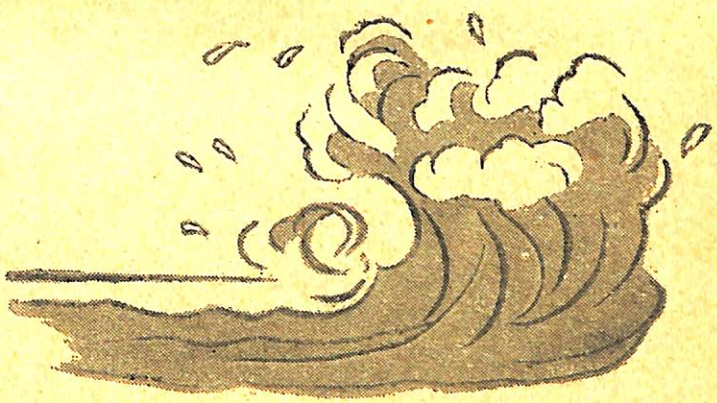
Our fingers are harder than steel,
Our co-op is stronger than Heaven;
We shall lead the Fairy Fountain to the highlands
To water the parched earth with its silver stream.

We pitch our tents in the gullies,
Our songs fly over the hills;
We smash through one obstruction after another
Till the stream has climbed the heights.

Let Heaven play fast and loose,
Let the Dragon King* frown!
Though ten years pass without a drop of rain,
On these highlands we shall reap a mighty harvest!

---

*The legendary god of rivers and seas.



Our Terraced Fields

from Hupeh

OH, our terraced fields they climb and climb so high,
They are only nine feet nine below the sky;
Half of them are wrapped in clouds now,
Half of them are wrapped in clouds now —
We'll be reaping rice in heaven by and by!

Angel Troops

from Kwangtung

THE road winds up and up the mountain still
Through swirls of mist and ridges cold and high;
The files of men transporting earth uphill
Seem angel troops descended from the sky.

The White Clouds at the Sight Will Not Leave

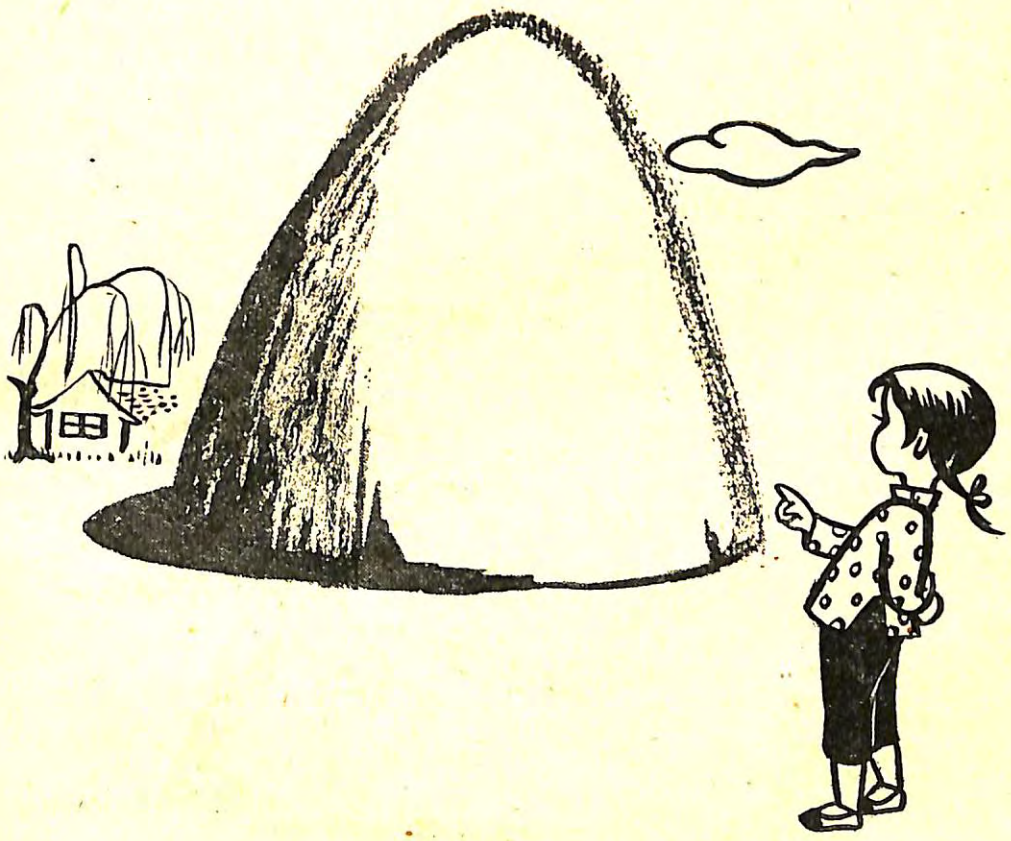
from Szechuan

THE bare hill has put on a green gown
And become a most beautiful maid;
The white clouds at the sight will not leave,
But they hover all day to give shade.

The Hill from Nowhere

from Hunan

A hill has come from nowhere
To roost by our co-op;
The size of a house today,
Tomorrow it will reach the mountain top.
This is no mountain, to be sure,
No mountain to be sure,
But a hundred thousand baskets
Of humus and manure!



Come and Watch Me!

from Hupeh

I'VE such a load in either crate,
My pole is sagging with the weight.
Just come and watch me, little mother —
Here's one mountain, there's another!

We Sow Our Crops in Heaven!

from Szechuan

OUR folk are men of iron,
We've stormed the mountains even —
Hoed the clouds and ploughed the mist
To sow our crops in heaven!

Digging Up the Dragon King's Palace

from Shensi

IRON mattocks, pounds in weight,
Cut to the Dragon's palace gate,
And the Dragon King is in quite a state!
He hastens to bow and vow:
"All right! All right!
You shall have your water now!"

Catch That Rain!

from Shensi

WE walk from hill to hill and see
They've dug round pits on each to catch the rain;
Their mouths are round as iron hoops
To stop the rain from draining off again.

Further On Is Ours As Well

by Wu Meng-ping of Kiangsi

EMERALD water, azure sky,
Side by side our fields lie;
Vines of an enchanting green,
Golden heads of rice between;
Take a look and walk a spell —
Further on is ours as well!

The Little Reservoir

by Lu Hsiao-chu of Anhwei

FROM far away it seems green jade,
From near at hand a sea;
The Dragon King could burst with rage,
Our folk could dance with glee!

A Sweet Potato Rolled Downhill!

by Shu Kuang of Kwangsi

A stream runs east beside our farm,
Upon its bank a hummock stands;
We're digging sweet potatoes here
In laughing, chattering bands.

A mighty splash is heard below,
The spray flies up to wet my chin;
I jump and give an anxious shout:
"What silly fool has fallen in?"

They laugh still more to hear me shout;
A girl's voice answers clear and shrill:
"No silly fool has fallen in —
A sweet potato rolled downhill!"

Three Visits to Huangnipo

by Hsueh Shan of Szechuan

FIRST time I came through Huangnipo
Rank weeds and grass grew high,
Wild rabbits darted through the brush,
But not a soul passed by.

Next time I came through Huangnipo
'Twas crowded as a fair;
The barren mountain was reclaimed
And terraced square by square.

Today when I pass Huangnipo
Girls sing as they are hoeing:
"Our co-op's unity is strength—
Look at the corn we're growing!"

Granny Goes to Night School

by Chang Wei-yun of Chekiang

AT dusk the birds fly high
As granny sets out with her stick for night school.

She meets young Ah-miao on the road,
And what a long face he pulls!

"Granny, you'd better go home!
How can you see in this dark?"

"You silly, it's just because I'm in the dark
That I am going to night school."

II

Deep Under the Earth

by Sun Yu-tien, a Kiangsu coal-miner

THE lasses are leaving the pit-head,
Laughing and chatting, singing as they go.
To think these slips of girls
Dare tackle the pitch-black coal-face down below!

I remember how, when they first went down the mine,
The blasting reduced them to tears.
When the charge hand shouted: "There she goes!"
They clapped their hands to their ears.

Black gold is hard to get,
And no help at all had they from our young louts;
But they meant to be "steel" not "slag" —
So they gritted their teeth and stuck it out.

For one ton of coal they gladly shed pints of sweat,
In the coldest winter their clothes are sopping wet.
When blasting sounds they shout, "Let's have some more!"
It's with laughter that the drills they are handling roar.

They tighten their belts
And pin their plaits up high
"Think you can still beat us, boys?
All right! Just try!"

To this job they give the best of their days;
They throw themselves into it like a fire ablaze!
They are drilling for coal for all they're worth,
The coal that glitters deep under the earth!

I Walk the Main Highway at Night

by Hou Yueh, a worker in a motorcar works in Kirin

I walk the main highway at night
As the snowflakes come fluttering down,
And our red motor works
Is a white-clothed town.

Billowing smoke from the power plant
Soars like a coal-black dragon into the sky.
Will it visit our Green Eagles*
Or the camp-fires in woods near by?

Smoke of our motor works city,
Carries our breath through the air
To the distant frontiers of our motherland
And to Peking's Tien An Men Square!

I walk the main highway at night
With indescribable happiness in my heart;
And as I stride to the workshop
The sparks form a pattern with miraculous art. . . .

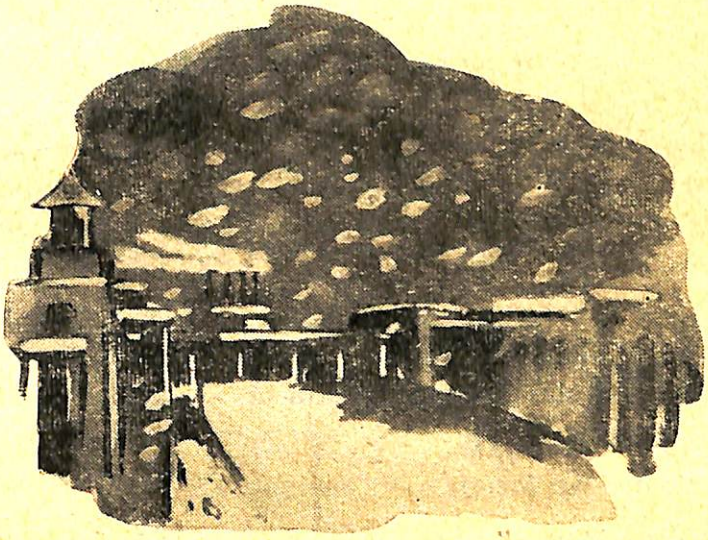
*The Liberation Trucks the works produces.

Late at Night

by Sun Ying-mo, an iron-miner in Shantung

THE crescent moon hangs on the chimney stack,
The light in the office is lit;
There sits the white-haired Party secretary
Working late into the night.

Wind bangs the doors and windows to and fro,
All round's a hum and clatter of machines;
He studies our suggestions one by one,
Like some prospector who has struck a mine!



The Girl-Checker

by Shen Che, a Liaoning textile worker

THE dark eyes of the girl-checker are so sharp,
Not a single defect in the thread escapes them.

Many are afraid of those eyes,
Many are fascinated by them!

I take her the cloth I have woven,
And my heart that can stand any test;

I hope the lovely eyes of the girl-checker
Will linger on my cloth.

Night Shift

by Han Hsueh-chiang and Hsiao Lu, electricians of Inner Mongolia

BRIGHT flames leap in the furnace,
The wheels are whirling;
The young electrician in her spotless cap
Lever in hand is studying the meter.

Night muffles the sky like a cloak,
Flames sparkle in the furnace,
And time flies second by second
As the engine turns.

The furnace reddens the stoker's cheerful face,
The engine thuds in time to the engineer's heart-beats;
The young electrician is completely absorbed —
She has given all her love to this beautiful night.

On the Bus

by Li Cheng-yung, a pharmaceutical worker in Shanghai

BIG raindrops patter on the bus
And splash through the open window
Where sits a night-shift worker,
Fast asleep.

A Young Pioneer tiptoes up and reaches out,
She pushes hard to close the window tight;
Then she takes a snowy handkerchief from her pocket
And softly wipes the moisture on his shoulder.

By the window a night-shift worker sits,
Fast asleep.
Has the small hand of the girl in the red scarf
Appeared to him in his dreams? . . .

The Girl at the Lathe

by Ssutu Nu, a mechanic in a Shensi motor works

SILVER filings fly from her lathe
Like drops from a fountain;
Her rosy, perspiring cheeks
Are peonies bathed in dew.

The larger filings scatter the ground,
The smaller filings spatter her face;
She works hard at her lathe all day,
The love in her heart turned to thousands of silver filings.

On Top of the Press

by Fang Teh-wen, a worker in a motorcar works in Kirin

ON top of the press
I feel on top of the clouds,
And look ten thousand *li*
Into the distance.
Like a swirling waterfall
Anshan's furnaces pour out their flaming iron —
Mount Tai is nothing to this city of steel!

Which construction site is that?
A crowd of men push lights to the horizon:
Are those the drills for Tienshan thundering?
Tractors are rolling through the land,
Old peasants are sowing moonlight in their fields:
Do you see how, right behind you,
Each drop of sweat will raise up pearly crops?

I raise my head
And sing aloud to the moon.
Let me play with the clouds,
Let me reach for the stars to thread a necklace for you,
Let me lift down the Milky Way and fix strings to it
To make a lyre and sing of my heart's delight —
Sing to my country, to this mighty land.

At the Forge

by Liu Chi-hsien, a Szechuan steel worker

SPARKS fly when we raise our hammer;
We work miracles like the tide in spring,
Each blow hammers out a new record,
Three blows to complete the Five-Year Plan!

Electric Sparks

by Yu Teh-cheng, a worker in a motorcar works in Kirin

THE hammer booms and crashes,
The motor chugs and chirrs;
But to tell its joy an electric spark
Murmurs, whispers or purrs.

Electric sparks, electric sparks,
What heat and light are yours!
You bind the steel with strands of silk
And fill the lathes with flowers!

Handcarts in the Snowstorm

by Kuo Chao-yu, a carter in Szechuan

THE north wind is howling,
A flurry of snowflakes is whirling —
Silver mountains, silver trees,
Houses plated with silver,
Silver roads.

Snow covers the carts
As they race with their loads of timber;
Our straw hats are heavy,
Our faces red with cold.

The carts press on,
The team leader sings in the icy wind;
On the snowy road
The wheels leave long, long tracks.

Welding Girders at Night

by Li Fu, a Kirin electrician

STARS twinkle and the moon hangs at the horizon
As the welder climbs the high steel girders.
Clouds float past him, the night wind buffets him,
He could stretch out to reach the stars.
The roar of his blowpipe shatters the silence,
His hot sweat melts the snow.
The blue sparks on the girders
Are the flowers he scatters to his country at night.

Stop the Sun from Setting

by Li Tsung-kao, a Hupeh steel worker

MOLTEN steel as red as flame,
Binds the sun and holds it tame;
Crimson light, a soaring jet,
Holds the sun, won't let it set.

The Fragrance of Oil Has Seeped Through the Sand

by Wen Feng of Chinghai

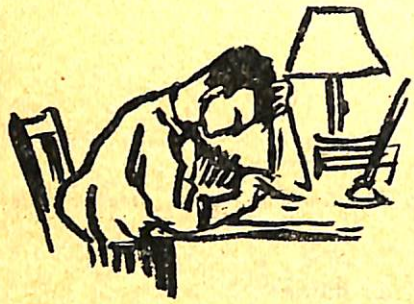
THE spring wind blows and flowers start to bloom,
But not even grass grows in the Gobi;
Here are no sweet-smelling flowers,
But the fragrance of oil has seeped through the sand.

Looking for the Director

by Wang Shen, a Shanghai glass worker

WE seek him here, we seek him there;
In vain we seek him everywhere.
His office shows his coat and hat,
His brief case on his desk lies flat —
But where is our director? Where?

We seek him east, we seek him west,
Until we find the man at last.
In our experimental shop
A new "apprentice" makes his cast,
And old hands praise him when he's done:
"Director, you are learning fast!"



The High Tide of Production

by Chen Chi-kun, a Shanghai textile worker

AFTER a long, sound sleep
The little boy is wakened by the cock.
Stretching and rubbing his eyes,
He sees his father working by the lamp.

It's all quite clear in the lamplight:
There is father, smiling, at his desk,
Busily writing away.
"Mother! Wake up! Look at father!"

"Hush, my son!
They're spinning so much cloth now in the mill,
They're racing each other and overfulfilling their quota.
That's why your father is making a new plan."

Then the little boy keeps quiet and closes his eyes
While mother dresses and goes into the kitchen.
By the time she brings them out a bowl of soup
It is already light.

Plucking the Stars

by Pu Chin-tsai, a Shensi printer

THE shelves are full of type
Like stars that stud the sky,
And working here each day
Is just like walking through the stars on high.

Each time I take a type
I feel I've plucked a star;
Stars light the traveller's way,
But type lights up men's hearts — that's better far!

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Lin Wan-tsui

Tracks in the Snowy Forest

CHU PO

The following is an excerpt from the novel Tracks in the Snowy Forest, *written against the background of the Chinese People's War of Liberation.*

By 1946, in the revolutionary bases of north-east China, land reform was instituted to consolidate the bases, and material and manpower were mobilized to sustain the War of Liberation. But some routed Kuomintang officers had escaped and hid themselves in remote wooded mountains. There, in league with landlords, local despots and professional bandits, they organized armed gangs which plundered and killed the local people and sabotaged our land reform work. Tracks in the Snowy Forest *describes how a carefully chosen small unit of the PLA went into the mountains and forest in bitter winter and with remarkable courage and skill finally wiped out the bandit gangs.*

Published in Peking in the autumn of 1957, the novel immediately won wide acclaim among the reading public. Several portions of the novel were adapted into plays, Peking opera and pingchu *opera, and were staged with great success in many parts of China.*

The author, Chu Po, was born in 1923 in Huanghsien County, Shantung Province. After only six years of primary school education, he joined the Eighth Route Army at the age of sixteen. He remained in the army until 1950 when he was severely wounded. When he recovered he was transferred to a job in industry. He is now the vice-director of an industrial designing bureau.

I

Military maps of a scale of one to fifty thousand covered one wall of the office of Vice Divisional Commander Tien.

Regimental Commander Wang was reporting on the raids our People's Liberation Army had been making against the bandits in their mountain hide-outs. Each time, the enemy had eluded us. Wang stressed the lessons learned from these experiences. Recently, several thousand troops had searched the Aristocrat Range for fifteen days without result. Unless it was continually provided with supplies, a large military unit could

not live in the mountain forests for long. Even if we had gone over the mountains with a fine-tooth comb, the enemy would have been able to slip through the openings in our line. To be more accurate, it wasn't really a question of openings. Our entire unit had only been able to occupy one small section of the huge Aristocrat Range. Any cave or grove of trees was enough to provide the enemy with complete cover, or avenue of escape. Obviously, new tactics had to be evolved.

"We need reliable information on the bandits' movements, so that we can strike swiftly and suddenly," Wang insisted. "Good scouting is of primary importance."

The other officers attending the meeting listened thoughtfully.

Political Commissar Ho rose to his feet, notebook in hand. He took a drag on his cigarette, then said solemnly, "These are costly experiences. The people are paying for them in blood. In our previous battles we didn't wipe out the enemy completely. Their remnants have become bandit chiefs whose gangs are marauding and killing. We can't shunt off our responsibility. Because of our laxness, there have been blood baths in several villages. The land reform work is being affected; our rear bases are being weakened. In the past five days over a hundred people and government workers were slaughtered in four different villages. Nearly all the homes and granaries were burned to the ground. The enemy are extremely vicious. Their motto is, 'Burn everything, kill everyone!'"

Shame and self-reproach darkened the eyes of the officers looking at Commissar Ho. Recalling the scene of carnage he had found in one village, Shao Chien-po felt a stab of anger and pain.

"It's not surprising," Ho went on. "These are no ordinary enemy remnants. They're the worst types of savages, with long records of bloody crimes. It's inevitable that they are and will be diehard counter-revolutionaries and relentless enemies of the people. They include landlords, and puppet officials, spies, military police and professional bandits left over from the Manchukuo regime set up by the Japanese imperialists. And now they're controlled by Kuomintang agents. They're in their death throes, so they're particularly murderous and cruel. Because we've broken the back of a Kuomintang army of a hundred thousand, before these massacres in the villages, we assumed that the handful of Kuomintang military remaining had fled to Shenyang or to enemy-occupied territory in the south. We forgot that these north-east provinces have been infested with bandits for centuries. We lost sight of the fact that Chiang Kai-shek's armymen and the local dregs of society — the feudal landlord despots and the bandit kings in the mountains — are birds of a feather. All the evidence we have collected so far proves that the recent slaughter has been the work of Horse-Cudgel Hsu and his gang. We know that Kuomintang agent Hou Tien-kun came down from the hills

too. We're soldiers of the people. The longer we let the enemy get away with this, the more the people will suffer. It's up to us to wipe the enemy out once and for all. We have to protect the land reform, strengthen the rear, and support the front!"

Tall, brawny Commander Tien was a man who didn't mince words. "From a tactical point of view, sending a large military force against a gang of bandits is like using a howitzer to shoot a fly — absolutely futile," he said flatly. "What we need is a small flexible but strong unit that can scout and fight at the same time. A unit that can manoeuvre and twist through the mountain forests with the enemy until it finishes them off to the last man!" Tien brought his fist down on the table lightly.

"We have come to a decision," he continued. His eyes swept the room, then fixed themselves on Chien-po. "Comrade Shao Chien-po is to organize such a unit and be responsible for this task."

While Commissar Ho had been speaking, every man present had been mentally calculating how to wage the campaign; each was preparing to ask for the assignment. At Tien's announcement that Chien-po had been chosen, the others immediately tried to argue.

Chien-po was already on his feet. His young face was flushed with pleasure; his handsome dark eyebrows arched high. Controlling his excitement, he looked at Commander Tien gratefully. Lively, emotional, Chien-po was one of the youngest officers of his grade.

"In forming your unit, choose the bravest of our men," Tien advised him.

Confident and proud, Chien-po replied, "I know our fighters. They're all courageous."

Commissar Ho liked this bold youth and recognized his good qualities. Now he added a word of caution.

"You'll need two kinds of courage — collective courage and the courage of each individual. The battles your men will be fighting will call particularly for the individual type of courage. This courage must be based on three things — a clear political understanding, military skill and far-sightedness, and a powerful physique. Only men with such attributes can be a match for the kind of enemy you're going to be up against."

Chien-po nodded. "I understand, Comrade Commissar. The enemy will outnumber us several times over. . . ."

"That's it exactly," Commander Tien cut in. "Although the enemy have been crushed, there are still quite a few of them, compared to your small unit. They're a crafty, vicious gang, from officers down to the smallest bandit. Whatever you do, don't underestimate the fighting ability of the professional brigands; you must do a thorough job of annihilating them. They'll make you pay dearly for any carelessness."

Chien-po smiled. "To catch the King of the Monkeys, be trickier than he; to seize the ferocious tiger, be fiercer still by three!"

Everyone laughed.

"Right!" Smiling, Commissar Ho patted Chien-po on the shoulder. "You're going to have other troubles too — mountain forests and deep snow. It's up to you to learn how to ride these troubles, to tame them and turn them to your advantage. I wish you success." He held out his hand.

Chien-po grasped it. "I am honoured by the Party's trust in me, though I know I haven't fully earned it yet. My men and I will do our best."

*

"Two minutes to ten." Commander Wang looked at his watch, then gave Chien-po a friendly glance. Chien-po and his men would be leaving at eleven. Wang had been talking with him for the past two hours about how the small unit was to live and fight in the mountain forests.

"Report!" young guardsman Kao Po came in and announced. "Vice Divisional Commander Tien is here."

Wang and Chien-po rose to greet Tien as he entered the room. Tien shook hands with Chien-po and asked jestingly, "How's it going, General of the Expeditionary Force?"

"Everything's ready. We're leaving in an hour."

"Everything, eh?" Tien sat down on a bench. "Good. Let me hear about your 'everything'!"

Chien-po recited rapidly, as if giving a memorized report on the drill field.

"The unit has been formed. It consists of Scout Hero Yang Tzu-yung, Fighting Hero Liu Hsun-tsang, Expert Climber Luan Chao-chia, Long-Legged Marcher Sun Ta-teh. . . ." After listing the personnel, he described the equipment, stated the tactics he intended to use, described all his preparations. He was plainly a bit proud of his thoroughness.

"So that's your 'everything,' is it?" the Commander asked with unexpected sternness.

Chien-po realized he had slipped up somewhere. He knew how strict Tien was about battle preparations. His face reddened.

"Well, what about it? Do you have anything else to report?"

"That's all."

"I ask you — what will you do if men are wounded?"

"We've provided for that." Chien-po smiled in relief. "Each man carries three first-aid kits."

"Oh? Three first-aid kits and all a casualty's problems are solved?"

"If he's lightly wounded."

"And what if he's severely wounded?"

"I'm confident in my men's strong physique and endurance. . . ."

"Rot!" Tien fixed Chien-po with an icy stare. "What if the severity of a man's wound exceeds the power of his endurance? Eh? What will you do? Let him die?"

"No, of course not!" Chien-po was becoming a little flustered. "We'll pool our knowledge to win a maximum victory with a minimum of casualties."

"That's only your subjective intention. You're going into a huge trackless forest; winter there is bitterly cold. It will take you several months, at least, to finish your campaign. Understand?"

"Yes!" said Chien-po, earnestly. "I was only trying to make the unit more mobile, keep our size down to a minimum. . . ."

Tien could see that this young officer, of whom he was so fond, was quite embarrassed. A smile softened his face, and he clapped Chien-po on the shoulder.

"That's a mark against you — subjective and careless at the start. Now you'll probably write in your diary — 'That fellow Tien is a crusty old bird. He raked me over the coals before we even set out.' And you can add in parenthesis — 'A bad omen!' "

They all laughed.

The Vice Divisional Commander looked at his watch. "All right. I won't alter your plans. Just add a medical orderly to your unit. What's the target going to be for your first arrow?"

"That sneaker in the woods," Chien-po replied promptly. "Until now, it's the only target we've found that has any marks on it."

*

The sky was dark and the earth was black. A howling wind flung stinging particles of sand against the men's faces. The severe northern winter was coming! Chien-po and his small unit set out for the Aristocrat Range, with its endless mountains and deep forests.

Craggy peaks pierced the heavens like great stone teeth; mountain gales roared like tremendous angry seas. Dense trees blotted out the sky overhead; thick grass concealed the ground underfoot.

The Aristocrat Range — who knew how high it soared into the sky? Or over how vast an area it sprawled? People said it had thirty-eight hundred peaks. After several days of marching, the little unit had crossed only a dozen mountains. The evening of the third day, they made camp in a cave in a huge overhanging cliff, halfway up Peony Mountain. Compared with the entire mountain, the cliff was no bigger than a fingernail, and Chien-po and his thirty-five men took up only a small corner of the cave. It wasn't often you could find such a comfortable billet in the wilds.

In the fading daylight, the men looked out over the forest stretching below them. Not far off, in the crotch of a big tree, was a hole as big

as a millstone. A large black bear laboriously climbed the tree and disappeared into the dark opening. Well, no one could say they had no neighbour.

On a bone-chilling morning, the unit arrived in Nine-Dragon Confluence, a hamlet in the heart of the mountain range. They had travelled about seventy miles after leaving the last village on the edge of the forest.

The hamlet got its name from the nine mountain streams joining together in a deep rocky pool. When the streams were dry, the pool was like a mirror reflecting the nine mountains crouched around it and the clear blue firmament above; at night, the pool was filled with stars, as if a piece of the sky lay beneath its waters. In the rainy season, the streams poured turbulently into the pool, throwing up a rainbow haze a hundred feet high.

The local peasants claimed the pool was enchanted. According to them, the second day of the second lunar month was the day the dragons raised their heads; it was also the birthday of the God of the Mountains. On that day every family in the hamlet burned incense and paper money at the edge of the pool, and respectfully kowtowed.

There were thirty-six families in the hamlet, and they planted their grain and vegetables in the black soil beside the streams. They never knew drought and they suffered no floods; every year was a rich harvest. Between seasons, they dug medicinal roots, hunted, and picked mushrooms. They lived either in log cabins or in cave-dwellings which they hollowed out of the mountainside. They had little in the way of crockery; most of their bowls and basins were made from gourds. In every household two spirit tablets were worshipped. One represented the God of the Mountains; the other, the King of the Dragons.

When the People's Liberation Army had made its large-scale search through this region before, Scout Tzu-yung had found a white sneaker about ten miles south-east of Nine-Dragon Confluence. That was why Chien-po brought his men to this hamlet. But where were the bandits? The sneaker couldn't tell them, nor could they find any other clues in the vicinity.

The forest was so vast and they were so few; it was difficult to discover any trace of the bandits. When they questioned the local inhabitants, the only answer they got was, "We're all Chinese. Why do you have to fight?" Or, "We haven't seen any soldiers since the Japanese army passed through here three years ago."

Chien-po and his unit searched for eight days without finding a single clue. For the first time that the men could remember, there was no smile on the face of the enthusiastic, cheerful Chien-po.

Now he sat alone in a cabin, wondering about Tzu-Yung and Ta-teh. The night the unit had arrived in Nine-Dragon Confluence, the two scouts had disguised themselves as traders and went off in the direction of the

sneaker. Eight days had passed without a word from them! Why had they adopted the garb of traders? Because traders were the only strangers who ever came to this region — and only one or two every couple of years, at that. Offering rough cloth and crude farm implements and household utensils, the unscrupulous merchants would obtain in return — at a very low rate of exchange — commercially valuable furs, ginseng root and deer-horn. The local people hated these adventurers heartily.

*

After reaching the place where the sneaker had been found, Tzu-yung and Ta-teh made a careful search for further clues. But in this deep overgrown forest, it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. Though they combed the mountains and gullies for several days, they had no success. They were drenched with sweat in spite of the chill early winter weather.

"It's hopeless. Let's take some other line of approach!" Ta-teh pleaded in an exhausted voice.

"No, Ta-teh." Tzu-yung sat down on a boulder and stroked his beard. "There must be a story behind that sneaker. It couldn't have come here by itself. Someone had to be wearing it." To encourage the young scout, the older man pretended much more confidence than he actually felt.

"Maybe some hunter threw it away here. Or maybe he was eaten by a wild animal and the sneaker was all that was left; otherwise, why can't we find any other traces of him?"

"That's hardly possible," Tzu-yung smiled. He drew the sneaker out from his coat and examined it closely. "You see, there are no blood-stains on it. And there's no blood or human bones in the area where I found it. So the wearer couldn't have been eaten by a wild animal. Besides, as I understand it, hunters around here don't wear sneakers. There's even less chance that any of the other local people could afford them. You're from the mountains yourself. Am I talking sense?"

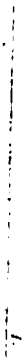
"Yes, of course." Ta-teh's eyes stared off into the distance. "But sometimes there's something special. . . ." Suddenly his eyes narrowed. Still muttering, "Special . . . special . . ." he rose quickly and ran straight forward. Mystified, Tzu-yung hurried after him.

Ta-teh's long legs covered ground rapidly. In a moment, he reached a big tree. Leaping for joy, he smacked both hands against his thighs and crowed, "Tzu-yung, ha-ha, special, special — we've found the something special!"

Turning, he pulled Tzu-yung over to the tree and pointed to a white slash as wide as a man's hand in the bark of the trunk about head high. "Is that special or isn't it?"

The older scout peered at the slash intently. "It's a knife slash all right!" he said delightedly. "No doubt about it!"

"It's a knife slash all right!"



. . . But what does it prove? he wondered. He thought a moment, then cheerfully clapped Ta-teh on the shoulder.

"This is our first discovery in three days. As the old saying goes, 'When an eagle passes, it trails its sound behind; when a man passes, he leaves his footprints.' You mean to say the bandits could have gone through here without leaving a trace? I don't believe it! Patience, Ta-teh, let's keep looking!"

Tzu-yung circled the tree several times, but there were no other cuts in the bark. Had some hunter been testing the keenness of his blade? he wondered. Or was the slash made with no motive at all? And what was its connection with the sneaker? Did it really have anything to do with the bandits? . . . These questions ran through Tzu-yung's mind.

Walking around to the back of the tree, he inspected every tree in line with the rear. He examined them one by one, from branches to trunk, from trunk to roots.

"Good! Another one!" he suddenly shouted. "Ta-teh, come over here! Here's another one!" He ran to a tree that was forty odd paces beyond the first. Again, head high, a piece of bark had been slashed off, revealing white wood beneath. Tzu-yung hurried back to where he had found the sneaker, walked to the first tree, then went on to the second. His path, a total distance of about one hundred yards, had proceeded in a straight line from south-east to north-west. Continuing in the same north-westerly direction, they found a third slash, a fourth, a fifth. . . .

Tzu-yung stroked his beard and smiled. "We've got something this time, Ta-teh. Those slashes must have been made by someone who was afraid of losing his way. What do you say?"

"Right!" Ta-teh's spirits had fully revived. "Absolutely! But was it a hunter? Or someone out picking mushrooms? Or someone digging ginseng roots? Or was it a bandit? Hard to say."

"Never mind about that now. First we've got to track him down. Scour the mountains and drag the streams!"

"Right! Let's go!" Bursting with energy, Ta-teh swung his long legs into a ground-consuming stride. Together with Tzu-yung, he pushed on into the deep forest, following the trail of slashes. . . .

Tzu-yung was an experienced scout. Originally a hired farmhand, he had joined the army to fight the Japanese and had served in the battles on the eastern coast of Shantung Province. Now, at the age of forty-one, he was the leader of the regiment's scout platoon. Life had always been hard for him and he had never been able to go to school, but he was very intelligent. He could recite from the famous classical novels by heart, engrossing his listeners with his fine dramatic talents. Before he left the farm, during the rainy weather or in the slack winter season, he had always been surrounded by people listening to his stories. He was like a warm fire in winter, a shady spot in summer. Everyone

liked him. It was this keen intelligence of his, plus his courage and painstaking attention to detail that made him so successful as a scout.

The two PLA men followed the trail for three days. Their dry rations were finished, but they couldn't kill any game, for fear of exposing themselves. They had to live on plain boiled mushrooms.

That night, they climbed to the top of a steep mountain. Pausing to catch their breath, they observed smoke rising from a hollow below. Both men forgot their fatigue. Straining their eyes, they made out a dozen or so small log cabins. Tzu-yung checked his compass and calculated the scouts' present position and the distance from their unit in Nine-Dragon Confluence.

"Another discovery, Ta-teh," he said. "This hamlet isn't on the map. When our troops searched these mountains last time, I scouted through this region. We didn't see any signs of bandits then. The hamlet is north of Nine-Dragon Confluence, not more than ten miles, I'd say."

"I'll take your word for it. I can never figure those compasses." Ta-teh was alertly watching the log cabins. "When our troops came through here, the bandits probably all ran away and came back later. What shall we do? It might be a bandits' nest at that."

Tzu-yung smiled. "Not necessarily. We've only been searching for six or seven days. If we've really discovered a bandits' hide-out so quickly, that's excellent!"

From the hamlet came the sound of dogs barking and hens cackling. Tzu-yung's face fell. "That does it," he said sadly. "Did you ever hear of bandits who kept dogs and chickens, Ta-teh?"

The younger scout sighed. He sat down despondently on the grass.

Tzu-yung forced a laugh. "Let's go down and get something to eat. Don't relax your vigilance. Remember — I'm a trader and you're my helper. Be careful. Don't talk much and keep your eyes peeled. Understand?"

Ta-teh nodded. The men checked each other's disguises, then descended the slope towards the nameless hamlet.

It was dusk when they entered the small settlement. Lights were gleaming in the windows of the score or more families living there — the inhabitants burned resinous pine torches for illumination. Tzu-yung pushed open the door of a small cabin at the west end of the hamlet. An old man and his wife were eating in the light of a torch. They were frightened speechless at the sight of the strangers.

"We're traders, from the Tehcheng Trading Company, Mutankiang. Don't be afraid," said Tzu-yung quickly, making a deep bow. "We've just arrived. Could we trouble you two old folks to let us spend the night here?"

Somewhat reassured, the old man queried, "Where are you coming from now?"

"Nine-Dragon Confluence."

The old man was startled. "Oh? I hear there are soldiers there. Is that so?"

It was Tzu-yung's turn to be taken aback. The presence of the PLA unit in Nine-Dragon Confluence was supposed to be a secret. How did they know about it here?

"We let the army attend to their soldiers. We're only interested in trading," he said casually, and he brought the conversation around to the business of buying and selling local products.

There were two things he had to find out — how far the hamlet was from Nine-Dragon Confluence, and how the old man had learned of the arrival of the unit. Fortunately, the old couple were simple honest people and Tzu-yung soon got the information from them. Nine-Dragon Confluence was only seven miles away, just on the other side of the ridge. They knew about the PLA men because hunters from the hamlet, when they went to the top of the mountain, had seen the soldiers practising cliff-scaling.

Early the following morning, Tzu-yung went from door to door, pricing ginseng roots, deer-horn, raw furs. None of the local people would quote him a figure in money; they insisted on barter. Three years before, a couple of scoundrels had cheated them with counterfeit notes.

At noon, when Tzu-yung and Ta-teh sat down beside the small street and rested, they were surrounded by dozens of people, adults and children — probably the hamlet's entire population. Tzu-yung asked all manner of questions. Suddenly, he was interrupted by a cry from Ta-teh.

"Oh! Ah — boss!"

He looked in the direction Ta-teh pointed with pursed lips. His eyes fell upon a child's foot.

The boy was about ten. On his right foot was a wooden sandal, on his left a torn white sneaker that was much too big for him.

Questioning revealed that the child's father had been ill for the past three months. The boy also had a mother. A few days ago, an uncle had arrived. He was a man of about forty, a tinker. He had come to see his sister and brother-in-law and little nephew. The tinker wore none of the garb of the mountain folk except on his feet; these were clad in the leather sandals of the local hunters.

Late that night, Tzu-yung ordered Ta-teh to keep a close watch on the cabin where the tinker was staying. He himself, in accordance with the directions he had obtained and with the aid of his compass, stole away towards Nine-Dragon Confluence.

*

Chien-po was making an entry in his diary in the lamplight when Tzu-yung came in.

"Still not asleep, Commander 203?"

At the sound of Tzu-yung's voice, Chien-po leaped from the *kang* and grasped his hand.

"Tzu-yung, Tzu-yung, you must have had a hard time. Here, have a drink."

The scout gulped the water down, wiped his mouth, then gave a rapid recital of what had transpired with him and Ta-teh. In conclusion he said, "We've found the mate to the sneaker. We think they belonged to that tinker. What do you say? Shall we bring him in for questioning?"

"Yes," replied Chien-po. Then he frowned. "No. Those bandits aren't the same as the average Kuomintang army prisoners. Besides, we can't prove anything yet. Arresting him now would be too clumsy."

"But we can't keep waiting either." Tzu-yung rubbed his chin. "The secret of our being here isn't a secret any more."

"We let the news leak out on purpose just to see what the people in that hamlet would do. My idea is that we drive him away and see where he runs to. That will get us much better results than questioning him now. Right?"

Tzu-yung grinned and nodded.

"The important thing is to watch where our suspect goes. If he heads for the bandits in the mountains, we can send Chao-chia after him. But he won't be so stupid; he'll probably run in the other direction. In that case, more intricate tactics will be required. It will be up to you to handle him."

"Excellent! We'll get much more that way."

"Good, then." Chien-po smiled. "Go back, Comrade Tzu-yung, and resume your disguise. We'll arrive at dawn."

Tzu-yung bid Chien-po goodbye and returned quickly to the nameless hamlet the same night.

At break of day, leading Chao-chia's squad, Chien-po entered the little hamlet. The PLA men arrested the trader, his helper, and the self-styled tinker, and detained them in a small house at the east end of the street.

Chien-po, his face stern, questioned the trader.

"Who are you?"

"I'm the outside man for the Tehcheng Trading Company in Mutankiang."

"Your name?"

"Yang Hsi-ming."

"You don't look a trader to me, with that big beard. The truth now — who are you?"

"Whiskers Yang. Everybody in Mutankiang knows me."

"Go back there then. We don't want any more of you crooked traders coming around to cheat these mountain folk. Our government will set up a market for them. Do I make myself clear?"

"Quite clear!" The man who called himself Whiskers Yang bowed repeatedly. "Quite clear. . . ."

Chien-po turned to the alleged tinker.

"Who are you?"

"I'm a tinker," the man replied, his eyes blank.

"No one in this poor hamlet has any metal pots or pans. What could you mend around here? You must be a bandit!"

"No, no, Your Excellency, I don't work in the mountains. I've only come to see my sister. All my life I've been a tinker. . . ."

"Don't you know that there are bandits around here? That you're risking your life to come?"

The tinker twisted his mouth. "*Aiya*! I'll leave right away! I'll go tomorrow!"

Just then an ailing man, and a woman holding a ten-year-old boy by the hand, entered the door. The man bowed repeatedly. "He's my wife's brother, captain. He's not a stranger. Our whole family vouches for him." As he said this, the man's face was tight with fear.

Chien-po rose. "Very well," he said to the tinker and the two traders. "I give you until tomorrow to clear out." After the three men had departed, Chien-po led Chao-chia's squad due west, in the direction of the steep mountain from which Tzu-yung had first seen the hamlet.

The following morning, the tinker set out towards the east. Tzu-yung and Ta-teh went along with him. They became quite friendly, and chatted about their respective trades. The tinker spoke openly, without the least reservation. Can he really be a tinker? Tzu-yung wondered. Why is he heading away from the mountains? If he's a contact man for the bandits, how can he talk so freely? Is he a good person — or a very clever bandit? If he's a good man, why is he taking such a sneaky route? . . .

Tzu-yung was hesitant, doubtful, but his long experience as a scout taught him not to waver. He thought to himself: We mustn't underestimate the craftiness of these birds. . . .

At dusk, the tinker increased his pace, although he obviously was very tired. He limped a little too. But he gritted his teeth and pushed on, as if racing to a particular destination. Several times Tzu-yung and Ta-teh urged him to stop and make camp, but each time he refused.

"This part of the forest is full of wild beasts," he said. "The nearer we get to the edge of it, the safer we'll be."

But even when they came to sparsely wooded clearings, the tinker still insisted on going ahead. This aroused Tzu-yung's suspicion. He

gave Ta-teh a significant glance, indicating that he should keep on the alert.

It grew darker. The constellation Orion appeared in the south-eastern sky. The men reached an ominous rocky peak. The tinker proposed that they camp there.

Tzu-yung and Ta-teh looked up at the heavy pile of rock overhead and at the dark surrounding forest. Can there be bandits here? they thought in some alarm. But feeling the hard pressure of the automatics consealed in their waist bands, they grew calm and settled down for the night.

Although it was very cold, the tinker did not sleep together with the other two. He made himself a pallet of dry grass at the foot of a tall tree about ten paces away from the scouts.

Tzu-yung's heart beat fast. He was quite worn out, but he could not sleep. Before long, the tinker began snoring loudly. Tzu-yung's suspicions were slowly allayed by the rythmic, peaceful snores.

Icy night air seeped through Tzu-yung's padded robe. Even a good sleeper like Ta-teh was awakened by the cold. But the tinker continued to snore. Tzu-yung was both worried and delighted. Worried because he feared there might be bandits nearby — he and Ta-teh were only two men with one pistol each. Delighted because the shrewd tinker had made another slip. Although the frigid temperature forced him to turn frequently, he never stopped snoring, even when he rolled over on his side.

Tzu-yung grinned to himself. If that's what he wants, we'll play that way too! Nudging Ta-teh, he also started snoring, gradually increasing in volume. To make it look authentic, he lay motionless, letting the cold eat into his bones. You're pretty smart, he thought, but I'll be damned if I can't act this role better than you!

"Trader, hey, trader!" the tinker whispered timidly. "Mr. Yang, Mr. Yang! . . ."

Tzu-yung squeezed Ta-teh's arm, then silently grasped the automatic in his waist band.

The tinker stealthily rose from his pallet, stole past a few trees, and crept off in the direction of the rocky peak.

"You stay here," Tzu-yung said to Ta-teh. "Be ready for anything. I'm going to trail him." His voice was so low he could barely hear it himself.

Years of training had sharpened Tzu-yung's vision. It was keen even in the night. Now, his eyes fixed on the white cloth band around the tinker's waist, he followed softly, darting from tree to tree. Although the tinker was jumpy as a gun-shy fox, he was unaware of the man stalking fifteen or sixteen paces behind him.

After creeping about two hundred yards, the tinker seemed to gain confidence. He increased his stride and walked quickly to a few big

trees at the foot of the rocky peak. There he bent and lifted a heavy stone from the mountainside. Tzu-yung could hear him strain and grunt. The stone thudded to the ground, followed by a second and a third. The tinker leaned, panting, against a tree and looked around. Apparently satisfied, he again strode towards the rocky mountainside. Something creaked, and the tinker disappeared.

Like a cat chasing a mouse, Tzu-yung crouched behind a big tree, his eyes piercing the darkness in the direction from which the sound had come. Suddenly a match flared, and then a lamp gleamed. Tzu-yung's heart glowed like the flame. From inside his padded robe he brought out a small dagger that every man in the unit carried, and sliced off a piece of bark, revealing the white wood beneath. He took his directions on the North Star, then once more carefully examined the rocky peak. When he was sure that he could find this place again, he walked softly towards the light. Hey! Before him was a little window one foot square.

Aided by the feeble glow of the lamp, he could see now that this was a small cave. The entrance was a small door woven of thin branches. The stones the tinker had removed must have concealed the door and window. Inside, the only sound was the heavy breathing of the tinker.

Tzu-yung crept back to the concealment of the large tree. He kept his eyes on the secret cave.

About an hour later, the light in the cave went out, and the tinker hurriedly emerged. Before Tzu-yung could move, the tinker walked quickly past him in the direction of their camp.

Damn! murmured Tzu-yung. What will happen if he gets back first and finds I'm not there?

He thought fast, then swung off in a wide detour around the tinker. But the man was travelling in a direct line, and Tzu-yung was taking a circuitous route. The scout was unable to get ahead.

Reaching the camp site, the tinker called in a low voice, "Trader, Mr. Yang!"

"What's the matter? Are you cold?" Tzu-yung's friendly voice came from behind him.

"Oh!" The tinker spun around wildly. "Mr. Yang, you . . . you . . ."

"This blasted cold chilled my guts. I've been having the runs. I've just been off in the bushes. . . ."

"Ah!" The tinker feigned a sympathetic laugh. "That's too bad."

Bending over as if his stomach still pained him, Tzu-yung walked back to his bedding. He adjusted the padded coat covering Ta-teh, who was lying rigid and wide-awake. Then Tzu-yung crawled in beside him.

In the afternoon the next day, the three men arrived in Pear Valley, a village of a hundred families at the edge of the forest. To lull the suspicions of the tinker, the two scouts immediately bade him farewell and set out towards a hamlet to the west.

They returned at dusk, now dressed as PLA soldiers, and took posts in an old abandoned house on a hill at the east end of Pear Valley. From there they had a clear view of the street and all the compounds.

The sun set.

At the east end of the village was a large, prosperous-looking compound with whitewashed walls. With the accoutrements of his trade hanging from a carrying pole on his shoulder, the tinker slipped into this compound, furtive as a rat. Before long, a fat old man poked his head through the compound gateway, looked around, then slammed the gate and barred it.

Ta-teh fretted impatiently. "There's no doubt any more. That fellow's a big landlord. Let's nab them and be done with it."

Tzu-yung smiled. "Be patient. The deeper the water, the more line we give. The more line we give, the bigger the fish we'll catch."

After dark, the mountain wind rose. It howled and moaned.

The two scouts came down from the hill and halted outside the large compound. They exchanged a few whispered words, then scaled the wall and stole into the rear courtyard. The loud wind muffled the sound of their footsteps. Outside the main building of the hollow square, the scouts stopped and listened beside a window. The place seemed empty. But a light was gleaming in a room at the eastern end of the building. A pungent odour assailed the scouts' nostrils. Ta-teh grasped the lapels of Tzu-yung's coat.

"Opium," he whispered hoarsely.

The older scout made a gesture with his hand, warning him to be silent. Then he crept to the window, wet his finger, rubbed a little hole in the paper pane and peered in.

Beside the window was a large *kang*; in the centre of the *kang*, an opium lamp burned. The tinker and the fat old man who had barred the gate lay curled up like shrimps on either side of the lamp, sucking away for dear life on opium pipes.

The tinker inhaled deeply, retaining the smoke for a long time, then expelling it in a thick blue cloud.

When the two men had satisfied their craving, they sat up.

His eyes bulging like a frog's, the tinker said, "I've brought two hundred ounces today, Third Uncle." He walked over to his tinker's equipment and from a compartment took out ten large black packages.

The fat old man also got down from the *kang*. He removed a pot-bellied idol from its niche in the wall and the tinker put the packets into the hollow pedestal.

Pretty slick, bringing in all that opium without us seeing it, Tzu-yung said to himself.

The two men returned to the *kang*.

"Why so little this time?" Fatty demanded, closing his eyes.

"You don't know the trouble I had, Third Uncle," the tinker said in a low tone. "I couldn't make contact."

"What?" Fatty's eyes popped open.

"I was nearly held by the Communists." The tinker drew closer. "Their army's gone into the mountains. They're in Nine-Dragon Confluence, and that section behind. If this nephew of yours hadn't thought fast, they'd have seen through me. I just managed to talk them out of it. I didn't dare to make contact; I came right back. Two fellows who said they were traders from Mutankiang came down the mountain with me. Sons of bitches! Traders! communist scouts, that's what they were! But they couldn't kid little Luan Ping. I pretended not to know a thing. They were fooled and went away. . . ." The tinker laughed loudly. "Monkey Tiao is probably cursing me. Waiting all day at Muffin Rock must have driven him crazy."

Fatty gave a dry rasping laugh. "Nice work! You sure can wriggle out of a tight spot." His voice changed. "The last couple of days they've started land reform at Monk Hamlet too. In other places where they've finished they're going through it again to check against any slip-ups. Those dirty paupers are full of tricks!" He coughed dejectedly, like a man on the point of death.

The tinker hung his head. "What about our family?" he asked dully.

"Everything's taken care of." Fatty's gloom vanished and he appeared complacent again. "Your aunt and my three daughters-in-law have moved in with your Third Sister's family at Mutankiang. Your oldest cousin changed his name and got a job in the Railway Administration. All our valuables and opium I've moved away. Let the dirty paupers come! They won't be able to get a thing out of me!"

The two men laughed, but there was fear in their voices, and desolation.

"Third Uncle has vision," said the tinker. "You're sharp and nimble. But take my advice — if things look bad, head for the mountains. We've plenty of grain and meat up there, and the old God of the Mountains protects us. But we're short of salt and medicine. Sell the black stuff, I say, and buy salt and medicine."

Fatty expelled a great breath. "We've got a lot of black stuff but very few customers. Old Chiang of Monk Hamlet — the paupers beat him to death. Feng the Third is in jail. Only Widow Liu is left, but she doesn't use much. I can only sell her a little."

For several minutes, the two sat in gloomy silence.

"You'll get rid of it gradually," the tinker said without conviction. "Things have been pretty tense lately. You'd better lay low. I'm going back to the mountains at dawn to hole up a couple of days. I won't go near our other places for a while."

The lamp was extinguished. From within the room soon came the sound of snores.

Tzu-yung and Ta-teh climbed the wall and left the compound.

In a hushed excited voice Ta-teh said, "Meat on the table! Let's take them — the two together!"

The older scout thought a moment. "Militarily, the old buzzard doesn't make any difference, and he may not know about the bandit lairs in the mountains. Leave him to the land reform team. If we arrest him now, the son that's wormed his way into the Railway Administration and the three daughters-in-law who are holding the family loot will all take off."

Ta-teh nodded. "Right. Leave him alone. Just nab the tinker." He started to climb back over the wall. Tzu-yung stopped him.

"If you beat the mule, the horse will get scared. Didn't you hear him? Tomorrow, when he starts back for the mountains. . . ." Tzu-yung brought both hands together in a tight clutch.

"Good. We'll let him have his sleep first!"

"Let's go. To catch a wolf, lay for him in his den."

When the tinker returned to his secret cave, Tzu-yung and Ta-teh had already been waiting for a long time. They escorted him through the forest to Nine-Dragon Confluence.

II

"Let's split up, what do you say?" Liu Hsun-tsang and two soldiers were seated on a slab of rock halfway up Calf Mountain, eating balls of cooked sorghum. They were discussing their next step.

The soldiers did not answer. For three whole days they had searched without finding a clue, and they were becoming anxious.

"Don't be down-hearted," Hsun-tsang counselled. "Even catching lice takes time, to say nothing of bandits! Tzu-yung hunted for three days in the area of the torn sneaker before he found anything. He's following up on it right now, and the trail has taken him outside the mountains. We still don't know how he's getting on."

Hsun-tsang stood up and wiped the hand that had been holding the sticky sorghum ball, then wiped his mouth. "Commander 203 told us plainly: 'When an eagle passes, it trails its sound behind; when a man passes, he leaves his footprints.' The bandits couldn't have gone through here without leaving a trace. If we search thoroughly, we're bound to find something."

"Right. What do you want us to do?" the soldiers asked, chewing their final mouthful of sorghum and tying their ration bags.

"My idea is this," said Hsun-tsang, placing his hands on his hips. "If the three of us stick together we won't see or hear as much as if we split up. You two search Horse Corral Knoll; it's nearby. I'll take another route and go a little further. All right?"

"Right. That's the way it'll be!" the soldiers agreed.

Hsun-tsang told them if they discovered anything to make direct contact with Commander 203. The three then separated and went into the deep forest.

Hsun-tsang was a man of enormous energy; he never seemed to tire, covering difficult terrain with never a pause. When he was hungry, he would pull a sorghum ball out of his ration kit and munch it as he walked. When thirsty he would find a mountain stream that was not completely frozen over and drink his fill. In the forest, nothing escaped his sharp eyes. The man was like a tiger stalking game.

That night, to avoid being troubled by wild animals, he camped in a deep fissure of the rear slope of a watershed. After a sound sleep, he arose at dawn and washed his face in the stream. He checked over the equipment he had laid out the night before and grinned confidently. He thought — an automatic pistol, two hundred rounds of ammunition, four hand-grenades, plus a big army knife. . . . And I've got thirteen catties of sorghum balls in my ration kit, and the forest is full of mushrooms. I might even catch some game to cook for dinner. . . .

Hsun-tsang laughed aloud. Well, boys, he mused, there are only the few of us. I'm the commanding general and you're my armies. We've got to do this job right, no matter where it takes us. Stick it out! We'll show the world who the real men are around here!

He took a sorghum ball and crammed it into his mouth. Chewing, he loaded himself with his weapons — the automatic, the knife and the grenades. All was in order. He climbed to the top of a high cliff and headed towards the vast forest.

A sobering thought came to him. They had been searching for four days now and hadn't uncovered a single clue. Hsun-tsang's quick temper flared. He pushed forward with blazing eyes. I'll comb every inch of this wretched mountain, he fumed. We'll see where you bandits can hide!

But by noon he still hadn't found a thing. Hsun-tsang swore. How will I locate bandits, plunging around blindly like this? He halted and stamped in exasperation. Commander 203 gave me plain instructions — be thorough, thorough, thorough! And I keep rushing about like a mad bull! Hsun-tsang ripped off his cap and wiped his perspiring face. I'd rather fight than do this damn scouting any day. Fighting's like shaving a man's head — a few scrapes and it's finished, clean! But this blasted scouting is more trouble than giving a permanent wave! Of all the slow, nasty jobs! . . .

Hsun-tsang was indeed a formidable fighter on the battlefield. He was bold, impetuous and skilful. And he had trained every man of the Heroes Platoon, which he commanded, to be equally courageous and dashing. Originally, he had been a student, and a very poor one at that. Right up to middle school, he seldom got more than 60 in any of his exams. There was only one subject in which he excelled — physical training. He was a natural athlete. Basketball, soccer, gymnastics, shot-put, discus, swimming, skating — he was good at them all. His fine physique and great strength earned him his nickname — "Tank."

During the Japanese invasion, the enemy raided a village on the edge of a liberated area and captured two of our administrative officers. Hsun-tsang, who was then serving as a messenger, learned about this. At dusk, before the enemy had finished making camp, he crept to a clearing in the village where the Japanese had put their heavy machine-guns and mortars. The enemy soldiers were worn out from their day's march. Hsun-tsang set fire to the haystacks around the clearing in several places. Soon the whole clearing was ringed with flames. The Japanese rushed to put out the blaze, but it spread all over the village. Enemy ammunition dumps, engulfed in the fire, began exploding. The Japanese were thrown into a panic. Taking advantage of the confusion, Hsun-tsang rescued the two comrades and spiked the enemy's plan to "mop-up" our organizations. . . .

Just as Hsun-tsang was berating himself for his crudeness, a flock of ravens skimmed over the tree-tops, cawing raucously. He looked up at them. Lazy devils. What could have scared you into flying, this cold winter's day?

He remembered one of the basic rules of scouting, *When birds take flight and cry, man is surely nigh.* His irritation immediately vanished and his body grew tense. Aha, can my game be coming? Am I going to break my fast at last? . . . He set off rapidly in the direction from which the ravens had come.

Hsun-tsang hurried through a dense part of the forest. Soon the trees thinned out, and he came to a slope carpeted with short grass that was dry and soft underfoot. At the bottom of the slope was a gully going due west. Hsun-tsang followed it. Suddenly, he became aware of a strong stench. He halted, looked around, then said, "Ah," triumphantly, and began to run. Ahead, beneath a tree, was the body of a horse that had been dead for several days. The birds and wild beasts had already torn the corpse to bits.

Before Hsun-tsang had a chance to examine his surroundings carefully, he was startled by savage cries. Grasping his gun, he swung.

"Bastards! A pack of wolves!"

They were glaring at him balefully. He whipped out his knife and brandished it. The wolves turned tail and fled.

Calming down, Hsun-tsang examined the grass to see where the horse had come from. Finally he found the trail. It was parallel with his own, separated by a distance of some two hundred yards. But what about the rider? He searched carefully for a long time but could find no trace of him. He blew out his breath, rather dejected.

Son of a bitch! Scouting in the woods is much too hard. Can't I see anything even at this distance? . . . In the end he came to the conclusion it was the wolves, not bandits, which had frightened the ravens.

Still, he thought, the horse is a more important discovery than the sneaker. The question is what to do next? . . . He pondered for fifteen minutes without arriving at any conclusion. He became aware of the fact that he was hungry. As he reached for a sorghum ball in his ration kit, the yelping of wolves again broke the silence. He was about to take up his gun when he remembered Chien-po's instructions — "Don't attract attention. Fire at animals or bandits only as a last resort."

It hasn't come to that yet, thought Hsun-tsang. Those wolves are after that dead horse; they don't want me. I don't have to shoot. I can give ground.

Facing the wolf pack, he slowly stepped back until he was some distance away. When the ravening horde had again closed in and were tearing flesh from the corpse of the horse, Hsun-tsang turned and walked towards a small knoll to the north. Crossing through a grove of trees he came to the foot of the knoll. There he discovered a large boulder, as high as two men, smooth and glistening, like a big muffin. Hsun-tsang hurried up to it. On the ground beside the boulder were two sets of footprints. The smaller prints were made by sneakers, the larger by cloth-soled shoes. A short distance from the rock they disappeared into the heavy grass.

Hsun-tsang made a quick circuit around the boulder. On its south-east side were the remains of a recent campfire. He slapped his thigh delightedly. "Good! Our fast is really over!" His body grew light. Joy swallowed his fatigue. He felt his ration bag. It was still bulging with sorghum balls. Hsun-tsang grinned, and he patted the kit. "As long as you're with me, old friend, I can get along!"

Reminded of how hungry he was, he looked for a quiet spot where he could eat. A hundred yards to the north was a tall tree. Walking up to it, he found that its trunk was hollow, forming a kind of cave that faced south-west. Shrubs screened the opening like a curtain.

A fine place! As Hsun-tsang parted the bushes to step in, something came hurtling out so unexpectedly that he recoiled a few paces, his heart beating fast. He looked. A couple of rabbits! They had been nibbling mushrooms at the foot of the tree and he had frightened them away.

He gazed after the fleeing bunnies and smiled. Sorry, I'm encroaching on your territory. He gathered some dried grass, spread it on the

floor of the hollow tree, sat down and began munching a sorghum ball. Then, he burst into laughter. He had recalled the old aphorism, "Wait by the log to catch a rabbit." He thought — in my case it's "Wait in the tree to catch a bandit!" . . . But I won't be stupid enough just to sit around and wait. After I've finished eating, I'm going out to continue searching!

Sunlight, filtering through the branches of the trees, shone into the opening, warming Hsun-tsang's body. How precious a little sunlight was on a winter's day in the forest. Still chewing, he closed his eyes. He nearly dozed off. The sharp rapping of a woodpecker roused him and put him on the alert again.

I mustn't get careless, he said to himself. Rising to his feet, he rubbed his face hard and came out of the hollow trunk. He climbed an old elm tree and picked some "monkey head" mushrooms growing on its bark. These he ate zestfully.

Still in the tree savouring the mushrooms, he suddenly heard a song drifting down from the mountain slope on the south-west. *Speaking of old Sung the Third, he and his wife have been selling opium all their lives.* . . . Someone was singing in a nauseatingly affected voice.

At first Hsun-tsang thought he heard wrong. But his ears never played tricks like that on him before. Holding fast to the trunk, he peered through the branches. He couldn't see anyone, but the voice kept coming closer: *Their lovely daughter's sweet sixteen, and she's known as Water Lily.* . . .

From a grove of elm trees a man emerged, a rifle slung across his back. He was wearing a yellow Japanese army overcoat. Pushed to the back of his skull was a torn fur hat, its ear covers dangling as he walked, as if some dirty old crow had perched upon his head and was flapping its wings. Slung over his shoulder was a canvas sack that looked quite heavy. Humming to himself, the man came down the slope.

About seventy-five yards from Muffin Rock, he halted and stopped singing. He looked around, then formed a megaphone with his hands and called: "Captain Luan!" The mountains threw back the echo, but no one answered. The man called again, three or four times. Still no response.

"Late again!" the man muttered impatiently. He hurried around to the south side of the boulder which faced the sun and was out of the wind, and sat down beside the ashes of the campfire. He rested his rifle against the rock and tossed his sack to the ground. It rolled twice before coming to rest.

Every cell in Hsun-tsang's body was dancing. He had all he could do to restrain himself from rushing out and grabbing the man at once. He thought: If I wait till "Captain Luan" shows up, it may be hard for me to manage the two together. It would be better to take them on

one at a time. That's basic battle tactics. And I've got to take them alive, too. . . .

From his perch in the tree, he leaped twenty feet to the ground, dashed down the slope, raising his automatic and cocking it as he ran.

The man looked casually around at the sound of Hsun-tsang's approach. At first he couldn't see clearly, and he rose to his feet. When he finally realized that charging towards him was a PLA soldier, he knew something had gone wrong. Controlling a flurry of panic, he shouted a greeting.

"Where you from, slippy? What's big brother's moniker?"

The gangster's slang did't mean a thing to Hsun-tsang. He never slowed his charge. The man grabbed his rifle, but by now Hsun-tsang was only twenty yards away, holding the automatic level.

"Don't move!"

Working his bolt, the man rammed a bullet into the rifle's chamber and raised the gun. Hsun-tsang scooped up a rock and threw it hard, striking the man's right hand. The man dropped the rifle with a cry of pain, then turned and fled.

I'll squeeze your neck like a chicken's! Hsun-tsang thought happily. Now that the man was unarmed, he certainly wouldn't have to fire. He remembered Chien-po's instructions — "I want a live prisoner, one that can talk." Tucking his gun in his belt, he set off in pursuit.

The man knew the mountain paths well. He scrambled up hill and down dale like a monkey. Hsun-tsang matched him stride for stride, shouting, "Halt! Halt, or I'll shoot!"

With frightened eyes, the man turned his head and cried, "There's someone behind you!"

Hsun-tsang remembered him calling Captain Luan, and he quickly turned around. There was no one. He had been tricked. In that interval, the man had gained another few dozen yards. Hsun-tsang angrily increased his speed.

As the scout narrowed the distance between them, the man yelled, "Help! Help!"

You want a rescuer, eh? thought Hsun-tsang. Well, let him come. I'm going to catch you if it's the last thing I do! . . . Several minutes later, there was still no sign of anyone. The man had been faking again. Hsun-tsang's confidence grew; he sprinted, pumping his arms.

Now, Hsun-tsang was only thirty yards away. Suddenly, the man wheeled around and said menacingly, "Come and take me, if you've got the guts. My gang are on this mountain right ahead. Any closer and you're a dead man!"

"I'm not afraid of death," yelled Hsun-tsang, never slackening his pace. "I'm coming for you!"

His threat having failed, the man again turned and fled.

The distance narrowed to twenty yards. Hsun-tsang snatched up a rock and threw. It hit the man's right leg. He staggered and fell. As Hsun-tsang reached for him, the man whipped out a dagger — every bandit carries one — for a final struggle. With a snarl, the man struck viciously at Hsun-tsang's chest. Hsun-tsang dodged. Before the bandit could retract his arm, with a deft kick in the wrist, Hsun-tsang sent the dagger flying through the air. Then he grabbed the bandit by the neck and flung him so heavily to the ground that he rolled over twice. The man crawled to his feet, gasping for breath.

Now he dropped to his knees, kowtowed repeatedly, and pleaded, "Big brother, spare me! This child doesn't know right from wrong!" His feigned piteousness was sickening.

"Who else in your gang is around here?" Hsun-tsang's eyes burned at him fiercely. The automatic was pointing at the bandit's head.

"Nobody. I'm the only one. My job is to meet the contact."

"You're lying!"

"If every word isn't true, put a bullet through my brain!" The bandit pressed his forehead with his finger.

"Where's that Captain Luan you just called, eh? . . ." Hsun-tsang pulled out his big army knife.

The terrified bandit rapidly kowtowed several times. "Spare me! . . . Spare me . . . I'll talk. . . . It's like this. . . . He lives in the hamlet behind Nine-Dragon Confluence. I meet him here every ten days. But today, he . . . he hasn't come yet."

Hsun-tsang thought: What Commander 203 wants most is a "tongue" who'll talk. This bird is a contact man for the bandits. He's just right. Better take him back and learn the whole story from him. Then, when we take action, we'll know what we're doing.... He returned the knife to its sheath.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Which direction does Captain Luan come from? Take me to meet him. If you try any funny business, I'll split you in two!"

"Yessir, yessir!" the bandit made three bows in a row. "This little man will prove his gratitude!"

Hsun-tsang finally got a good look at the bandit, and he almost laughed. The man was like a monkey — wide mouth, bow-legs, and shifty frightened eyes. His face had the ashen hue of the habitual opium-smoker.

As they walked towards Muffin Rock, Hsun-tsang commanded, "Tell me again. Where does that Captain Luan come from?"

"Nine-Dragon Confluence! The hamlet behind Nine-Dragon Confluence. It's the absolute truth. Shoot me if I'm lying!"

The bastard's right under our nose, Hsun-tsang muttered to himself. To the bandit he said, "Pick up your sack and come along with me."

"Yessir!" The man docilely put his sack over his shoulder and limped ahead.

The captured rifle slung across his back, Hsun-tsang followed, holding his automatic. His burly frame looked bigger than ever in contrast to the skinny monkey-like figure of the other.

III

Deep night. A cold moon like a lonely lantern. Dogs barking at the frigid stars.

In a small room, Chien-po was questioning the tinker Tzu-yung had brought in. The atmosphere was tense. Chien-po was anxious for information; he wanted to know the locations of the bandits' lairs. The crafty tinker revealed nothing. Kao Po and Li Hung-yi, the two young PLA soldiers guarding him, ground their teeth. They wished they could cut the bandit open and rip the information out.

The answers Chien-po received to his patient questions told him that this bandit was stubborn and very shrewd. No wonder he had nearly fooled even an experienced scout like Tzu-yung. Chien-po was questioning the tinker for the second time, and he was becoming rather irritated. He gazed at the man coldly.

"Tell me again. What do you do?"

"I've told you. I'm a tinker." The man feigned annoyance.

"Where are you from? What's your name?"

"Monk Hamlet. I'm called Wang An."

"Wang Yin-tien who lives in the hamlet behind Nine-Dragon Confluence — what is he to you?"

"He's my brother-in-law."

"Where is Horse-Cudgel Hsu?"

"Don't know a thing about him. I'm just a tinker. I needed the money, so I ran a little opium. It's got nothing to do with him. Why are you forcing me to say that I'm a Kuomintang man, a bandit?"

"Listen you," Chien-po snapped. "We're lenient to prisoners, but only on certain conditions. For your own good you'd better tell the truth. Tell us about your Third Uncle, and those others. . . ."

The tinker was worried that his timorous Third Uncle might have talked. And Chien-po's obviously hardening attitude made him uneasy. The fear and speculation in his eyes revealed the conflict raging within him.

"If you force me, I'll confess," he said artfully. "But I won't be responsible."

Chien-po felt like pounding the table. He restrained himself with an effort.

Outside, a dog barked. Tzu-yung and Pai Ju, the girl who had been chosen to be the unit's medical orderly, burst into the room, panting and flushed. They had been running.

Pai Ju was a lively girl of eighteen. Her pretty cheeks were dimpled in a broad smile and she was almost skipping for joy. "Success! Success!" she cried. "Our attack's been a great success!"

This slim young girl was a Model Rescue Nurse. In one battle, she had rescued thirteen men under heavy fire. Because her surname "Pai" meant "white" and since she seemed to fly rather than walk most of the time, the men affectionately called her "White Dove."

Tzu-yung, grinning, plainly had something to say. But when he saw the tinker, he remained silent.

Chien-po looked at White Dove disapprovingly. "Be careful you don't knock the lamp over."

White Dove blushed. Slipping around behind Kao Po, she sat down on the *kang*.

Chien-jo had the guards lead the prisoner away. Then he said to Tzu-yung with a smile, "Speak up. Let's hear about your success."

Before Tzu-yung could answer, footsteps were heard rapidly approaching. The two men and the girl stiffened, and walked to the door.

As they crossed the threshold, they saw Tung Chung-sung, young assistant leader of Squad Two, racing towards them. "Chief of staff!" he cried happily. "Chief of staff!"

"203, you mean," White Dove corrected him, half in jest. Chien-po had cautioned her several times to call him only by his numerical designation during this military operation. Now she was reprimanding Young Tung to show Chien-po that she had not forgotten.

Young Tung chuckled. "I don't know what I'm saying."

"What's got you in such a state? Out with it, man!"

When Young Tung caught his breath a bit, he explained. "Hsun-tsang's back. He's captured a real clown. The minute he came in the door, the character flopped on his knees and kowtowed. '. . . Little man begs your pardon. I'm just an ignorant child. Spare me! . . . We're all one family. . . .' "

Young Tung's comic mimicry of the bandit's piteous tones convulsed the others with mirth. White Dove couldn't stop laughing.

"Tell it again," she begged, giving Young Tung a push.

Before the sound of their laughter died away, Hsun-tsang came barging in. He was perspiring freely, and his face looked as if he hadn't washed it in days.

"Hey, Tank, you had us worried!" Chien-po grasped the scout's hand.

"Our Tank has rolled home," jested the others, each stepping forward to shake hands with him warmly. When it was White Dove's turn, Hsun-

tsang deliberately put a little extra pressure in his grip. The girl yelled and jumped with pain. Hsun-tsang loved to tease her.

"Little White Dove," he said, letting her hand go, "you're dancing again! I heard you laughing way up in the mountains." He leaped up on the *kang*.

Rubbing her injured hand, the girl pouted, "What long ears you have!"

Hsun-tsang squatted on the *kang* and gave a detailed account of his adventures. Everyone listened breathlessly. His courage and verve infected them; they were fired by his enthusiasm.

"Good!" said Chien-po. "We'll question the prisoner right now. The longer we wait the more time the bandits will have to get on their guard and the more likely we are to give ourselves away. We must catch them unawares. Time is strength." He turned to Hsun-tsang. "Anything special about this bloke?"

"He's afraid to die!" the scout said with conviction.

"Right. We can't keep using the same old methods, in scouting or in interrogating either. That tinker is taking advantage of our lenient policy to play his crafty tricks. With hardened bandits and counter-revolutionaries, you've got to use pressure. Young Tung! Bring the new prisoner in!"

"Yes sir!" Young Tung trotted out.

Hsun-tsang unsheathed a big Japanese sword. White Dove lit a pine torch; the room became very bright. They all looked exceptionally sharp-eyed and competent in the glare.

Young Tung brought in Hsun-tsang's "victory trophy," holding him by the collar. The bandit slumped at the waist, his head pulled in, blinking his beady monkey eyes. On entering the room, he immediately fell to his knees and began to kowtow.

"Spare me, Your Excellency, spare me! This small man pleads for mercy!"

Young Tung hauled him to his feet and flung him roughly forward. The bandit staggered. He was trembling from head to toe.

Chien-po said nothing. For a full two minutes he fixed the prisoner with a stern piercing gaze. The fellow was shaking so violently he could hardly stand.

"Do you want to die, or do you want to live?" Chien-po growled viciously.

"I want to live, to live! Spare me, Excellency, spare me!" The man's whole skinny monkey frame bent in rapid bows.

"Then tell the truth! One false word out of you, and —" Chien-po looked at Hsun-tsang, who raised his sword and roared, "I'll cut your head off!"

The bandit uttered a cry of terror and clutched his neck. He dropped to his knees again, and Young Tung dragged him up by the collar.

Chien-po glanced at White Dove. "Record this!" Then, in a threatening tone, he addressed the bandit. "Your name?"

"My crimes deserve a thousand deaths! This humble person is called Tiao Chan-yi."

Chien-po looked at Tzu-yung significantly. Hadn't the scout heard the tinker talking to his Third Uncle about "Monkey Tiao"?

"And who is Monkey Tiao, eh?" Chien-po wanted to frighten the man into thinking the PLA unit knew a great deal, so that he wouldn't dare lie, or at least lie less.

"It's me. It's this humble person. I deliver opium every ten days. We raise it ourselves in the mountains. I give it to Captain Luan, and he takes it down to sell. He buys salt and medicine for us, and brings us information. We meet at Muffin Rock by the Watershed. Today I brought thirty catties of opium. Before Captain Luan showed up, that gentleman —" He glanced at Hsun-tsang.

"You know Captain Luan?" Chien-po interrupted.

"If he were skinned alive, I'd recognize his bones."

"Where is the bandit lair of Horse-Cudgel Hsu?" Chien-po demanded sternly. He knew he was succeeding.

"Breast Mountain! Breast Mountain!"

"Can you lead us there?" Chien-po pressed.

Monkey Tiao faltered. "I can't do that. . . ."

"What?" Hsun-tsang barked, glaring.

"Spare me! . . . Listen to me! . . ." begged the frightened bandit. "Between the top of Breast Mountain and the outside world there are three links. The first is Scab-Eye Ting, chief of the guards. The second is me, because I know the trails. I send stuff out and bring things in. But I'm not allowed in the hide-out and I can't leave the mountain. If I didn't have this habit . . ." the bandit raised an imaginary opium pipe to his lips, ". . . do you think I'd stick with them? The third link is Captain Luan. He's Horse-Cudgel Hsu's adjutant. He's in charge of selling the opium and sending in intelligence reports. Horse-Cudgel is afraid of secrets leaking out, so there's no direct contact between the mountain and the outside. They'll be rough on me if I cross the line either way. I've never been to the top of Breast Mountain. I don't know what it's like there. That's the truth. This little man doesn't dare lie. Spare me . . . spare me. . . ."

"How does Captain Luan mark his trail?"

"I don't know," Monkey Tiao said hastily. "I make a slash in the bark myself."

Chien-po looked at his watch. It was nearly one in the morning. That's all we'll get out of this fellow, he thought. He whispered a few

For a full two minutes he fixed the prisoner with a stern piercing gaze.

words in Young Tung's ear. The PLA man then escorted Monkey out. Monkey wasn't sure what this meant, and he cried, "Spare me, spare me!" They could still hear him pleading as he was led out of the door.

"It's up to you two now," Chien-po said to Tzu-yung and White Dove. "So far we know this much — the man who calls himself Wang An the tinker is really Captain Luan."

"No doubt about it," the scout replied. "Everything points to it."

"If we bring the two face-to-face, can you carry it off?"

"Don't worry, Comrade Commander," said White Dove. "Nothing will go wrong."

"Good!" said Chien-po. He ordered Kao Po to bring in the tinker. Taking a sheet of paper from his military dispatch case, he wrote a few lines on it, then paused thoughtfully. He faced White Dove and Tzu-yung.

"The fellow is very shrewd. He knows all the answers. I must admit I have no experience with rascals of that sort. I want you two to spend the next few minutes working on the couple the tinker stayed with, so that everything will go smoothly. Our aim is not to destroy the tinker — we want to get information from him."

The girl and the scout walked out confidently.

The tinker was led in, a complacent expression on his face.

Chien-po looked at him angrily, in silence, for three or four minutes, trying to cow and confuse him.

Hsun-tsang sat on the *kang,* toying with his big sword.

Although somewhat frightened, the tinker managed to gaze around calmly, as if very sure of himself. But when he saw Hsun-tsang, a savage-visaged hulking stranger, he began to get worried.

"Captain Luan!" Chien-po suddenly snapped, nearly frightening the tinker out of his wits. The man turned pale and lowered his head. But he was full of guile. A moment later he had regained his composure, although the pretense was now very forced. He shook his head with a sneer.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Really?" said Chien-po, contemptuous and scornful. Casually he rose to his feet.

"I said I don't, and I don't!" The tinker bit into the words tenaciously.

"You're closing the door too soon. That's not good for you at all," Chien-po said coldly. He called through the window, "Come in!"

Tzu-yung and White Dove entered with the tinker's so-called "sister" and her husband, Wang Yin-tien. The couple were asked to be seated on the *kang.* The tinker was shocked when he saw them, but immediately he beamed at them, an intimate beatific smile that was laden with menace.

"Brother-in-law, sister, it's all right. I haven't done anything."

"Bah!" Wang stood up abruptly with the boldness of an old hunter, his illness vanishing. "Who's your brother-in-law?" he spat. "Captain Luan! Luan Ping! Adjutant Luan! . . ."

"Don't wrong an innocent man!" Although it was hopeless, Captain Luan kept trying.

Wang strode up to him. "Shut your stinking mouth! You bandits took over my hunting grounds, robbed me of thirty traps, stole more than thirty dressed skins, three catties of extract of deer placenta. You left me with nothing to hunt with, nothing to sell. My whole family, the three of us, can starve to death for all you care! And we would have starved, too, if friends and neighbours hadn't helped us out. . . ."

At this point, Wang's wife burst into tears. "On the fifteenth of July in the middle of the night, he came with three men and grabbed my boy. They wanted fifty skins and two catties of deer-horn as ransom. Old Lord of the Heavens! Where could we get it? They had already taken everything! We knelt and kowtowed and begged for mercy. They insisted that we become a 'front' for Luan, or they'd take the child away. We had no choice; we gave in. I come from Pear Valley, too, originally. Luan made me say I'm his sister."

The woman sobbed bitterly. White Dove soothingly led her to a seat on the edge of the *kang*.

"Then he put a pistol to my head," Wang continued. "He said, 'If you give me away I'll kill you. If you behave yourself you'll be rewarded when the Kuomintang army returns.' They're all murderers. How could we refuse?" The husband and wife wept together.

This puppet captain for the Japanese, who posed as a tinker, this Kuomintang army adjutant, was trembling from head to foot, his face streaming perspiration. There was no trace of his former composure.

Chien-po glanced at him. On with the attack! he said to himself. He shouted through the window, "Young Tung!"

"Here!" replied the guard. He led in Monkey Tiao. The skinny bandit didn't look so frightened any more. In accordance with Chien-po's instructions, Young Tung had explained to him our policy of leniency to criminals who show a real desire to reform. Young Tung had also brought him water to wash with and something to eat.

On entering the room, Monkey gave Chien-po a ninety degree bow from the waist, intoning, "I will prove my gratitude, I will prove my gratitude!" Turning, he squinted at the tinker, then slapped him smartly across the face, twice. Monkey pointed at him and launched into a wildly gesticulating tirade.

"That's the guy! That's him! If he were skinned alive, I'd know his bones. He was Captain Luan in the Manchukuo days under the Japanese, a stiff-necked big shot. When the Kuomintang came, he became adjutant to Horse-Cudgel Hsu. Now he hides outside the forest, selling

opium, spying for the bandits — I've delivered over three hundred catties of the black stuff to him myself. Your Excellency! You mustn't let this guy off lightly!" Monkey looked exceptionally virtuous. He was both testifying and making a positive proposal.

Great beads of sweat dripped from the tinker. His eyes stared and his legs went weak.

Chien-po strode up to him. "Do you know what I'm talking about now, Captain Luan?" he demanded sternly.

The tinker didn't dare look at him. He slapped his own face, hard. "I deserve to die! I deserve to die!"

Chien-po had White Dove escort Wang and his wife out; Young Tung led Monkey Tiao away. Again Chien-po walked over to the tinker.

"I've talked with you a total of six times. I tried to be lenient, hoping it would teach you something. But you repaid our kindness by being stubborn and tricky!" Chien-po's eyes grew angry. He picked up the sheet of paper and read what he had written.

> Luan Ping, traitor, captain in the puppet army under the Japanese, committed many crimes for his masters, murdered innocent people. After victory, joined the Kuomintang as a military espionage agent, committed murder and arson, trafficked in opium, poisoning the people. . . .

Chien-po looked up. "That's your record. Can you deny any part of it? They're all offences calling for the death penalty. As a representative of the people's government I can have you executed."

Terrified tears fell from the tinker's eyes. He dropped to his knees, pleading for mercy.

"Whether you live or die is up to you," Chien-po said coldly. "If you want to die, just keep on being tricky. If you want to live, tell the truth. Depending on the veracity of your confession and your future behaviour, the people's government will determine whether to treat you leniently or strictly."

The tinker beat his breast, crying, "I want to live! I want to live! Spare me, Your Excellency, spare me!"

"Decide for yourself." Chien-po sat down on the edge of the *kang*. "You have two minutes to choose between life and death. I give you two minutes."

Chien-po took off his wrist-watch. Hsun-tsang pulled the sword from its sheath.

"One minute!" Chien-po stared at the tinker.

"I'll talk!" panted the tinker. "I'll talk!"

White Dove took up her pen to record his statement.

The tinker began with his fat Third Uncle in Pear Valley and went on to reveal the whereabouts and circumstances of eighteen landlords and leaders of superstitious cults — all turned bandit — including one

scoundrel who was now a leader of one of the PLA squads guarding the railway near Mutankiang.

We're much too lax, Chien-po thought. A bandit not only worms his way into our armed forces — he even becomes an officer!

Off to one side, listening, Hsun-tsang burned with angry impatience. "Who ordered the massacre in Pine Breeze Station?" he shouted. He saw Tzu-yung warningly shake his head. He subsided, abashed, knowing that he had spoken too soon.

Captain Luan's heart nearly burst with fear at the mention of the massacre. "I didn't have anything to do with it," he cried. "It was Three-Gun Cheng. On outside contacts, I'm in the south; he handles the north. My job is to keep contact with the Eagle. Collecting information and getting ready to welcome the return of the Kuomintang — that's all handled by Commissioner Hou. It's not in the hands of small fry like me."

"Repeat that!" Chien-po commanded quickly.

"I keep contact with the Eagle on Tiger Mountain. Where he is exactly, I don't know. I meet his man in the foothills at the edge of the forest."

As to Horse-Cudgel Hsu, the tinker said he only knew he was on Breast Mountain, but that he himself had never been to the hide-out. The reason was the same as Monkey Tiao had given. The outside man had more chances of being caught; Horse-Cudgel was particularly careful not to let him know anything of the set-up inside. In talking about the strength of Hsu's bandit gang, for some reason the tinker gazed at Chien-po and the others rather negligently.

"You'd better be careful with Horse-Cudgel," he warned. "He's got the best marksmen in the mountains under his command. Hsu Fu, his son, can bring down sparrows with his pistol; he never misses. Then there's Three-Gun Cheng. Been a bandit all his life. Horse-Cudgel hired him as a bodyguard for a thousand silver dollars. In the Manchukuo days he was Hsu's groom. He can hit anything that moves; he'll even tell you which eye he's going to hit first. Old Hsu and his sons are all a little afraid of him. Not only that. Three-Gun moves through the forest and scales the heights like he was on level ground, and he can cover forty miles in a day. He's got twelve men under him who are all almost his equal. You'd better be careful. I'm telling you for your own good!" The tinker glanced sideways at Chien-po to see whether he had frightened him.

A rooster crowed.

Chien-po looked at his watch. It was already five a.m.

A soft, weary footfall came through the door. It was Kao Po, only half awake. "203," he blurted, "the old mushroom picker —"

"Just a minute." Chien-po cut him short with a meaningful glance at the tinker.

The bandit finished his confession and put his thumb print on it.

"I want you to make me a list of the 'fronts' your gang has in the foothills," Chien-po said to him. "If we catch you lying, things will go badly for you."

After Luan was led away, Kao Po began again, "The old mushroom picker — "

"We know all about him!" said Chien-po with a happy grin. He stood up. "Comrades, we've made a start tonight. On the basis of what we knew before, plus the confessions of these two bandits, we'll soon be climbing Breast Mountain. I order everyone to take six hours' rest — it may be all the rest we'll get for some time. We've got a tough job ahead of us."

The men said they weren't tired. This exciting news revived their spirits. But Chien-po was firm.

"Your only duty for the next six hours is — sleep. After that, we're going to visit an old man of the mountains. . . ."

IV

Three days previously, while Tzu-yung was trailing the tinker and Hsun-tsang was looking for traces of bandits in the forest and Chao-chia was training the unit in mountain climbing techniques, Chien-po had been struggling to work out a plan for conquering the Aristocrat Range.

> Aristocrat Range, Aristocrat Range,
> Three thousand eight hundred peaks,
> Even the lowest no man has reached,
> The higher have ne'er known the song of birds.

So ran an old folk rhyme, and it wasn't much of an exaggeration. The mountains seemed heaped one upon the other. They rose through the clouds, and their tree tops pierced the heavens. They were alive with roaring tigers and growling bears; wild boars roamed in packs. There were panther and deer and flocks of wild mountain sheep. In the forests, you couldn't see the sky; from the heights, you couldn't see the foothills. Somewhere in that ocean of trees was a small gang of murdering bandits. But how could you find them? Where should you begin to look?

Chien-po's thoughts were as confused as a tangle of shreds of hemp.

That evening he went for a stroll up the ridge west of Nine-Dragon Confluence, together with Kao Po and Hung-yi. Gazing towards the northwest, they observed a flickering light in a hollow midway up a mountain. At first they thought it was a will-o'-the-wisp. But closer observation revealed that the flame was red, and that it stayed in one place. They decided it was man-made. With Chien-po in the lead, the three PLA men advanced towards the glow.

As they approached, they found a cave-dwelling hollowed out of the mountainside. The cave faced south and had a door with a window on either side. It was through one of these windows that the flame was shining.

Weak groans came from the little room.

Chien-po pushed open the door and went in. Lying on a *kang* was an old man, his legs covered with a torn sheepskin coat. A pine torch sputtered small red flames, filling the room with an acrid odour. The old man had white tousled hair and a silvery beard. He burst into rage when the three PLA men entered.

"Old grandpa," Chien-po greeted him.

"You've driven me down the mountain — isn't that enough for you? Must you come to my house and drive me to my grave? Is there no conscience in heaven or on earth!"

Chien-po was stunned for a moment by this sudden fury. Then he guessed it must have something to do with the bandits. "Old grandpa," he explained with a placating smile, "we're the People's Liberation Army, not mountain bandits. In fact we've come to get them off the necks of the people."

The old man didn't listen. Fuming, he took a wooden board from under his pillow, sat up and kicked aside the sheepskin coat covering his legs. He plainly was preparing for a battle to the death.

Kao Po hastily pushed Chien-po behind him. He repeated what Chien-po had said, then opened his overcoat and took off his big fur hat to reveal the cap and uniform of the PLA.

The old man squinted and examined him sceptically. Slowly his anger abated. At last he swung his legs over the side of the *kang* and sat up on the edge.

"Then you're not bandits?"

"We're not bandits, we're PLA men. We've come to clean the bandits out." Chien-po was afraid the old man was deaf. He raised his voice and pronounced every word carefully.

For several minutes the old man was silent. "Soldiers, huh!" he finally muttered. "Soldiers and bandits are the same family. Bandits are disaster, soldiers are plague! In this troubled world, if it's not one it's the other, bringing calamity on the people. Ay! . . ." he sighed deeply. "Sixty years in the forest, and the wolves and tigers have never harmed me. But these demons drive me down from the mountain!"

Chien-po could understand why the old man should hate the soldiers he had met in the old society. Smiling, he drew near and said soothingly, "We're not the old-style soldiers, grandpa. We're communist soldiers, we're the people's own army. Don't be afraid. We're completely different from the old reactionary armies."

The old man said nothing. He took his long-stemmed pipe from the *kang* and lit it. Its fragrant smoke somewhat ameliorated the acrid fumes of the burning resin.

Chien-po sat down beside him. He noticed that the old man was burning hot and breathing with difficulty. Taking the old man's hand, he asked in alarm, "Are you ill, grandpa?"

"What if I am? I knew it without your asking!" glared the old man. Still angry, he snapped at everyone.

Chien-po knew how he felt. "Go get White Dove," he directed Kao Po. "Tell her there's a sick man here."

Kao Po raced off.

Speaking as simply as could, Chien-po explained to the old man the policies of the Communist Party and the PLA.

Twenty minutes later Kao Po returned with White Dove. The old man's rage had diminished as Chien-po was speaking to him, and now he gazed curiously at these four strange soldiers. When White Dove removed her overcoat and cap and he saw her two perky braids, he became even quieter.

White Dove took his temperature and questioned him about his symptoms. He wasn't able to hold anything on his stomach.

"Since when?"

"The night before last."

"Have you tried to eat a little?"

"Who could eat? I've been so mad. The dirty sons of bitches! . . ." In broken sentences, the old man poured out the story of his indignation.

Three days before, three bandits appeared out of nowhere when he was up at Candlestick Ledge, robbed him of his things and drove him down the mountain. Like his father and grandfather before him, the old man had been gathering mushrooms in the Aristocrat Range all his life. This year he was sixty-eight. Every spring and autumn he went up into the mountains; every summer and winter he brought his produce to market. He had never married. No one knew his name. In these parts everyone called him "Old Mushroom Picker."

From the way he spoke, it was plain that the old man was direct, courageous and stubborn. Although nearly seventy, his eyes were bright and clear, his bearing robust.

White Dove diagnosed his ailment as intestinal flu. She gave him medicine and an injection, put some rice gruel on to boil, then washed his face and hands with warm water. She was as gentle as his own daughter. And every other word was an affectionate "old grandpa."

The old man couldn't take his eyes off her. At times he sighed, at times he appeared uneasy, at times he seemed ready to speak to her. Hot tears welled to his eyes.

"Whose daughter are you?" he finally asked.

"Poor people's daughter, old grandpa. Pa used to grow vegetables. Ma kept a vegetable stall."

"How many in your husband's family?"

"I'm only eighteen. Haven't got a husband." White Dove replied with such unabashed frankness that they all laughed.

"And now . . . you mean girls can also. . . ."

"That's right. Girls can also be soldiers and fight, and wipe out bandits, and protect the poor."

Old Mushroom Picker blinked slowly. Folding his hands on his chest he muttered, "God of the Mountains! Old One on High, preserve these good people!" He kept talking under his breath, his voice growing lower and lower until, at last, he fell asleep.

Chien-po was impatient to get on with his job. He left White Dove and Kao Po to look after the old man, and returned to the base with Hung-yi. As he was leaving he said to White Dove quietly. "It's a pity about the old man — living alone all these years without any dear ones. He didn't get a drop of warmth in the old days."

White Dove nodded silently.

"Maybe he can be our guide after he recovers."

Again White Dove nodded. "I'll talk to him. I'm sure he'll be willing to help us."

Three days later, thanks to the girl's ministrations, the old man was well again. He insisted on adopting White Dove as his grand-daughter. Rising before daybreak, he hurried to the village and asked Chien-po to preside over a party of celebration.

The sun rose to the tree-tops. After six hours of sweet repose, the PLA men were fully refreshed. Chien-po, Tzu-yung, Hsun-tsang, Chao-chia, Kao Po, Hung-yi and White Dove all went together to the Old Mushroom Picker's little cave home. Very happy, the old man welcomed his honoured guests with Return to Youth tea, brewed strong. From a niche in the wall he brought out something wrapped in a tattered cloth and handed it to Tzu-yung.

"Hey!" grinned the scout. "Grandpa's gift to his grand-daughter!" He unwound the cloth to reveal an ivory-coloured small sandalwood chest. Crowding close, Hsun-tsang opened the lid with his thick fingers. Everyone looked. Inside was a black object covered with fuzz and some bean-sized seeds.

Chao-chia sniffed the black thing, grinned, and patted White Dove on the shoulder. "Your grandpa really thinks of everything!" He held up the dark object and launched into the rapid patter of a medicine salesman.

"Now this medicine doesn't cure headaches and brain fever, colds or influenza. It doesn't cure bruises and bumps from falls and collisions, and it certainly won't help your lazy snoozing. This marvellous medication is

White Dove took his temperature and questioned him about his symptoms.

specially intended for irregular menstrual periods. I have here the most precious treasure of the north-east provinces — extract of deer placenta!"

Everyone burst into laughter.

Chao-chia picked up the seeds. "These are ginseng seeds. They're not for planting, they're not for eating. They're a treatment for difficult births. 'Delivery Pusher Seeds' is what we call them around here!"

Again the men roared with laughter, and they all looked at White Dove, who was standing beside the chuckling old man. The girl was a little embarrassed, although the valuable gifts were well-intended. She pouted and hung her head.

Then White Dove presented the gifts which she and the men of the unit had prepared. White shirts contributed by Tzu-yung and Hsun-tsang, and a tobacco pouch embroidered by White Dove — in red thread she had unravelled from a sock — with the motto, "Long-lived as the ancient pine."

Accepting the gifts, the old man wrung the hands of Chien-po and Tzu-yung warmly. He was all smiles, but tears flowed from his eyes.

White Dove wiped them away with her handkerchief. "Grandpa," she chided, "didn't you say you never cried in your sixty-eight years? What's come over you today?"

Old Mushroom Picker cupped her pretty face with both hands. "In sixty-eight years, girl . . . the first time . . ." he was unable to go on.

They all sat on the edge of the *kang* and on stools, drinking the famous Return to Youth tea the old man had picked himself on the slopes of the Aristocrat Range, where it grow wild. After chatting a while, Chien-po gave White Dove a meaningful glance. The girl understood. She shook the old man's knee.

"Grandpa, didn't you say all the rabbits in the Aristocrat Range know you? And you said you're sure the bandits are on Breast Mountain. Tell us about the place, so we'll know how to get at them."

The old man tapped out his pipe and took a pleasureable sip of Return to Youth tea. "I was born in the Aristocrat Range, I grew up here, I eat off it, I get my clothes here, I've walked it from one end to the other. If all the rabbits don't know me by now — they should!"

"Tell us about Breast Mountain," the PLA men pleaded.

Old Mushroom Picker fingered his silvery beard, and recited the words of a mountain song.

Breast Mountain,
Breast Mountain,
Rearing high in the north-west sky.
Near the top, a cave,
In the cave, a nymph,
On the peak, a freshet,
A freshet with nine springs.

Old men drink its waters,
And return to youth again.

"It's a place of treasure and supernatural beings — and dangerous terrain. We have an old saying that goes: *If you can reach the summit of Breast Mountain, you've magic enough to vault into Heaven; if you can set foot in the Cave of the Nymph, you're agile enough to make the Monkey King die of envy.*

"Over forty years ago, when I was around your age, one October, when the big wind was blowing but before the snows came, I picked up my rifle, slung my mushroom sack over my back, took my two-edged dagger, and set off alone for Breast Mountain.

"I walked up Calf Height, passed Horse Corral Knoll, crossed the Watershed, forded Frog Pond, scaled Candlestick Ledge, and climbed a few wooded mountains that had never before known the tread of man. I looked ahead, and there I saw not more trees, but a stretch of great stones, sticking up like wolves' teeth, gleaming gold in the sunlight.

"I started down through a deep gorge, going north. Both sides of the gorge were huge cliffs, so high it made you dizzy to look up. When the wind blew the overhanging rock creaked, as if it wanted to fall and crush me. The sky above looked like a blue river. Large white clouds, neat and orderly as if cut with a knife, formed a bridge from one side to the other. My father used to say, 'On a bridge of clouds you can reach the heavens.' It certainly looked that way. Anyone who could stand on those clouds had only to raise his hand and he could touch the sky.

"Coming out of the gorge, I entered upon a stony flat that twisted in a wide arc around the base of Breast Mountain. On the perimeter of the stony flat were large rocky mountains that formed a great circle with Breast Mountain as their centre.

"The mountain really looks like a woman's breast. It's broad and round, and at the very top is a gigantic black boulder, hundreds of yards high, forming the nipple. The nipple is coated with deep black soil and has many tall trees.

"About two miles west of Breast Mountain, on the other side of a boulder-strewn gorge, is Mount Fountain. This mountain is heaped with big boulders, and water gushes from crevices between them, spurting out thickly and dropping long distances. From afar, the mountain seems to be supported by thousands of liquid pillars. Water also flows from many horizontal openings and descends in broad waterfalls; there are many hundreds of these too. The liquid pillars and the waterfalls, cascading down, strike against the boulders at the foot of the mountain and burst into millions of pearly drops and an enormous curtain of spray that shines like a rainbow in the sun. It's very beautiful.

"North of Breast Mountain, about two miles away, is Stone Forest Mountain, also on the other side of a rocky valley, and right next to

Mount Fountain. This mountain is covered with groves of tall stately stones that look exactly like golden speckled pine — even to the bark and the branches.

"To the east is Hawk's Beak Peak. The base of this mountain is only a few hundred paces from Breast Mountain. It rises up steeply to a hooked rocky crag that hangs like an open beak over the neighbouring nipple. From below, this mass of dark stone is a terrifying sight, for it blocks out the sky and looks about to come crashing down at any minute. An icy wind howls around the summit, which is overgrown with moss.

"There's only one path to the top of Breast Mountain. It climbs the west face in a series of eighteen ladder stages, each with dozens of steps hewn out of the sheer rock, and so narrow that only one man can climb at a time. On both sides of the path are precipitous cliffs, thousands of yards high. Except for the Eighteen Stages, there's no way to get up or come down.

"Near the top is a huge fissure, and on one side of it is a large stone cave facing Mount Fountain to the west. Twenty large banquet tables could fit in the cave; it's as big as ten rooms. Inside the cave are two smaller openings. One, going up, is called the Tunnel to the Sky. It leads to a grove of trees atop the Nipple. The other, going down, is called the Bottomless Pit. It's pitch-black, gusty, full of weird sounds. No one has ever dared to explore it.

"I spent a night in the cave. It was quite warm and comfortable. The next morning I followed the light in the Tunnel to the Sky up a large sloping passage paved with glistening black stones.

"On the top are big trees, many of them hundreds of years old, leaning crazily in all directions; some stretch straight into the sky. The ground is carpeted with green grass. The surface of the Nipple is about a mile from east to west and a mile and three-quarters from north to south.

"In the exact centre is a hole five feet deep with nine small springs. Water flows from it all seasons of the year like milk from the nipple of a woman's breast; everyone calls it Heavenly Milk Freshet. It's a magic place. In all my years I've never seen water flow so high on any other mountain. Near the spring are wild Return to Youth tea bushes. People say if you make that tea with water from the freshet, the old can become young again and the young will never grow old. That's why I've brewed it especially for you, today.

"The cave is magic too. My grandfather told me — it's the Cave of the Nymph Maiden. . . ."

"Oh? A nymph is a girl?" Although White Dove didn't believe in spirits, she was so engrossed with the old man's tale, she couldn't help asking this silly question.

Everyone laughed. Chien-po had been taking careful note of anything the old man said that could help him understand the terrain of Breast Mountain and how to overcome its formidable barriers.

Old Mushroom Picker looked at White Dove and said, "Listen, my dear —

"Many, many years ago, I don't know how many centuries, there was a tribe living south-east of here. In the tribe was a middle-aged couple who herded sheep. They had always been childless, but when they reached fifty, Heaven bestowed on them a little daughter. Of course, she was their dearest treasure. People say the fragrant iris is the most precious of flowers, and so her parents named her Iris. Iris was intelligent and lovely, and she combed her lustrous black hair in two long braids. She sang beautifully. She also was a fine shot with the bow and arrow. Iris rode a small spotted deer that had antlers with eight prongs and ran like the wind.

"In the same tribe was a young man named Hero who was a splendid hunter. He rode a white horse with a long curly mane and played a bamboo flute. When he blew a blast on his hunting horn, the wolves didn't dare to move; when he shouted, the tigers and leopards trembled. He could fight a tiger with his bare hands, or tear a leopard apart, for he truly had the skill and strength of both.

"Iris loved to hear the sound of his flute, to see his large and shining dark eyes, to be in the presence of his magnificent courage. The two adored each other.

"The year Iris was eighteen, the chief of a savage neighbouring tribe, Fat Pig, lusted after her. He sent her many jewels and precious stones, but she would have none of them.

"That autumn, when Hero was away hunting in the distant mountains, Fat Pig led a hundred warriors in a raid and tied a red bridal veil on Iris. The girl wept bitter tears, but the people of her tribe had all been driven back and she was forced to leave with the raiders. She refused to ride Fat Pig's horse, nor would she ride his ox. She would ride only her beloved spotted deer.

"They travelled day after day, crossing mountain after mountain. Iris wept without cease. She wept so, even her deer shed tears and the birds in the trees stilled their songs.

"Three days after the raid, Hero returned home. He went to Iris' tent and found it empty. Without even pausing for a drink of water, he took up his three-hundred-catty bow, mounted his white horse with the curly mane, and set off, alone, in pursuit. Five days and five nights later, Hero and Fat Pig's warriors clashed in battle on a grassy plain.

"Hero was surrounded by Fat Pig and a hundred men, but he wasn't the least afraid. His arrows sped fast and true, toppling men and horses. But he only had one bow and seven bunches of arrows. By dusk his

quiver was empty, his arms were tired, his horse exhausted. With Iris' cry of 'Hero! Hero!' ringing in his ears, he hacked open a bloody path and, weeping, plunged into the forest. Then he remembered his fellow hunters. 'That's it!' he said. 'I'll get them to help me.'

"He raced his horse back towards his tribe. From the top of a mountain he called several times in a voice that rocked the hills and shook the earth. And after each cry he heard the response, 'Hero!' It sounded like Iris and it sounded like his young hunting mates.

"Fat Pig was anxious to move on. He and his men hurried across one hundred and eight streams, scaled one hundred and nine heights, till at last they came to a beautiful peak, called Iris Peak. It had the same name as Iris because it was covered with fragrant iris plants, and their flowers were the same pink hue as Iris' lovely face. On the peak the song of the phoenix could often be heard.

"At dusk, beside Iris Spring in Iris Valley, at the foot of Iris Peak, a large tent was erected. Iris led her deer and fed it on iris grass on the slopes, then let it drink the clear water of the Iris Spring. She wept more bitterly than ever. She wept so, the moon didn't shine and the stars were dimmed, and the waters of the stream sobbed with her. She cried for her father and mother, she cried for Hero, she cried half the night.

"Suddenly there was a sound like the mountains splitting asunder, and a wild gale rose that blew down the tent and flung about stones as big as ladles. The horses neighed madly and stampeded away. The wind blew so hard that Iris was buffeted into a stupor.

"But Iris' deer didn't fear the wind. Putting Iris on its back, it sailed across mountains and ridges all through the night. At dawn the wind died and the clouds dispelled. Still dazed, Iris heard the gentle melodious tones of a bamboo flute and the whinnying of a horse, and she smelled the delicious odour of cooked meat.

"As if awakening from a nightmare, she opened her eyes. Fat Pig's tent was gone. She was in a mountain cave and the deer was licking her hand. Turning towards the sound of the flute, she saw Hero happily playing a tune as he roasted a piece of meat over the fire and waited for her to awake. Nearby were his bow and his horse. How delighted the two lovers were to be together again!

"But their troubles were still not over. For the place they were in had no water and no grain. It was far from her sheep, from her mother and father, and flowers she loved so well. As they pined, suddenly a sweet song was borne to them on the breeze. They looked. Coming towards them were four maidens. One was dressed in a blue blouse and blue skirt and carried a large gourd. The second wore a red blouse and green skirt and carried a bunch of fresh flowers. The third was dressed

completely in apricot yellow and carried an armful of wheat. The fourth wore all kingfisher blue and held a phoenix tail-feather.

"Hero and Iris hurried to greet them, and the maidens introduced themselves. 'I am the Clear Spring Maiden.' 'I am the Spirit of Grain.' 'I am the Nymph of Flowers.' 'I am the Queen of Birds.' 'You lovers need not despair.' So saying, the four maidens waved their hands.

"There was a blinding flash and Mount Fountain began gushing water, grain sprouted on Breast Mountain, grass grew everywhere, flowers burst into bloom and the air was filled with thousands of birds of all descriptions. Iris sang for joy, Hero tootled gaily on his flute; the two celebrated for hours. Suddenly they remembered that they ought to thank their benefactors, but the four maidens were gone. All that remained were the glorious hues of the sunset clouds.

"From that day on, the lovers made their home in the cave on Breast Mountain. They hunted and raised vegetables and grain, picked mushrooms, tended sheep, played the flute and sang. They had many children — both boys and girls. Iris reared her children and sent them to help the poor and the aged. Those who had no daughters, she gave girls; those who had no sons, she gave boys. She wanted nothing for it. When people asked her her name, she said, 'Call me anything you like.'

"After living in the cave, I don't know how many years, the two of them left, riding a cloud over the Four Seas, bringing happiness to people everywhere. The cave has been known ever since as the Cave of the Child-Bestowing Nymph."

Old Mushroom Picker paused for a sip of Return to Youth tea. He lit his pipe, took a puff and blew out a cloud of thin blue smoke.

"Today the bandits are on Breast Mountain and in the Cave of the Nymph. They plunder and kill the people, and they've driven me down the mountain. This is a great crime against the nymphs who blessed the place; the bandits will eventually be punished. When Iris and Hero come back, they'll wipe those fiends out. That's the only way to get rid of the bandits; ordinary mortals can never do it!"

"Why not?" demanded Hsun-tsang.

"Don't you see? There's only one path to the cave. Before that are the Eighteen Stages. One man can hold them against ten thousand. Who but the immortals can fight their way up?"

Chien-po looked around at the others. "We're going to destroy those bandits, come what may. Iris and Hero are coming back very soon!"

Everyone laughed. Chao-chia asked the question which concerned him most.

"Old grandpa, how far did you say Hawk's Beak is from the Nipple?"

The old man thought a moment. "On a straight line, about twenty paces." He shook his head sceptically. "It's not very wide, but how are you going to get across? Below is a sheer drop of thousands of feet; it

makes you dizzy just to look down. What's more, Hawk's Beak is high; Breast Mountain is lower. It can't be done!"

"How much lower?" Chao-chia asked.

"We've an old saying that goes, 'The Beak thirsts for the Nipple, but it can't even reach the tree-tops.' Even the highest trees on Breast Mountain don't touch the Beak."

"That's a very old saying," Hsun-tsang interjected with a grin. "The trees must be much taller by now!" The old man and the others laughed.

"We've got another old saying," Old Mushroom Picker jested, " 'The tallest trees can't reach the sky, the oldest man can't pass one hundred.' There's no use trying the impossible. . . ."

But Chien-po, too, pressed him for the distance from the Beak to the tree-tops. The old man estimated, "About fifteen paces." Chien-po glanced at Chao-chia. The scout was deep in calculations.

Chien-po thanked the old man and everyone rose to leave. The old man hated to see them go. He accompanied them to outside the door.

V

The golden rays of the late afternoon sun illuminated the interior of the Cave of the Nymph.

There, in his private chamber, bandit chieftan Horse-Cudgel Hsu and his eldest son, Hsu Fu, were curled up like shrimps on a tiger-skin-covered couch noisily sucking opium pipes.

In the main hall of the cave quarrelling and cursing and singing dirty songs, bandits were playing cards. Their faces were covered with stubble an inch long.

Scab-Eye Ting, puffing and wheezing after his climb up the Eighteen Stages, walked through the hall of bickering swearing bandits and entered the apartment of Horse-Cudgel Hsu. He tucked in his neck and inhaled avidly the opium smoke that Hsu had just expelled. Finally he breathed out, smacked his lips in satisfaction and cried:

"Reporting to the brigadier!"

Horse-Cudgel was going at the opium pipe for all he was worth. At the sound of Scab-Eye's voice, he took a last deep drag, lazily rolled over on his back and nodded slightly. He let a bit of smoke dribble out of his nose, then breathed it back in again.

Tucking in his neck, Scab-Eye took another couple of quick gasps and batted his eyes blissfully.

"Brigadier, I'm bringing word from Three-Gun Cheng. He says Commissioner Hou is full of praise for our success at Pine Breeze Station. The commissioner's promoted Three-Gun to colonel. The commissioner says the moment our Kuomintang army returns he's going to recommend that you be promoted to deputy commander of a division!"

Lying belly upwards, Horse-Cudgel was very pleased with himself. He exhaled a cloud of thick white smoke. Scab-Eye's nose again twitched excitedly.

"Naturally." Hsu stretched out his legs and put his opium pipe aside. "I've always been a man of daring. The others? Bah! Which of those bastards can compare?" He swung his legs over the edge of the couch and sat up. "Li Teh-lin of the Second Brigade is an old pig who only knows how to eat. The Eagle, while he's competent enough, is a money-sucking bedbug; he won't make a move without cash on the line. Tiger-Cat Nine has always been a petty little sneak-thief; he's quick to take advantage but he never wants to do any work. Ma Hsi-shan is an able man, but now that he's left his old stamping grounds, he's lost his luck." Hsu rubbed his thick eyelids. "Let's hear, what's the news? We ought to go after the Reds again while our luck's still with us!"

Scab-Eye's whole face wrinkled in a grin. He blinked rapidly. "We've got a great chance, brigadier. When we go down the mountain this time, there'll be fine pickings!"

"Speak up! Out with it!" Hsu Fu, having satisfied his craving, sat up quickly.

"After Three-Gun Cheng left Commissioner Hou, he went to Mutankiang." Scab-Eye twisted his mouth conspiratorially. "This is straight stuff. The communist army searched the mountains for a month and half, but they didn't find a thing. Now they've called back all their men and, instead of returning to Mutankiang, they've spread out among the little hamlets in the foothills. They're helping the stinking paupers divide up the land, fight the landlords. They've got no real force left in Mutankiang, only a couple of units of clodhoppers with less than two months' training. Three-Gun's idea is. . . ."

"A wonderful chance!" Hsu Fu slapped his thigh. "Push into Mutankiang and knock the Commies on the head!"

"Right!" Horse-Cudgel jumped to his feet. "They won't know which way to turn. They come out to search the mountains and we destroy their base in town!"

"That's Three-Gun's idea exactly." Scab-Eye gazed heavenward in admiration. "It's a case of 'All heroes think alike.' Three-Gun's getting in touch with our people in Mutankiang right now, and learning the enemy's passwords. He wants to strike from within and without at the same time."

Pleased, Horse-Cudgel wagged his head. "Three-Gun never let's a thing get by. He slips into every opening."

Hsu Fu jumped down from the couch and clapped Scab-Eye on the shoulder. "After Three-Gun finishes making his contacts in the town we won't be just a hundred and fifty men and more — we'll be over a thousand. With a force like that we'll split Mutankiang open like a knife through a ripe melon. Hey! One slash and we'll cut the Reds in two!"

"No!" Horse-Cudgel clenched his fist and swung it down. "We won't cut them, we'll pulverize them, grind them to bits, make mush out of them! You and Three-Gun can take over the Commies' bank. I'll knock out the provincial Party committee. Ting here and your second brother can finish off their district military headquarters."

The three bandits laughed uproariously.

"When do we start?" Hsu Fu shook himself.

Horse-Cudgel frowned and rolled his eyes up thoughtfully. "Crack troops are as fast as demons. We start tomorrow."

He went into the main hall of the cave where the bandits were still roistering. "Brothers, we're going to Mutankiang tomorrow for a little fun," he brayed. "It's much too cramped in this Cave of the Nymph. In town we'll really be able to let loose!"

Throwing down their cards, the bandits, leaped to their feet and yelled like madmen.

"When we get there," said Horse-Cudgel Hsu, grinding his teeth, "I've only three orders — burn, kill, loot! We'll give awards to the men who bring back the most communist ears!"

*

A full moon hung in the eastern evening sky.

In Nine-Dragon Confluence people were lighting their lamps. The barking of dogs rang sharply in the clear air.

On the slope of a hill about a third of a mile from the village, the full complement of the small PLA unit was drawn up in neat array. Chien-po addressed the men cheerfully.

"Comrades, we've discovered the first bandits' nest. But in order to get to it, we have to go through dangers the like of which we've never known before."

Again he described in detail the obstacles barring the way to Breast Mountain, and told how they would be overcome. As to the enemy, he said, "We're going to beard the tiger in his den. The enemy has four or five times more men than we — which means that each of us must lick four or five of them. We've got to be quick as lightning, powerful as thunder. We've got to hit them so hard that they can't catch their breath. If we give them a chance to counter-attack, we're lost.

"But does that mean we're being too rash? No!" Chien-po believed this one hundred per cent. Long battle experience had steeled his determination; the more difficult things were, the steadier he became.

"The terrain here isn't suitable for a large attacking force. But we don't want one anyway. You can't hit a sparrow with a millstone. This rough terrain is going to be an advantage to our small detachment because the enemy is sure to count on it and get careless. The natural barriers will become our allies. . . . Now let's go!"

Just then Old Mushroom Picker came panting up. "What's this? Why haven't you called me?" he demanded reproachfully.

"We were afraid you're too old, grandpa."

"Old? Me? Nonsense. Anyhow the older you get, the tougher your bones. Think I'm not good enough, eh? Come on, let's go! I'll show you how tough this old man is!"

"Grandpa," White Dove gently tugged his arm. "Stay here and guard the tinker and Monkey Tiao. That's an important job too!"

"Hey, girl! So you're picking on me too?"

"No, grandpa. But if you go, what will we do about the prisoners?" White Dove was afraid the two bandits would escape.

The scouts Hsun-tsang and Ta-teh began to chuckle in the ranks.

The old man laughed too. "You don't have to worry about that. I put them in a place nobody knows but me. They can't escape, they can't starve, and they can't be rescued."

Beneath his shack the old man had a stone-paved storage pit covered by a big slab of rock. The night before, with the help of Hsun-tsang and Ta-teh, he had pulled open the slab, intending to take out the valuable herbs and roots he had accumulated over the years and follow the PLA unit down to the foothills. But when the scouts told him they were going to storm Breast Mountain, he insisted on acting as guide. The scouts consented, feeling that his knowledge of the trails would be very helpful. This morning, the scouts and the old man put the prisoners into the pit, left them some cooked sorghum, pushed the slab back in place and weighted it with three big rocks, each of which took two men to carry.

Chien-po assigned Old Mushroom Picker to Tzu-yung's squad. The unit sped forward like an arrow, straight into the depths of the forest.

To say that they marched would be putting it mildly. They rather surged forward like a school of slim fish cutting through mountainous waves. Horse Corral Knoll, Calf Height, the Watershed . . . seemed to roll past the unit in the opposite direction. One by one they were left behind.

The Old Mushroom Picker walked at the very head of the unit. He was full of energy. In spite of the speed of the long march, he wasn't even breathing hard.

At Frog Pond, the unit divided into two columns, in accordance with Chien-po's battle strategy. Tzu-yung led a column of riflemen, with the old man as guide. They climbed Candlestick Ledge and, following the path the old man had trod forty years before, entered the steep gorge. This took them around to the south-west side of Breast Mountain where they established firing positions to seal off the Eighteen Stages — the only path to or from the Cave of the Nymph — and the mouth of the cave itself.

Chien-po, at the head of two squads commanded by Hsun-tsang and Chao-chia and armed with tommy-guns and automatics, went due west and began climbing Hawk's Beak Peak. Their plan was to cross the abyss, land on the Nipple of Breast Mountain, and fight their way down into the Cave of the Nymph through the Tunnel to the Sky.

Chien-po and his men climbed Hawk's Beak during the darkest hour before the dawn. Luckily the tree-tops were coated with the cold silver of a fading moon; it was this light that guided them to the sharp point of the massive Beak. Below was Breast Mountain — and a black yawning abyss, hung with huge boulders and towering cliffs and swirling with dank wild winds that bit your flesh and ate into your bones. The tall trees on the Nipple were swaying and creaking in the wind directly below the men's feet; it looked as if the whole mountain was in motion. Dizzy, the palms of their tensely clenched hands sweating, the men fought to keep their vision focused.

"Hurry, Chao-chia," Chien-po ordered quietly. "It's almost daybreak!"

"Yes sir! I'm starting right now."

Bending forward at the waist and holding on to a big stone projection, Chao-chia looked here, peered there.

He was an expert climber. His father and grandfather before him had been lumberjacks. Chao-chia had grown up with them in the mountain forests. Slim and light, he was very agile and could swing through the branches from tree to tree dozens of feet above the ground. His skill had earned him the nickname, "Flying Monkey."

Chao-chia first picked out a big tree on the Nipple that was close to the Beak. The tip of one of its thick branches was separated from the point of the Beak by a distance of about fifteen yards. On this end, on the crown of the Hawk's "head," there was only one dried-out ancient elm tree. Chao-chia wrapped his arms around it and shook it vigorously.

"Good. Not rotted yet. It's still quite strong." In Chien-po's ear, he said cheerfully, "No problem. I can fly across."

A thousand-catty load dropped from Chien-po's heart. He felt much relieved.

"Everything depends on whether you can build us a 'sky ladder,' Chao-chia. Let's see you do it!"

Smiling, Chao-chia nodded. He turned and tied one end of a strong rope, thirty-five yards long, around the trunk of the old elm tree. On the other end he made a bowline, which he tied around his waist. Then he carefully inspected the entire length of the rope.

Hopeful, but by no means sure, the men watched his every move.

"Everything is ready!" Chao-chia reported to Chien-po, whose eyes had never left him for a second. "May I begin?"

Chien-po did not reply. First he tested each section of the rope personally. Then he leaned over and measured with his eye the distance to the tree-tops on the Nipple. Chien-po was tense. His old companion in battle might fall into the abyss; and if Chao-chia couldn't get across, the whole mission would fail. Nothing else seemed to matter. Chao-chia simply had to fly over to Breast Mountain!

Convinced that preparations had been properly made, Chien-po shook hands with him. "Good luck, Comrade Chao-chia."

The scout looked Chien-po in the eye and wrung his hand warmly. "See you on the other side, Commander 203." Chao-chia shook hands with each of his other companions, then pulled the rope to the edge of the cliff, dropped it over the side, and slid down after it, out of sight. All that remained was the section of rope stretching tautly from the old elm.

Halfway down the cliff, his hands clutching the rope, his feet braced against the rock face, Chao-chia was like a spider on a thread. After he descended to the rope's end, he worked his way over with bounding motions of his feet till he was directly opposite his target.

The men's hearts beat fast. All eyes were fixed on the big tree on the Nipple, the tree on which Chao-chia was supposed to land. One second, ten seconds, a minute, three minutes. . . .

"Three minutes and forty seconds." Chien-po looked at the luminous dial of his wrist-watch. His heart was thumping.

Chao-chia had already selected his angle. The scout was assailed by a moment of doubt. Could he make it? If he didn't reach the tree, the rope on its backswing would dash him against the cliff and crack every bone in his body. But that was a small matter. The main thing was that Chien-po's plan, their mission to crush the bandits, would fail.

Again he measured the distance. Then he pulled up his legs and sprang out from the cliff with all his might. He flew like a shot from a catapult, over the abyss, towards Breast Mountain. The men on Hawk's Beak drew in their breath. But before they could utter a sound, Chao-chia was perched on the thick branch extending out from the big tree on the Nipple.

The hearts of Chien-po and his men nearly split with relief. A warm wave ran from the hair on their heads to the tips of their toes.

Chien-po lay down quickly and grasped the rope. He could feel it being pulled towards Breast Mountain, tighter and tighter. Straining his eyes, he saw a small black object in the branches disappearing among the leaves. He softly released his breath and rose to his feet.

"He's made it, comrades!" he announced in a low excited voice. "What a hero! Now it's our turn. Be bold. Victory is in our hands."

The men were so thrilled they seemed ready to clear the abyss in one leap.

"Look, 203," cried Kao Po. "There's Chao-chia's signal. That means the rope is tied fast!"

Everyone lay prone and squinted along the rope. It ran down at a forty-five degree angle, linking Hawk's Beak and the Nipple. An aerial strand had been thrown across the deep abyss.

"This hempen bridge is our sky ladder to the bandits, comrades," jested Chien-po, lying in their midst. "A sky ladder — Chao-chia variety! Now we've got to come down from heaven. Give free rein to your courage and hold the rope tight! I'll go first." He wrapped his arms about the rope and was about to slide when Hsun-tsang stopped him.

"Not so fast, 203. It isn't time for you to go yet." Hsun-tsang turned and swung his arm. "Squad Two, follow me!" Hooking the rope with arms and legs, he pushed off and slid across like a dark bead on a string, landing in the tree on the opposite side.

"It's quite safe, comrades!" Before the words were out of Chien-po's mouth, another dark bead slid down the string, and another and another.

I ought to get over there, Chien-po thought. Turning to Young Tung he said, "I'm going now. You follow with Squad Three." He hooked his elbows and knees over the rope as he had seen Hsun-tsang do. Kao Po was ahead of him, and after him came Hung-Yi and White Dove. Keeping a fixed distance between them, they slid across the abyss together and reached Breast Mountain.

No sooner did Chien-po's feet touch the ground than Chao-chia came running up to him.

"We've found the exit of the Tunnel to the Sky, 203. Hsun-tsang's squad is guarding it."

Chien-po swung his arm. "Let's go!" With Chao-chia leading the way, Chien-po hurried towards the tunnel.

At the exit, Hsun-tsang and his men were closely surrounding a small log cabin which the bandits had built over the mouth of the tunnel to keep it from filling with the heavy winter snows. The cabin faced south, its back to the north wind. Inside was the slanting tunnel of gleaming black stone. About fifteen yards down, a small round door of woven branches blocked the passage. The bandits were resting tranquilly on the other side.

"Good! The sons of bitches are all asleep. What about it, 203?" whispered Hsun-tsang. "Shall we blast our way in? I've already tied three bunches of grenades together. We can blow open the door and — "

"Not yet." Chien-po cut him short with a quick motion of the hand. "Do you smell anything?" He faced north and sniffed.

The fragrance of cooking meat and rice was overpowering the pungent woodland aroma. Immediately, the men were on their alert. Chien-po thought of the Heavenly Milk Freshet to the north that the Old Mushroom Picker had told them about. He wrinkled his brow.

"Hsun-tsang's squad, stay here and guard the tunnel. Chao-chia's squad, come with me!"

Just then Young Tung and the rest of the men appeared. Chien-po motioned for them to join him, then plunged north into the grove. The newcomers quickly followed, taking up the rear in combat formation.

The fragrant odour grew stronger as the grove thinned out. Ahead was a pile of kindling, as high as a man. Using this as cover, the PLA men advanced cautiously in the faint pre-morning light. Suddenly they saw a brief glow of fire. Hiding behind trees, the men peered in the direction from which the glow had come. About forty yards ahead and to the right was a wooden shack. Fire was gleaming through a crack in its door, shining in the grove like the beam of a flashlight.

Outside, a bandit was relieving himself against the east wall. The PLA men could see his profile. Chien-po made a gesture to Kao Po and Hung-yi beside him — he brought both hands together and pressed down. The clever young fighters understood him completely. They flew towards the bandit, grabbed him like foxes pouncing on a chicken and flung him over backwards on the ground.

"Quit fooling around," the bandit growled, struggling to rise. "It's too cold for this kind of horseplay!"

When he saw that he was being held by a couple of PLA men, he uttered an astonished curse. By then, Chao-chia and Chien-po were also upon him. Chao-chia planted his foot on the bandit's belly and held the point of his blade to the man's heart.

"Keep your voice down," Chao-chia warned ominously. "How many men are up here? Tell the truth. Even half a lie and I'll split you wide open!"

Trembling with fright, the bandit stammered, "I — I'm the cook. Every — everyone's in the cave. Spare me! . . ."

"How many are there here on the Nipple? I'm not asking about the cave."

"Two — two cooks, and — and ten — ten soldiers."

"Lead us to them! Stop your gab!" Kao Po pulled him up by the hair. "Let's go!" The bandit was so terrified his legs were weak and rubbery. Half walking half crawling, he led them around the cook house to a grove on the north. There, before them, was another cabin. The PLA men moved up rapidly on the three sides that had a door and windows. At that moment, the door opened and a bandit appeared, an overcoat draped over his shoulders; he was hitching up his trousers. As he put one foot over the threshold, he saw the soldiers. His jaw dropped in astonishment. The PLA men charged. He realized what was happening when they were twenty yards away. With a cry of dismay, he darted back into the cabin, slammed the door and bolted it. "The enemy! The enemy!" they heard him yelling.

"Smash in, quick!" shouted Kao Po. A dozen soldiers swarmed up to the door. Young Tung broke it open with one kick, and sped in like an arrow. Kao Po, Chao-chia, and six or seven others, piled in behind him.

Inside, there was wild confusion. The bandit who had fled from the door pulled a gun down from the wall and levelled it at Young Tung. Kao Po's automatic barked twice. The bandit crumbled dead to the floor.

"We'll shoot anyone that moves!" The muzzles of the PLA guns were trained on the dozen or so bandits who were sitting up, startled, on a *kang*. "Lie down, all of you!"

Frightened and shivering, the bandits resumed their original positions.

Chao-chia and a few of the soldiers leaped up on the *kang* and collected the guns and knives hanging on the walls. Then Chao-chia snapped, "Get up! Get out of bed! Put your clothes on!"

The prisoners were escorted to the cook house. Chien-po left two PLA men to guard them. All the others hastened back towards the mouth of the tunnel.

At the tunnel, Hsun-tsang, when he heard Kao Po's automatic, had begun to wonder whether anything had gone wrong. Suddenly, three more shots echoed in the rocky gorge at the base of the mountain. It was already dawn, and Tzu-yung and his squad, advancing up the gorge in the direction of the Cave of the Nymph, had been spotted by a bandit sentry, who fired one shot, then turned and started clambering up the Eighteen Stages. Ta-teh's rifle spoke twice. The man fell backwards, gun and all, to be dashed to pieces in the gorge.

The sound of the shooting awakened the bandits in the cave. Immediately, the lair was in a turmoil.

"Bastards! What's all the racket about?" Hsu Fu cursed his underlings. "How many hundreds have the Reds sent?"

"Reporting to the Chief of Staff," called a guard at the entrance to the cave. "We can't see the foot of the mountain clearly."

"Step back, all of you," cried Hsu Fu, rolling up his sleeves. "Bring me three hundred rounds of ammunition. I'll show them a little shooting — one shot, one hit; two shots, two corpses. We'll see how many dead Commies it takes to fill up the gorge!" Holding his rifle, he swaggered to the mouth of the cave.

From below, Tzu-yung's squad fired a blistering volley and yelled, to give the impression of a large attacking force.

Hsu Fu lay indolently on the stone ledge outside the cave. "Little Commies," he brayed. "You came here walking, but you'll be carried back, feet first!"

There was no question about it — Tzu-yung and his men could not possibly reach the Cave of the Nymph from the gorge. The only way

up was by means of the narrow Eighteen Stages — in plain view of the marksman on the ledge.

"Back to sleep, brothers. I'll hold the place alone," Hsu Fu boasted to his cohorts. "You can go down after breakfast and collect the dead enemy's guns. Then we'll go on to Mutankiang and have some fun."

At the foot of the mountain, rifles popped and sputtered, as Tzu-yung kept up his simulated attack.

In the Tunnel to the Sky, Hsun-tsang had laid grenades to blast open the gate blocking the passage. By then Chien-po arrived. Hsun-tsang met him outside the cabin door. Before Chien-po had a chance to speak, the gate in the tunnel creaked open. Chien-po and Hsun-tsang peered through a crack in the cabin door. Coming towards them were two bandits. One, a heavily bearded man about fifty, in a sheepskin overcoat, had a face like a black demon, with a large head, big ears, and thick lips — obviously Horse-Cudgel Hsu. An automatic hung from a cord around his neck.

"So the Reds want to die, do they? Sons of bitches!" he swore. "Pussycats scratching the tiger's nose! . . ."

The moment Horse-Cudgel set foot outside the cabin door Hsun-tsang tackled him from the rear and threw him, face first, to the ground. Two soldiers swiftly bound him hand and foot. The younger bandit was Horse-Cudgel's fourth son, Hsu Hsiang. When he saw his father being seized he ran back into the tunnel, yelling, "There are Communists on the summit! They've caught the brigadier!"

This was something the bandits had never imagined could happen, even in their dreams. There was absolute chaos in the cave. Hsu Fu's donkey voice rose above the clamour.

"Quick, out through the tunnel. Charge to the top. Quick!"

The cave resounded with the sliding of dozens of bolts pushing bullets into the rifle chambers, then the wild shout, "Charge!"

Hsun-tsang prepared to meet the rush with his tommy-gun. Chien-po waved his hand. "No. Grenades first!" Hsun-tsang at once grasped the long firing string of three bunches of grenades he had placed in the tunnel beside the gate.

The bandits rushed to the gate of the tunnel. Hsun-tsang pulled the string. There was a tremendous explosion. Bits of rock flew in all directions. The Tunnel to the Sky became a smoking chimney. Thick acrid smoke spewed out of its mouth. The bandits who were still alive lay crying and groaning.

"Charge!" ordered Chien-po. With Hsun-tsang, Chao-chia and Young Tung at their head, two squads plunged through the tunnel into the cave, firing and cheering. Terrified bandits fled towards the mouth of the cave, but some continued to resist. Hsun-tsang and his men fought their way to the centre of the main hall. They concentrated seven tommy-guns

that sprayed a rain of death in every corner, forcing all the bandits out of the cave. Some began climbing down the narrow Eighteen Stages. Tzu-yung and his dozen sharp-shooters in one volley sent seven or eight of them tumbling off the steep cliffs to the rocks below. The Eighteen Stages was no longer an impregnable defense for the bandits; it was their road to perdition.

Rushing back into the cave, they were again met with a hail of lead from the tommy-guns.

"Give up your arms and live!" shouted the PLA men.

It was hopeless. One by one the bandits dropped to their knees and surrendered their weapons.

In the crowd of bandit survivors, Hsu Fu levelled his pistol at Hsun-tsang, who was in the front ranks of the PLA men. A bandit about twenty-seven or eight seized his wrist.

"Don't shoot, young master! You'll be the death of all of us!"

When he heard the cry "young master," Hsun-tsang immediately ordered two soldiers to bind the fiend, who was the bandit chief's eldest son.

Horse-Cudgel's second son, Hsu Lu, was hiding in a fissure outside the mouth of the Cave of the Nymph. His back was exposed to Tzu-yung's squad in the gorge. There was a shot, and Hsu Lu's arm was broken.

All of the bandits were now rounded up. Firing ceased on Breast Mountain. Except for Hsu Hsiang, who plunged to his death from the Eighteen Stages, Horse-Cudgel Hsu and his other three sons were all taken alive.

The midday sun shone down on Breast Mountain, reddening its slopes. The Cave of the Nymph rang with the notes of White Dove's song, and the men sang with her. Joyous, happy music rose to the sky, tempering the wintry wind, echoing against the cliffs. And in the warmth that the song evoked, a flock of pigeons wheeled and soared.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Wen Yung-hsiung

From Fularki to Tsitsihar

LIU PAI-YU

The train ran on swiftly.

Outside the window, the setting sun, like a huge scarlet plate, hung over the vast grassland. Somewhere ahead, in a haze of smoke, was Fularki. As dusk deepened, the pink grassland turned pale yellow. That pearly white belt in the distance must be the Nunkiang River!

In a swirl of wind and snow, a vision of bygone days appeared before my eyes. Ten years ago, when Chiang Kai-shek was madly waging civil war, I used to visit this area quite often. The first time I came in spring. I rode alone in a dilapidated wagon. Like a small boat afloat on the sea, I had travelled all day across the vast grassland.

Whoever said it was plain and dull! When you went up to it, the grassland displayed to you all of its wonderful secrets. Was that a lark or some other bird, singing, high above in the sky? Looking up you saw only a span of blue, with not a shadow of any bird! Wild flowers bloomed in luxuriance; you'd think a section of the rainbow had fallen onto the ground, they were so beautiful and fragrant. Gray water fowls glided over the reeds by a brook, its transparent water as bright as a mirror.

All these wonders had been blurred by the thick smoke of war. In the winter of 1946 we launched our counter-attack in these parts. I still remember the smoke and fire rising round the railway station after enemy bombing. I also remember the peasants, a long line of men bringing supplies to the front, marching through the grassland in the pitch-black night.

Like a ball of yarn — my memories unfolded in an endless stream. The train was already nearing the Nunkiang River.

Again the snow and wind blurred my view. One night in deep winter I had paced alone up and down the platform of a small station in this area. A snowstorm raged, and in the dim lamplight I had gazed out at the clouded sombre sky, my heart yearning for peace. I had thought: Was not peace born slowly and bit by bit through the war? Ever since then, I have looked for, discovered and treasured even the slightest new bud in our lives. We have come a long way from those days and the path of war now seems so very remote. You have only to

compare the present with the past to realize all the more how gloriously bright our present life is. . . .

I had to cut short my reminiscence, for the conductor had come to bid me goodbye. Smilingly, he told me: "The train is 'leaping forward.' We get in an hour earlier than before!"

And so the train entered Fularki.

The Red Bank

Fularki at night was beautiful. This first night I arrived in Fularki, I could not sleep for long, long hours, fascinated by the picture outside my window. Across that enormous industrial area by the river bank, lights glittered like a myriad of stars scattered from the sky, and the blue flame of electric welding flickered like summer lightning.

During the days at Fularki these words rang in my ears constantly: "This is a brand-new page of history. The working people are at last making history according to their own ideas."

Though the vast grassland had changed greatly in appearance, the steps of history had not receded too far behind.

Comrade Lin Na, the first woman director assigned to set up a factory in Fularki, talked to me in her office.

"In the beginning we lived in small mud huts. The weather was bitterly cold and the stoves always lighted, fuming with black smoke day and night. Later, we moved into a new building. The youngsters were so excited many of them could not sleep at all the first night."

Our happy life has its deep roots in the arduous days of the past. When she was no more than a mere child, Comrade Lin Na joined the anti-Japanese forces in north-east China, fighting in the mountains and forests of Heilungkiang Province. These people, steeled in yesterday's flames of war, today are making steel of the finest grades.

We could not continue our conversation that day. Outside, gongs and drums were beating loudly — comrades from the workshops had come to report their victories in production! The factory was surging forward like a rising tide. Production targets were being surpassed one by one; new records were broken constantly. Comrade Lin Na was called away by the drums and gongs.

Now, let the pioneers speak for themselves. There were veteran engineers struggling with the severe northern winter for the first time, young college graduates from former missionary universities in Shanghai, villagers who had come to try their hand at industry, people with vision attracted by this heroic project — all were making history.

When they first arrived they found the name of the place, Northern Wilderness, fully justified. It was so cold: the wind slashed your face

like razors. The newcomers asked how often the wind blew. A local resident told them: "It blows only twice a year; six months each time!" As for the snow, an old man said, "Heavy snow seals up mud huts higher than a man." They found it out for themselves too. One night, the wind turned the heavy iron arm of a towering crane clear around to the other direction.

Yet people kept pouring in by the trainload from Peking, Shanghai, Wusih, Swatow, Taiyuan, Changchun, Penki and other places all over China. Among them were skilled well-drillers from Peking, women drivers of mobile cranes from Changchun, and the "March 8" surveying team famous throughout the country. None of them, whether old engineers or young folk, had ever worked in the remote north before. But all were in high spirits.

"We want to build up a new-type factory in this wilderness," they said.

Workers crouched high up in the scaffolding braving wind and snow. In spite of the severe cold, concrete workers sweated profusely to prevent the concrete from freezing. When an inexperienced young worker found a thin layer of ice coating his surveying instrument he pressed his mouth close to warm it; the icy steel burned like fire on his lips and made them bleed. Racing against time, surveyors worked in the night with the aid of flashlights, plotting the windy snow-covered wilderness. Wolves used to come out in packs, howling mournfully as if in protest or perhaps lamenting the loss of their hunting ground.

Day in, day out, in the wind and the rain, people worked ceaselessly. The railway stretched further. Building material piled up mountain-high. Machines roared and trucks raced down the road. Light blazed on the ground and in the air. One after another, buildings appeared out of nowhere and new machines were installed. As the manager of the basic construction company put it, "All this is like the gathering of forces to storm an enemy blockhouse, like the sending of ammunition to the front!" Speaking of one key project, he remarked, "That's our Huaihai Battle!"*

Before such daring people, the severe cold had to retreat and the wilderness give way. The Nunkiang River froze but thawed again. Nature, cruel and ruthless as it is, couldn't help smiling at the zeal and warm heart of these persistent workers. The Nunkiang River started also to sing the praise of this new-born city on its bank.

Now, just a word about the smoke from the chimney. An imaginative visitor might compare it to a dark cloud or a ball of cotton. But those who had reclaimed wasteland here, those whose sweat dripped on this ground,

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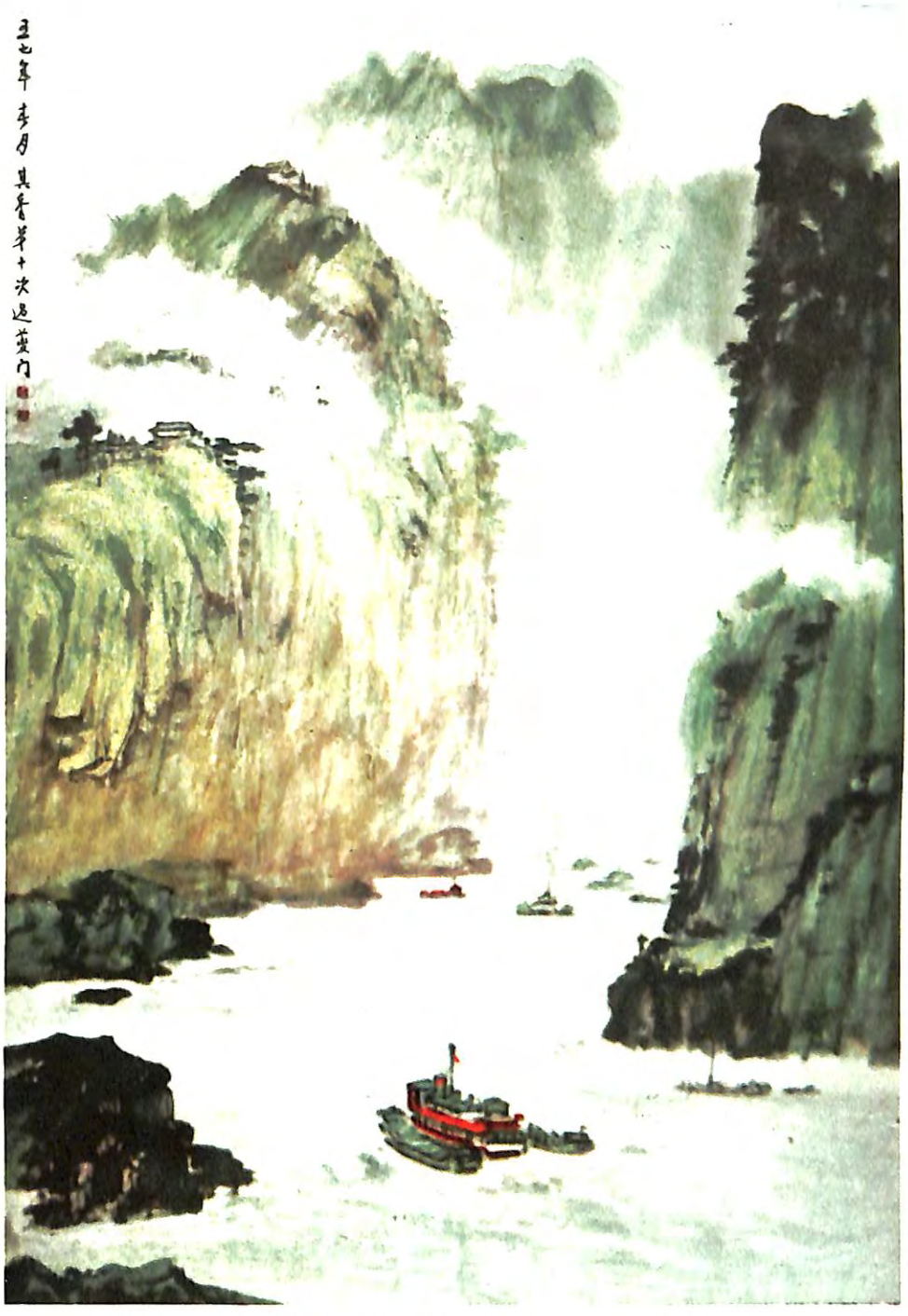
* A decisive battle in the People's War of Liberation. It started on November 7, 1948 and ended on January 10, 1949, during which the People's Liberation Army wiped out 550,000 Kuomintang troops.



Kueimen — Entrance to the Yangtse Gorge by Tsung Chi-hsiang

the first time they saw it said only, "See the smoke from the chimney?" Yet the simple words sounded more beautiful in their ears than the best poetry.

The severe winter was over. The rain and storm were over. Look, the machines were turning! The first streak of smoke floated from the chimney. Many people shed tears of joy! Thank you pioneers, you who blazed the trail through the nettles! Only you deserve such great happiness, such supreme satisfaction. It was you who made it possible for us to ride along smoothly to Fularki, to walk inside huge workshops with brand-new windowpanes.

In a forge I met an old welder, Ma Hsi-liang, beside a small furnace. His face was ruddy and his hair white at the temples. But his shoulders seemed cast of iron and steel, and he wore a long apron with great style. A small red victory banner hung above his work-bench. The group led by him and another group led by Liu Yun-shan were competing during these days and nights of the "great leap forward." The two groups raced each other like two dragons, now one dashing ahead, now the other catching up. Their job was to make steel links for chains.

Before the "great leap forward," it was considered good enough to turn out 50 to 60 links in one shift. But recently Ma Hsi-liang bravely leaped forward, turning out 350 the day before and 370 today — a remarkable achievement.

I asked Ma Hsi-liang: "How can you work so fast now?"

He grasped my hand, smiling. "The main thing is that people have taken steps forward."

Yes, the key is the people. It is the people who conquered the wilderness, it is they who wiped out the old and are creating the new. Should anyone ask: what has breathed new life into this formerly desolate river bank? —the reply is: the people, the new people of Fularki.

I sat opposite a young man named Shan Chang. He seemed such a quiet restrained person, but when he started to speak, his voice grew passionate and the light in his eyes was very stirring.

"As a child I was among the downtrodden," he said. "At that time I used to hate my home. Why were we so poor? Why were we so miserable?

"I came from Hopei Province. In our parts there used to be flood nine years out of ten. Now the people have built dams and no longer suffer from flood. I have been home and seen it myself. The dam is well built and on top there is a two-lane road. Formerly, people couldn't even eat husks — who had the time to build a dam!

"When I was thirteen, I carried messages for the guerrillas fighting the Japanese aggressors around our place. Once I got caught trying to cut the enemy's wire. They put me in prison, flogged me until I lost consciousness, then revived me with cold water and flogged me again. One day they dragged all the prisoners out. We knew we were heading for the

execution grounds. My cousin Shan Hua shouted, 'I, Shan Hua, shall not die in vain. So long as the Communist Party exists, you traitors are all doomed! . . .' There was a shot and he fell into a pond.

"Now, I often think how I am lucky to have survived. My wife who had an even harsher childhood than I also tells me often, 'Where, but for Chairman Mao, would you be today!'" Shan Chang paused, evidently overcome with emotion.

"I agree with her. Now that I have raised my head I must live a worthy life. I want to do more.

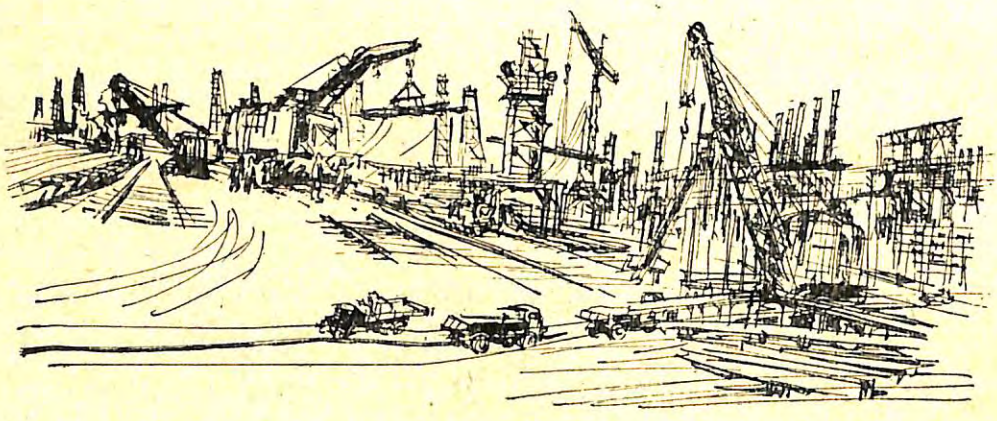
"I owe all my happiness to the Communist Party. Our factory in Fularki has started production. The electric lights have been turned on, and machines are humming. From knowing nothing at all I have learned to do a little; from a green hand I have gradually become a skilled worker able to handle automatic machines.

"I cannot forget the past. I often tell myself: I've done so little for the country, yet I am given so much in return. I must do my utmost. I am determined to race with time, and get ahead of time."

What this ordinary worker said is very significant. It shows the depths of the roots of our new life; our new life is rooted in this soil and in the people's heart. When you touch a new product or part on your way through the workshops, you feel they are tempered not only by the furnace, but also by the burning passion and fire of our hearts.

Fularki rises like the sun at daybreak. Some workshops have already begun production, some have just had their foundations laid. Here, a new factory building just completed, there, large red steel girders shot into the sky. The place is like a busy and prosperous market; a swelling sea of chimneys.

One factory building seemed a long broad street from one end to the other. Every storey from top to bottom was whirling and bright. Several



cranes were busy loading and unloading building materials. If you looked up you could see the blue sparks from the electric welder raining down from above like falling stars.

Someone had told me before that "this is our Huaihai Battle." Some of the people working here in this construction team had actually participated in that heroic battle. Now they were taking part in another campaign — in the friendly competition at Fularki. The manager, a slender man in black leather jacket and a yellow military cap, was formerly a divisional commander; the Party secretary here was formerly head of the division's political department. The man in charge of the key job, the work of laying the foundations, was formerly head of the political department of a regiment. A strong fighting unit transformed into a construction team, it marched quickly to important battlefields. First they helped to build the motorcar works in Changchun, now they had come to Fularki.

These heroic people not only become good technical personnel but promptly climbed the summit of building engineering. To sink a caisson as tall as an eight-storey building and 1,500,000 tons in weight into the ground, would usually take more than 18 months to complete, yet at Fularki they did it in 120 days! What an intensive fight! The director's telephone rang day and night. At crucial moments people forgot to eat and sleep. As the digging progressed, six winches removed the earth and an endless stream of trucks transported it away. Above, steel joists were joined, concrete poured in, while below, inch by inch, the caisson sank deeper. Conditions became more and more difficult; people working underground found it harder and harder to breathe. Underground water spurted out like springs in all directions.

When the Party secretary finished telling me of this experience, he paused before a blueprint of the project. "The most difficult year is over now!" he said, a faint smile hovering round the corners of his mouth.

People have entered the era of the "big leap forward," a new tide of leaps in production has arrived. Originally, the plant was to be completed in 1960, now they will start production in all the workshops before the end of 1958. People are rushing ahead boldly like a hurricane. Fularki is surging forward. . . .

As Comrade Lin Na told me: "Now there is friendly competition between one worker and another, and between one shift and another. People dare to think; and whatever they think of doing, they do." These are bold and splendid words.

Our people dare to dream, for we live in the socialist era. Wherever our ideals turn, there a new phase of life begins. Would you like to know why the place is called Fularki? In the local dialect "Fularki" means "red river bank." Perhaps the place got its name because the sunset dyes all the grassland red, or because of that swath of red sky at dawn. However

that may be, this old name has acquired its real meaning only today. Here, by the banks of Nunkiang River, the red glow of socialism shines day and night from a brand-new industrial city.

The Youth Collective Farm of Meiliszu District

Fularki used to be a tiny fishing hamlet on the banks of the Nunkiang River; it is now part of Tsitsihar city's industrial district. A seventy *li* highway runs along the river to the city centre — the Fu-Tsi Highway — though I think Fu-Tsi Avenue would have been a more appropriate name. This road joins Fularki and Tsitsihar into one metropolis.

"It's a boulevard in the making," our driver told me as our car sped down the smooth highway.

We drove down the "boulevard in the making," across a light grey steel bridge arching over the Nunkiang River and arrived in Tsitsihar.

Tsitsihar looked completely different since I last saw it: there was a forest of factories where dark smoke trailed out of countless tall chimneys. I spent two whole days in workshops looking at up-to-date machine tools with automatic controls, and tractor parts still in the making. However, no more of that here. I have said enough about new factories and whirling machines.

Every single day in our present life is full and splendid, but I think all of us know days which are particularly dear to our hearts. To me, the day I spent at the Youth Collective Farm was one of the brightest and most delightful. It was here that life presented a new and vivid question to my mind: What is happiness in our era? I will let the members of the Youth Collective Farm answer this question.

Turning off the highway and leaving the villages far behind, we reached a region which used to be part of the unexplored grassland. Before arriving at our destination we stopped at the Lung-Feng Collective Farm — it is really the Youth Collective Farm No.2; they are preparing to set up a No. 3 too.

Braking to a stop on the open ground where tractor attachments and horse-drawn implements were laid out in rows, we were welcomed by the director of the work district, Han Fu, who rushed out in the wind, his fur collar sticking up round his neck. He took us into his warm cozy office and we noticed a young girl writing by a desk.

We were told she had written a long letter last spring asking to come here. She said:

> . . . I am very tall and have strong arms and am a member of the Communist Youth League. I assure you that I am neither soft as bean-curd nor delicate as bean-shoots. I am young and full of hot blood; I

want to be a fighter for communism. For a long time now I have been thinking of only one thing: I want to help clear the wild grass from the wasteland, I want to struggle against nature with my hands and brains. I shall wrest riches from this vast land and accumulate wealth for our motherland. It is shameful to live like a parasite on the fruits of others' labour; I will never allow myself to do that. I want to be a real creator....

As a matter of fact, the author of this letter, Chu Kuei-ying, was no more than eighteen and she was not exactly tall. But as she had requested, she was accepted as a member of the Lung-Feng Collective Farm. She also became secretary of the Youth League committee. Sitting in the building she had constructed with her own hands, she was now engrossed in drafting a bulletin about leaping forward in the spring ploughing and sowing.

Continuing on our way over a stretch of rambling vale, we finally reached the Youth Collective Farm of Meiliszu District. The chairman was away on business and we were received by Kuo Chang-hai, deputy secretary of the Party branch, who had been one of the first to come out here in the spring of 1956. Streams of carts carrying manure were busy coming and going in the wind and storm. I noticed the drivers in leather boots were all young people who playfully cracked their red-tasselled whips. By one manure pile a group of young girls were busy shovelling. A girl with a green scarf round her neck stuck her spade into the pile and turned to us. "We nine here will finish loading this pile all by ourselves," she declared, her face radiant.

A turn brought us to the cattle shed: a herd of cows was lolling in the meadow; pigs and sheep sunned themselves in a corner out of the wind. Nearby, a row of shacks had just been emptied to serve as chicken houses: five thousand young chicks were to arrive the next day. We walked past and opened the door of another house. A stamping of little feet and we were confronted with rows of children hastily rising to greet us, their cheeks rosy and glowing, their eyes black and shining. We'd bumped into the farm's primary school.

"Come here and look," someone cried. "This is our farm's department store. Over there is the clinic and there, the veterinary centre. . . ."

We made our way to the farm's residential section, a row of brick houses with large glass windows. No sooner had we entered the cozy warm room than we were surrounded by young men and women just returned from work. They pointed out to me the farm's youngest member — he was already a veteran here — and the newest arrivals, three girls in printed cotton padded jackets who came from Liuchow, Kwangsi Province six days ago. Our cheerful conversation was frequently interrupted by peals of gay laughter and singing.

"Now, we eat food grown with our own labour," they told me and pointed to the granary where golden grain was piled up to the ceiling.

All this made me think. "Today, we no longer know what the grassland originally looked like. Soon people will not believe that this used to be part of a desolate steppe."

The youngsters, however, had remembered to preserve as a souvenir, in the middle of the farm, the first hut they had built of broken boards. It was here that life started.

"We came," said Kuo Chang-hai, "in the middle of an eight degree gale. The wind was so thick with dust you couldn't see a thing. When we got up in the morning, we stared at one another and laughed; everyone's face was black with grime.

"The weather was very cold. Sometimes at night we woke up shivering. I slept near the door where we kept a lamp burning all night. Sometimes I woke up in the middle of the night to find the youngsters sitting huddled together under the lamp, it was so dreadfully cold.

"In summer a fairly big shower would turn our shed into a pond and our shoes floated in the water like little boats. Frogs croaked under our beds while the girls huddled together in a dry corner and sang songs.

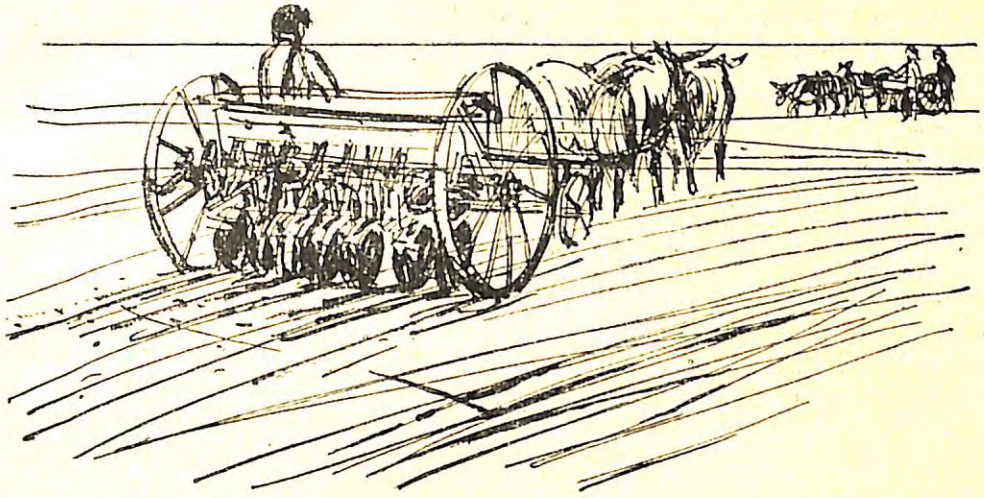
"The grassland was a wolves' haunt at night. The fourth day after our arrival a pack of wolves howled round our shed the whole night. There really were a lot of them. Even last summer, one of our comrades was suddenly surrounded by nine wolves when he rode out at dawn to attend a meeting nearby. They leaped at him and, though he tried to drive them away with the horse whip, he eventually had to come back. By then his padded coat was badly torn by the wolves.

"The next spring, help came from the tractor station. A tractor turned up for the first time the virgin soil hidden from the sun for thousands of years. Our youngsters dug the roots of old willow trees to clear the path for the tractor; blisters covered their hands before the job was half finished. They had never handled cattle or worked behind a plough before. One young fellow became so desperate when his ox refused to budge he just sat down by the animal's side and wept. Did you notice there are some very crooked furrows in our field? Nevertheless, we managed to plough and sow 1,680 acres of virgin land.

"You can't imagine how good our young people felt when first the little green shoots showed their heads. By then we had a new slogan, 'Overcome all difficulties and fight for 100 days to live in new houses.' It didn't take us that long though. We finished these five new buildings in only 87 days."

Usually, good days follow on the heels of arduous ones. After a period of hard steeling, the young people themselves assumed a new appearance.

Out on the grounds of the farm I had noticed a tall young girl sowing with a horse-drawn seeder. She was Shih Wen-hua, a nineteen-year-old whom everyone loved and whom everyone, including the chairman and



the Party secretary, called "Big Brother Shih." She had come to the farm in 1956 after finishing primary school. The first three days after her arrival she had said not a single word. Indeed, arriving in this strange place so far from home and confronted with the desolation of the grassland, she had felt completely lost. However, working as a member of a collective, she began to show her true colours. Her fervour for work grew immensely and she glittered like gold with a coat of dust wiped off. She fainted, weeding in the beet field under the burning sun in summer, but as soon as she revived she promptly went back.

Working alongside the harvester in autumn, she was once knocked out by the harvester's rotating arm, but she continued with her work as soon as she came to. Once when the river rose so much that a potato field was suddenly immersed in water, she waded barefoot into the cold half-frozen water at the head of a work brigade. They toiled for forty days and managed to salvage 100,000 catties of potatoes.

One winter night a snowstorm drove everyone indoors. But Shih Wen-hua dashed out into the wind and quickly covered the grain on the winnowing ground with bunches of straw.

The young people used to live quite a distance from the fields they were cultivating, and the boys sometimes rode to and fro on horseback. None of the girls knew how to ride at first. Shih was the first to leap on to a horse, though she was thrown off promptly and suffered from a badly scratched leg. Undaunted, she persisted in learning and had become a better rider than anyone. The other girls followed her example and they now ride side-saddle beautifully, galloping down the road in great style. She also learned to handle and repair all the horse-drawn implements.

The wind and frost of the grassland, the tedious work, has steeled the eager young workers of the farm. Shih Wen-hua has become a different person. She used to be a shy, timid girl, but there was little timidity about her now. In the process of building a farm in the grassland, model new men and women had been forged. Shih Wen-hua became the farm's model worker and took part in a congress of model workers in the provincial capital.

While we were visiting the farm's hostel, she came in from the sowing wearing a black cotton padded jacket and a blue knitted wool cap. When I asked about her ambition she said, "My ideal is to become a good farmer, able to handle all the implements well."

The dream of youngsters is no longer vague and lofty like floating clouds; it is down to earth, and will grow into reality in the soil they are tilling.

After the young people blazed a trail out here, the news flew like a bright spark across this free and great country of ours. Thousands of letters poured in from all corners of the land bearing many a young eager heart. All wanted to come and join this new collective. Already the farm included members from Kwangsi, Hunan, Hupeh, Szechuan, Shanghai, Nanking and Hainan Island.

One might wonder why the youth of our country should be willing to leave their cozy homes and beloved families to rush to this distant northern land? Why were they attracted to the grassland as if a bright sun was drawing them to it with its warmth? Let's take the case of the three latest arrivals to this collective farm, the three young women in padded jackets I mentioned above.

One was a quiet girl, Tang Hui-ying; another was warm-hearted Hsiao Yun-jen; and the third, lively Wang Chia-ying.

These three were good friends who graduated from the same school. "What road shall we take?" they had asked themselves. The news of the Youth Collective Farm caught their imagination and together they decided to become workers on this northern farm. Finally, after much consultation, they wrote a letter one Saturday night asking to be admitted as members of the Youth Collective Farm.

"We thought it was going to be even colder than this," Tang Hui-ying told me. "We thought we'd have to live in thatched huts. We didn't count on sleeping on a warm *kang* like the one in our hostel. The first day of work we picked beans. There were so much, we didn't know where to start; the fields were cluttered with beans."

Her ambition is simple and straightforward. She wants to be a young Michurin, a good scientific gardener. The newly opened virgin land is an ideal experimental ground for her.

Hsiao Yun-jen also loves the life on the farm. She knows she is seeing the birth and growth of a new-type farm and that she will witness the flowering of a prosperous life for the collective farmers.

Wang Chia-ying's dream is to be a combine driver. The vast fields of the farm will give her ample room to learn the skill she hopes to acquire. At the moment they must use their own hands to do the spade work and get things done. But they are fully determined to create the life they want.

Now what is real happiness and a good future for youth? Happiness awaits those who genuinely thirst for and work to win it: happiness will come to those who strive for it by working tirelessly.

It was getting dark, and I bid the farm and its members goodbye. As our car sped away I turned for a last look. The farm and the surrounding grassland were bright under the electric lights. Yes, you of the Youth Collective Farm have brightened the valleys, forests, grassland and river banks with the light from your new life. How I love this glowing light. Warm hearts are shining and our motherland smiles in radiance. My best wishes go to you at the Youth Collective Farm.

As we drove back along the Nunkiang River, two lines from the verse of an unknown poet kept ringing in my ears:

Who has brought the glow of dawn to this solitary grassland?
A flock of young eagles soaring with strong wings.

So quiet and serene was this night of spring. A misty cold moon hung in a corner of the sky. Lights twinkled faintly in the distance. Tranquility reigned, broken only by the bright glare of an occasional passing car.

Illustrations by Lu Chih-hsiang

A Typical Case

LI TEH-FU

Last year the agricultural co-operatives in our township started buzzing with energy and our peasants really worked with a will. Though we are only a little township in the mountains and no one expected much of us, when the year's earnings were computed after the autumn harvest everyone with full labour power got 500 yuan for his year's work. I could see from all this that the countryside was going to spurt ahead and a great change was coming. True enough, not long afterwards the *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily) published a speech by Vice-Chairman Chu Teh who said, "Exploit the rich resources in the mountains and build up mountainous regions! This is the task for the whole people and the entire Party. The entire Party must be mobilized with everyone taking a hand to make a success of the work. . . ." I jumped with joy when I'd finished and told myself, "Yes! We in the mountain gullies will show them what we can do." The vice-chairman had voiced the feelings in my heart. That evening I called a meeting of all Party functionaries in our township and asked them to study Chu Teh's speech. Then we got down to discussing how to exploit the resources in our locality and what to do to build up our villages. As is well known, when three shoemakers put their heads together, they become as wise as the famous strategist, Chuko Liang. We came to the conclusion that in our locality we had better concentrate on producing more *tung* oil and edible fungus. These things are worth a lot of money and can be exported. They were the two treasures of our mountains.

In a few days, Chang, secretary of the county Party committee, rang me up.

"Young Tu," he said, "do you know you, in the mountainous regions, are going to do a big leap forward?"

"Of course I know," I said. "As secretary of the Party branch I have already gone into action. I called all the Party functionaries together and we have studied the vice-chairman's speech."

"Well, how are you people going to leap?"

"We live in the mountains and depend on the mountains, so I suppose we must see what can be done with our sweet potatoes, sesame, *tung* oil

and edible fungus. There's our super quality charcoal too. We'll try to increase the output of these a couple of times. Won't that be a big leap forward?" I could hear him chuckling over the line so I asked, "What are you laughing at? Isn't it a leap forward?"

"Who says it isn't? Only you haven't leaped out of your old rut." I wasn't at all convinced by his answer but he told me not to argue and to listen to him. "Don't you have a folk song that runs something like this: 'During the Kuomintang days we fed on potato soup; after liberation we eat supply grain. When, O, when will there come a day when we have rice and a surplus of grain! . . .' "

I wanted to know what he meant by quoting this folk song, but he wouldn't explain. He told me to think it over, and when I'd puzzled it out I was to go to the county town for a meeting two days later. Then he hung up.

After some thought I realized why Chang had sung the folk song. He wanted us to plant rice in the mountains. The idea made me hop round the room with excitement, but immediately the word "Impossible" leaped into my mind. Yes, when I cooled down and thought it over, the idea was impossible. In the first place there was very little water up in our mountains, and then the climate was cold and the hillside steep. Furthermore, none of our peasants knew how to cultivate rice, except for a few households living in the foothills. It was out of the question. Nevertheless I was fascinated by this idea Chang had put into my head. If we could really grow rice in the mountains, if there would really come a time when the mountainsides would be a sea of gold, how wonderful that would be! That would certainly be a big leap, a fundamental change. I thought about it day and night and even went to the foothills to gaze wistfully at our township's only patch of paddy field, no larger than five *mou*. Finally I made a plan round this five *mou* of irrigated land. We could convert another five *mou* higher up into rice land by channeling the water a little further up. Yes, that would be a leap! As for converting large areas in the mountains into irrigated land, I knew it was impossible. It simply couldn't be done.

When it was time to go to the county town I felt very smug. For decades now our township had had no more than five *mou* of irrigated land, but my plan would convert another five *mou* in one stroke. It would mean doubling the area. I felt sure Chang, when he had heard my plan, would want me to go up and speak at the meeting. My report would be typical of the big leap forward.

As I expected, when I got to the county office and told Chang everything, he smiled and said, "Yes, this is typical too. You can speak about it. . . ." The next day, I was the first speaker at the meeting. I never mince matters or beat about the bush, so as soon as I got up I said, "Comrades, our township is going to take a big leap forward. We are going

to go full steam ahead in converting dry land into irrigated fields. We shall convert five *mou*. . . ." A sudden roar of laughter stopped me. Someone said loudly, "Ha! What's the sense of talking about a mere five *mou*? Our township's going to convert 100 *mou*." Chang made a sign to check the laughter and asked me to continue. But I no longer had the courage to speak. In less than five minutes I crept off the platform. Why make myself a laughing-stock? At the end of the meeting, Chang summed up the discussion and said that my case was also typical — typically backward. I felt dreadful listening to him. I had come meaning my report to be typical of the big leap forward — but it turned out I was typical of conservatism!

That night I lay in bed feeling very bad. Chang came in and took me to his office. He wanted to talk me into promising to convert more land into irrigated land. I told him frankly why our township couldn't do it. Even the five *mou* I planned was going to be far from easy. It wasn't a question of conservatism, we were simply limited by natural conditions. I had heaps of reasons and cited at least a hundred. By the time the cocks crowed for the fourth time we were still arguing. Chang was so persistent that I had to give way and reluctantly agreed to add one *mou*. "We'll convert six *mou* then, but that's really the peak. Just can't do any more."

"All right," said Chang, unable to convince me. "Let it be six *mou* for the present. But talk things over with the peasants, particularly the old ones. Keep an open mind." I agreed to do as he asked, though I couldn't see much point to it. I was born and bred in these mountains. I should know better than anyone else how much land could be converted.

We talked all through the night. Then, without waiting to get any sleep, I rushed straight home. Whether it was anger or anxiety that gave me speed, I wasn't sure, but I made the 120 *li* home by foot before dark. Without sitting down for supper I called all the co-op chairmen and Party secretaries together for a meeting. First, I told them how my report had been called typical of conservatism at the meeting and how I had had to leap a bit further by adding one *mou* to my original plan. We had to begin converting the land right away and I wanted their opinions. None of them thought what I had said funny: I gathered from their expression that they were sympathetic. I felt much better after this and asked them to work out carefully how we were to convert this six *mou*. They calculated and planned and after a great deal of discussion came to the conclusion that the most we could do was four and a half *mou*. I had been too reckless at the county meeting.

"Ha, you people are more conservative than I. This is bad."

Immediately they gave me numerous reasons why it couldn't be done, just as I had with Chang. Honestly, I couldn't stand any more by then. Without summing up the discussion I adjourned the meeting. That night,

I couldn't sleep again and hit my head hard with my fists. After a while I scrambled out of bed, threw open the windows and stared sadly at the big, bright moon outside. Since the liberation I had always been among the advanced, whether as a messenger or township Party secretary. Was I to descend to being a diehard over this matter of irrigated land? If only we could open up large tracts of paddy fields in the mountains! Our region would become self-sufficient and might even have surplus grain to sell to the state. With our many local products, some of them important exports, our peasants would become rich. But, water, where was the necessary water? And what about our steep mountains? Troubled by these thoughts, I dozed off against the window-sill. I dreamed of water, gurgling flowing water . . . rice covering the hillsides . . . then I was speaking at the meeting — a typical case of conservatism — I heard a roar of laughter and saw Chang's tightly knitted black brows. When I woke with a start there was a bright round moon overhead and in my mind the target of a measly four and a half *mou* or at the most six. I was virtually choking on that wretched six *mou*. I stared at the moon drifting slowly towards the west and suddenly remembered Moonlight Pool, on the west side of our township. Very few people ever went there; it was in a solitary mountain gully. But the name of the place made me think. If it was called a pool there ought to be water in it: otherwise why not call it Moonlight Vale? I felt as if I had struck gold and dashed out to find Wang, chairman of Red Blossom, the co-op nearest Moonlight Pool.

I pulled Wang out of bed and asked him to take me to Moonlight Pool. Blinking sleepily, he wanted to know whether I had gone off my head. I told him I was searching for water, not cracked. He said I was certainly mad because he had never seen a drop of water at Moonlight Pool, nor had his father before him, nor even his grandfather. With great patience, I explained to him that the name pool implied water, but he only shook his head and laughed. He went with me in the end, though. We climbed a long, winding, narrow mountain path. We reached Moonlight Pool as day was breaking. It was a dry gully with not a trickle of water. Still, I searched around, digging and groping here and there until the whole morning was spent and my hands were scratched and bleeding, but we didn't even find a drop of water to quench our thirst. Eventually we both got so hungry that Wang made me turn back. Damn it! My efforts had all been in vain. We were back at four and a half *mou*. I cursed whoever it was who had named this place Moonlight Pool. He had no right to do it when there was no water. The place should have been called Dried-up Gully.

At dusk I returned to my office. Unable to find water, I burned with frustration. It was then that I remembered Chang's parting words and decided to ask the advice of some of the old peasants. They might

know whether there had ever been water in Moonlight Pool. Yes, I would visit Grandad Wang, Fourth Uncle Wang and Greybeard Tu as soon as I'd finished supper. But before I set out who should come in but Grandad Wang himself.

"Secretary Tu, did you go with our co-op chairman to look for water at Moonlight Pool?" He was still panting a little from his journey up.

"Why? Is there water there?"

"Well, when my grandfather was living he told me there used to be water and quite a lot of it. In those days they also had the idea of converting the land nearby into paddy fields, but they failed because folk weren't working together."

"Is that true?" I was overjoyed and clapped Grandad Wang on the shoulder.

"Can't say for sure! In my father's time nobody saw any water at Moonlight Pool. It would be wonderful if there were water. Once we had our own irrigated land, we wouldn't have to waste labour power and time every year going down to the valley for grain."

"There must be water, there must! We'll go right now and look for it. . . ." I was so happy I couldn't wait.

"Just the two of us won't do. You must call on every member of Red Blossom to go out. Then we may find it. But I'd better make this clear from the start — don't blame me if we waste our time!"

"That's all right," I quickly assured him.

That evening I made a speech to all the members of Red Blossom. I told them they must be mobilized to a man and set out for Moonlight Pool in search of water. We would go together in quest of golden rice. I gathered from their expressions that they were enthusiastic about the idea. Only a few winked and curled their lips in scorn. It was finally decided that we would all go across the mountains to Moonlight Pool early next morning. But no sooner had I adjourned the meeting than several Youth Leaguers and militiamen lighted torches and started out for Moonlight Pool. The search began. Next day we nearly turned Moonlight Pool upside-down. Even a seventy-year-old granny insisted on going up the mountains. People longed to see rice growing on their own hills, to taste rice they had grown with their own hands. It would be something unheard of.

For four successive days we worked from early morning till late at night. We dug up pretty well all the brushwood and weeds at Moonlight Pool but still we found no water. People's enthusiasm began to ebb. Many turned looks of helpless appeal on me, but a few of the diehards — well-to-do middle peasants — made up jingles to ridicule me. They sang:

O, Secretary Tu,
He can't have much to do;
He drives us out to find a pool,
But when no pool is found, poor fool,
What next d'you think he'll do?

They also chanted:

Though rice is sweet, though rice is grand,
It's not for us, I think.
We've scoured the whole of Moonlight Pool
And found no drop to drink.

I was furious. "Let's not give them a mouthful when we've found water and planted rice," I told the folk. "We'll punish them by making them live on sweet potatoes for three years."

On the evening of the seventh day, the torch in Grandad Wang's hands showed a damp patch under the crags on the west side. Only about ten feet across, this patch was overgrown with moss. Grandad Wang thought there might be water under the crags. I asked everyone to concentrate on this spot, and to move away all the big rocks. At about two o'clock in the morning, after we had removed the largest boulder, there was a little gurgle and a jet of water spurted out . . . sweet clear spring water. Everyone went mad with joy. People hugged one another and shouts of "Long live Chairman Mao!" and "Long live the Communist Party!" shook the hills.

Needless to say, the next day we started digging ditches, to convert two hundred *mou* round Moonlight Pool into irrigated land.

Two days after I returned to the township office, a notice came from the county Party committee telling me to attend a meeting to exchange experience on the great leap forward. I felt very good because I had capital this time. My figure was no longer five *mou* but two hundred. I'd multiplied it several dozen times. Certainly this was more than a little leap.

I tried not to show the gladness in my heart when I went down to the county. But Chang saw through me at once. "You're not still on five *mou*, are you?"

"Of course not," I said and paused. Then, deliberately, I continued, "I don't intend to report to you now, let's discuss it at the meeting."

"Ha, you mean to startle me with your plan, eh? Fine, I'll be waiting to hear it."

That night, at the Party committee hostel where I was staying, I found myself next to the secretary of the Huohua township Party branch. His township had for some time been considered the rump hereabouts: it was always falling behind. Chang had criticized the poor secretary several times. Now that everyone was leaping forward, I wondered how he was doing. Before we turned in, he asked, "How many *mou* are you converting into irrigated land, Tu?" Proudly I stretched out two fingers and smiled ever so slightly. "My goodness!" He shot out his tongue in awe. "Really remarkable! So even you in the mountains will be doing two thousand *mou*! No wonder your township has always been held up as a model. You live up to your name. Though half our township lies on level land we can only cope with one thousand five hundred *mou* at present. We'll have to learn from you people."

I felt like a mute who had swallowed a bitter pill. The glad tidings I had brought from home were drowned in this bucket of cold water. To think I had dared to consider going up on the platform and making another speech. Lucky for me that I'd talked to my neighbour, otherwise I'd have become a typical case of conservatism again. I lay in bed and pondered the big leap. This thing was terrific — a race in jet planes. Our township was running as fast as it could, but our legs were no match for planes. Even Huohua Township, the rump, had got ahead of my "model" township. How could we talk about a leap?

My neighbour was still talking. He said I must make a report the next day. It was no simple task to convert two thousand *mou* into irrigated land in a mountainous region like ours. He was going to send people down to learn from us. I could hardly bear to listen and covered my head with the quilt. Tears were actually gushing from my eyes!

At the meeting the next day I sat well back and listened to different talks about the big leap. One speaker reported on his plan to convert

two thousand *mou* into irrigated land, another mentioned the figure three thousand, others went up to five, six or even eight thousand. No one spoke of a mere couple of hundreds. Several times, Chang tried to catch my eye. He wanted me to go up and speak. Naturally I dared not and hurriedly scribbled a note saying I must go over our plan again and asking to be excused from speaking. There I sat, my mind ringing with two thousand, three thousand . . . eight thousand. It was a headache.

The meeting came to an end. That evening I sat all alone in the hostel worrying myself sick. Chang came. I used to work as a messenger under him when he was district Party secretary and he knows me better than anyone. He always knows whether I am happy, troubled or sulky. He must have known I was worried and come to give me a pep talk, I thought. But no. He had come to take me to the county cultural centre to listen to a programme of drum ballads.

"I'm not in the mood," I said. "Haven't got the heart to listen to ballads."

"Come, Young Tu, come with me. They are going to sing a ballad based on a Soviet story today."

"What Soviet story?" It was the first time I had heard of a Soviet story in our traditional drum ballad form.

In the end I was dragged off. The cultural centre was full by the time we arrived and the young manageress who introduced the evening's programme told us the new ballad was an adaptation of a certain Katayev's story, *Time, March On!* She said they were presenting this ballad to match the mood of the great leap forward. I didn't care what it was, Chinese or Soviet. It would be no help to me and my problem of five or two hundred *mou*. My thoughts were far away. But the ballad singer was really remarkable. Somehow or other his throbbing voice captured me, and before long I was not only listening but hanging on his every word. It was a stirring story, and that Yeshchinko he told about was a real hero. Every time he and his comrades set a new record, it was broken by someone else. It was a real case of time marching on. I thought of my pitiful two hundred *mou* target which I had believed was quite something — others had surpassed us before I even had a chance to speak about it.

When the ballad came to an end, Chang patted me on the back. "Well, what do you say? Worth coming, eh?"

"Yes, the ballad's worth coming for. Now, I'm anxious to go home."

"All right, go on home and get your people roused in order to catch up. You see, in our great leap forward, one unit overtakes another and no one knows yet who will be the one ahead."

Only then did I tell him about our efforts to convert the land round Moonlight Pool. I promised him that I would follow the example of that Soviet hero, Yeshchinko, and not stop at a mere two hundred *mou*.

"Do you think you could multiply your present figure a couple of times?" he asked me with a smile. I flushed pink and dared not answer. I really wasn't at all sure. Eventually I mustered enough courage to say, "We'll try to double or treble it." Chang realized that my answer was very hesitant. He was silent for a while. "If you really want to learn from Yeshchinko you must first dare to think and then you must dare to act. Right?"

"Right."

"Then why don't you want to produce enough rice to feed your own region? That should be your minimum target in your leap forward."

"That . . . why . . . that would mean eight thousand *mou* of irrigated land. I did think about it. . . ."

"Good, as long as you've thought about it. The question is to act now. You can go home early tomorrow morning."

It was then that my mind did a real big leap forward. After that when I thought of converting seven or eight thousand *mou* in our mountains into irrigated land, I no longer felt scared though I had no idea how it was to be done. But then a few days back who would have dared to think of converting even two hundred *mou* round Moonlight Pool? So I was no longer frightened at the prospect. Instead I thumped my chest to say, "We'll be doing that one of these days."

I went home full of confidence. Without stopping in the township office, I went on to Red Blossom. No one was home except a few old grannies in charge of the babies. Everyone else had gone to dig ditches at Moonlight Pool. When I got down to the pool, a most lively scene met my eyes. The air rang with folk songs, and the people were working with spirit. I had been gone barely three days and they'd built a ditch halfway up the hill. Already some 40 per cent of the land had been converted. Though we hadn't asked any engineer to come down and give advice, the water had been tamed and was flowing wherever it was wanted. It's true that the people themselves are the greatest and most ingenious engineers.

Last time I came back I had fixed my mind on the five *mou* in the foothills. This time I concentrated on Moonlight Pool. I called several meetings: one a conference of the old peasants, another of the functionaries and another of the young people. I wanted everyone to think up ways and means and to make suggestions. The people were extremely enthusiastic and raised hundreds of proposals. One said we should look for more springs round Moonlight Pool, another proposed methods to economize on the use of water and manpower, others suggested ways to make the best use of the land: steep slopes were to be converted into terraced fields and low valleys filled in. There were proposals for rigging up bamboo pipes across the gullies so that the water could flow across a mountain range and water more land. Day and night, the co-op func-

tionaries and I studied these proposals. We tried out one method after another. In less than a fortnight two more springs were discovered at Moonlight Pool. With a very rational use of the water, one drop of which was literally as precious as a drop of blood to us, we were finally sure we could convert two thousand *mou* into irrigated land. That was about two-thirds of the hilly land of Red Blossom Co-op. That was something, eh? I'd lost a bit of weight by then, but the joy in my heart, ah! I just haven't the words to describe it.

I rang up Chang and told him the good news. Of course he was very pleased too, but he asked a funny question, "Is there only one Moonlight Pool in your township?"

"From ancient times till now," I replied, "there's only this one Moonlight Pool. We haven't another. I can't tell lies or make one for you."

"I don't want you to tell lies but I do want you to make a new Moonlight Pool."

"But how? Moonlight Pool was made by nature."

"You can do it. The thing to do is not to stick to Red Blossom and turn circles on the same spot. Your township covers a wide area and there are lots of other hills, you know."

I had to take my hat off to Chang. He seemed to go to the heart of my problem every time. He had hit the nail on the head again. I felt as pleased as a fish put back into water. Why hadn't I thought of this myself? Why shouldn't there be Moonlight Pools in other hills? Why shouldn't there be springs? All the hills in our region are green, and since we'd found water in one, there was no reason why we couldn't find water in another.

After my conversation with Chang, I packed a bedding roll and went round the co-ops in our township. I climbed one hill after another. Ever since water was found at Moonlight Pool, all the people in our township had talked about nothing else — the drive for finding water was in full swing. Wherever I went folks surrounded me. Co-op functionaries told me the peasants were full of vim, that they'd taken Moonlight Pool as an example and already started to look for water in the valleys round them. What they needed was the leadership and support of the township Party branch: they wanted a comprehensive plan to guide them. There you are! The people themselves were demanding to leap forward. As a leader, I couldn't hesitate and fall back. That would be real conservatism. The people pushed me ahead and I in turn urged them forward. In those days in our township, it was virtually, "Every single person searches for fountain-heads; every single co-op builds irrigation works." The word "water" brought tantalizing visions of golden rice. Wonderful days these were, red hot with enthusiasm. The people scoured the hills for springs. Grandad Wang became a water specialist much sought after by other co-ops. If he told you there was water at a certain

spot you had only to dig hard and the water would spurt out. At the end of a month, all the co-ops had found springs in the valleys near them. Including the first one at Moonlight Pool, we had discovered a total of nine fountain-heads. The people named their new finds, "Great Leap Spring," "Happy Spring," "Peking Spring" . . . these were new Moonlight Pools we had made ourselves. We even managed to find a spring on Cloud-capped Ridge, the highest mountain in the locality. With these nine springs we could easily set a target for 15,000 *mou* of irrigated land. We'd converted five thousand already. The people wouldn't sit down and take it easy, not even on New Year's Day or during the Spring Festival. It was no use my ordering them to rest, even though I am the Party secretary. They bubbled with enthusiasm like Happy Spring: there was no stopping them. As to how much more land we are going to convert into paddy fields, that is a question only they can answer. They decide the figures. If I say twenty or thirty thousand *mou*, that's probably being conservative. Do you know how many Happy Springs there are in our hills? What's more, all our co-op members are top-notch people.

Life in our mountain gullies is getting better and better. In the old days, we hill-dwellers dreamed of leaving the mountains and settling down elsewhere. Our gullies used to be the homes of beggars. Nowadays you couldn't tempt people away, not if you offered them a ride in a grand sedan-chair. The girls outside like to marry into the mountains now — something quite unheard of before. Just listen to what they are singing:

> Nine silver springs have laced our township round,
> Like golden dragons they entwine and coil;
> Through turquoise hills run streams of emerald green,
> Once barren slopes are now well-watered soil.
> No need to carry water from the well,
> Now pipes have brought it up to every door.
> Our life is good, and better every day —
> The gods above could ask for nothing more!

A couple of weeks ago Chang rang up again. There was going to be another meeting to exchange experience. This time I did not ask to speak, but Chang put my name down and it turned out I was the first speaker again.

I walked up to the platform with a light step. I knew what I was doing.

"Do you know how many *mou* we from the mountains meant to convert at first?" I began. "We leaped, yes, by converting five *mou*. . . ." There was another roar of laughter, but I wasn't flustered. "Don't laugh, folks, listen to how we're leaping now . . . fifteen thousand *mou*. . . ." Those who were laughing stopped. Some stuck their tongues out in amaze-

ment. After a moment's silence thunderous applause broke out, lasting half the time it takes for a meal, I reckon. When it died down I finished my sentence, ". . . otherwise we wouldn't call it a *big* leap forward." The men in the hall were smiling appreciatively. I had a lovely time reporting for nearly two hours on how we had done it, after which I walked confidently off the platform. At the end of the meeting, Chang summed up again. He said two months ago I had been a typical case of conservatism but now I was reporting on what was really typical. He pointed out that the leap forward was evident not only in the amount of land turned into irrigated fields but also in the way men's minds worked.

It's interesting to think back over the past two months. How the word "conservative" had made me hang my head in shame! Nowadays, "Five *mou*" has come to stand for conservatism round our parts. People like to say, "Your way of thinking is still five *mou*," or "Is your wheat target still five *mou*?" To think, I was the one who started this expression!

Illustration by Miao Ti

Episodes from the Korean War

The Chinese People's Volunteers, who have helped the Korean people defeat the aggression of the U.S. imperialists, are now leaving Korea and returning to China. They have written many moving accounts of their experiences there from which the following episodes are selected.

THE BATTLE AT TOSUBONG

Company Commander Li Hsing-yeh, awarded First Class Order of Merit

Braving a bitter cold of forty degrees below zero, we crossed the ridge of Nangrim Mountain — so high that it was bare of any traces of birds or beasts — then hastened south through the night along the mountain path skirting Chosin Reservoir.

The lake was frozen solid, its broad surface covered with a layer of snow, stretching in an endless white haze as far as the eye could see. The mountains, rising and falling beside the lake, were also thickly mantled with snow. Were it not for the occasional trees dotting the slopes, you might have thought them pure snow piled in mountainous heaps. It was like marching in the Arctic.

We followed a wild mountain trail that led us over several ridges exceeding a thousand yards in height. The snow was above our knees, and every step required a great effort. An icy wind threw swirling powdery snow into our faces, blinding us, making us gasp for breath. The cotton padding of our uniforms was poor protection against the penetrating cold. Our bodies were completely devoid of warmth.

Because of our rapid pace, we left the horse and mule transport section carrying our food supplies far behind. For three days we hadn't eaten a single full meal. The men kept tightening their belts. Whenever their hunger grew too unbearable they scooped up a handful of snow and stuffed it into their mouth.

Some of the men's feet became frost-bitten, and were swollen so painfully that they couldn't wear shoes. But they silently wrapped their feet with strips of blanket and continued to march. No matter how quickly we advanced, we couldn't convince them to drop out.

I saw one young soldier hobbling along, obviously on badly frost-bitten feet. I told him to halt and wait for the Casualty Section to catch up. He raised his head and glared at me angrily.

"I came here to fight, not to take scenic tours with the Casualty Section!" he snapped.

What could I say? I had no right to stand in the way of the young man's fighting determination.

Marching forty miles a night, finally, the night of December the sixth, we arrived at our destination — Tosubong.

We had caught with the vanguard of the First Infantry Division of the U.S. Army, which was fleeing south. Our task was to block their retreat to give brother units a chance to surround and annihilate them.

The platoon leaders and I quickly looked over the terrain and immediately ordered the men to dig in. Pickaxes and shovels rang against the earth, frozen hard as a rock. At first the pickaxes made only white scars on the ground. But the men, disregarding the blisters they raised on their hands, persisted for three hours and dug a line of foxholes.

At dawn, I stood on our emplacement and gazed north. I could see a white mist over the frozen Chosin Reservoir and the undulating mountains beside it. At our feet, the road twisted north and disappeared into the valley. Except for the noise of our men building fortifications, all was quiet.

The silence puzzled me. Had the enemy already passed? Surely our forced march had not been in vain?

" . . . Rat-tat-tat-tat. . . ." A burst of machine-gun bullets zipped over my head and kicked up a spray of snow on the slope behind me. Twelve Mustang pursuit planes, flying low, roared across the ridge, trailing the smell of gun-powder on the slopes and the sides of the road in the wake of their exploratory strafing.

I felt as if a great weight had been lifted from my heart. The planes informed me that the enemy had not escaped, they might appear any minute. These Mustangs were their vanguard.

I ordered the platoons to take up their positions. The men were delighted when they heard that we had cut off the enemy.

At eight o'clock a drone of motors came from the north. Shortly after, a large enemy force emerged from the northern valley. We could see with our field-glasses that they were preceded by several dozen tanks. These were followed by a long line of trucks loaded with infantrymen. There must have been a few hundred of the vehicles.

I analysed the situation with my second in command, Comrade Li Hsueh-ming. We had only sixty-two men in our company, in a lightly fortified emplacement. Our heavy weapons still hadn't caught up with us. The only "heavy" pieces we had were sixty millimetre mortars. If we

relied solely on trying to hold our position, we'd be sure to suffer. We therefore decided to adopt the alternative plan previously worked out in battalion headquarters. We wouldn't wait for the enemy to fan out in battle formation. We would take the initiative and attack — blockade them on the highway, fight for time. . . .

Comrade Li and some twenty men of the First Platoon went out to launch the initial assault.

Enemy tanks came rolling down the highway, never dreaming that a squad of our men was hiding in holes beside the road. They were taken completely by surprise when the first of our fighters jumped up and threw a bunch of grenades into one of the tank tracks. The grenades exploded and the tank ground to a halt.

"Charge!"

At this stirring cry the men of the First Platoon went tearing down the snowy slope behind Comrade Li like an avalanche. Machine-guns, rifles, tommy-guns, hand-grenades poured fire into the soldier-laden trucks. The enemy infantrymen were frightened witless by this sudden assault. They had no idea what size our force was. They jumped off the trucks and crawled underneath, firing at us wildly.

To give First Platoon cover, I ordered our mortars to open up. Our gunners lobbed shells where the enemy concentrations were thickest.

Comrade Li and his men charged onto the road and the enemy retreated pell-mell to the north, leaving a flaming tank and five burning trucks.

Our men were joyously happy. But I knew it was too early to rejoice. Our victory marked only the beginning of the battle. The bitterest fighting was yet to come.

Sure enough, the enemy quickly spread out in battle formation and, under cover of the cannons of their tanks, swept forward fiercely. First Platoon occupied only two narrow strips on either side of the road. Their positions were soon surrounded by the enemy.

"Second Platoon, come with me!" I could see that Comrade Li and his men were in for trouble. I immediately led Second Platoon charging down the mountain.

The flurried enemy turned their guns towards us. Some of our men fell, but we never paused. Dashing directly onto the highway we destroyed two tanks and four trucks in rapid succession. As I was about to toss a grenade against still another truck, the dozen or so U.S. soldiers in it, waiting with fear, frantically raised their rifles over their heads. I had to laugh. The First Infantry certainly deserved its reputation as one of the United States' "crack" divisions. Its men had been perfectly trained, even in the proper gesture of surrender.

We had cut the counter-assaulting enemy into two sections. One of them fled south, with Comrade Li and the First Platoon in hot pursuit.

The enemy soon came at us again. Facing outward from the road in four directions, we met their charge. Gradually, there were less and less men at my side. The enemy were closing in on us under cover of superior fire-power. Two of them had crawled to only twenty yards away, and were firing at us from behind a truck.

The volume of our fire grew increasingly thinner. I had only eight soldiers left in my platoon now; some were down to their last grenade. Enemy machine-guns chattered like mad. A large detachment of U.S. soldiers came swarming at us along the highway.

I looked around. The men were watching me silently.

"Fix bayonets!" The bayonets had long since been attached to the rifles, but I shouted the command to show our fighters my determination.

Suddenly, to the east there was intensive firing. The attacking enemy scattered and ran. Through the smoke of exploding hand-grenades, over forty volunteers hurtled towards us from the railway east of the highway. The commander, in the lead, carried an automatic. I recognized him by his robust agile movements immediately. He was the famous combat hero of our battalion — Comrade Liu Chin-tso, commander of Company Two.

With excited and grateful tears in my eyes, I hurried to greet him, and warmly grasped both his hands.

"Old Liu! You fellows have come just at the right time!"

Comrade Liu told me that our company's delaying action had given the battalion time to dig in. It now would be difficult for the enemy to get through here. He next ordered his men to share some of their ammunition with us and told everyone to build fortifications to meet the enemy's next desperate attempt.

No sooner had we finished than the enemy launched another assault — the largest so far. It was spearheaded by five tanks, followed by masses of infantrymen.

We had to knock out those tanks first, and deprive the foot soldiers of their cover.

We sent out four men with explosives, but they were mowed down before they could reach the tanks. The tanks rumbled towards us, spitting fire, their thunderous roars shaking the ground.

Comrade Liu gazed at them steadily. When our fourth explosives man was killed, he turned to me and said, "You take command, Old Li. I'm going after them!" Clutching a packet of dynamite sticks, he rushed at the tanks.

I shall never forget his courage. With uncanny agility he dashed in among them and, in an instant, destroyed three tanks. Just as he was climbing on the fourth, machine-gun fire from the fifth tank cut him down.

Comrade Liu Chin-tso gloriously gave his life on the battleground near Chosin Reservoir.

Stirred by Comrade Liu's action, every one of our men was consumed with bitterness and rage. They struck back at the enemy like a storm. Fighter Chang Yung-tso was hit in the leg by three bullets, but continued to throw grenades. Comrade Chen Yao-yung, our company's cultural officer who had never been in battle before, picked up a wounded comrade's tommy-gun and fired angrily at the enemy. After twenty minutes of hard fighting, we finally smashed the enemy assault.

I reorganized the men of our combined companies. There were only twenty of us left. I divided the men into two squads and appointed squad leaders.

Although we had suffered heavy losses, we were confident that we could continue blocking the road, because it was now cluttered with the charred remains of dozens of tanks and trucks and strewn with the bodies of U.S. soldiers.

The enemy's final try was launched in co-ordination with ten or twelve planes. After these bombed and strafed our position heavily, a huge enemy force fanned out and came at us under cover of artillery fire.

Concealing ourselves behind the destroyed tanks and trucks, we pumped lead into the enemy's advancing ranks. We were almost all armed with American weapons now. I myself was firing from atop a tank with a U.S. machine-gun.

The enemy were frantic as cornered rats. In spite of enormous casualties, they pushed towards us like a flock of stampeding sheep.

"Comrades! Give 'em your bayonets!" I cried. I leaped down from the tank and, holding the spitting machine-gun, charged at the enemy.

"Charge!" roared the fighters. They dashed forward with gleaming bayonets.

In an instant, the sound of shooting died. All that could be heard were grunts, the clash of metal, our fighters' shouts and the dismal howls of the enemy.

I crushed the skulls of two enemy soldiers with the butt of my machine-gun. As I was wheeling towards a third, something boomed in the back of my head. The sky revolved; I fell unconscious to the ground.

When I came to I was lying on a stretcher. In a stretcher beside me was Comrade Chen, our cultural officer. Seeing that I had revived, he cried happily, "You're alive, commander! We finished the job! Our brother units have all arrived!"

Excited, I sat up abruptly. A stab of pain nearly knocked me out again. A stretcher bearer warned me gently, "You'd better lie still. A bullet's knicked a chip of bone off your skull!"

As I was being transported from battalion to the rear, there was still intense firing along Chosin Reservoir. Our army was dealing an annihilating blow to the U.S. First Infantry Division!

MY FRIEND CHIU SHAO-YUN

Assistant Squad Leader Li Yuan-hsing, Hero, Second Class

We found a relatively concealed gully in a dip on Height 391 before dawn and hid ourselves there.

As the sun gradually climbed the sides of the mountains it dried the chill dew on our clothing and warmed our legs, which had been numbed with cold. Our idea originally had been to sleep at this time in the pleasant warmth of the sun. We had been up all the night before, and tonight a fierce battle was awaiting us. We needed to replenish our strength for the coming struggle.

But now I was unable to close my eyes. How could one sleep — right under the nose of the enemy?

I discovered our gully was not so concealed after all. We were much too close to the enemy. One of their outposts was only sixty yards away. Not only could we see the barbed wire and breast-works of the outpost — even the pill-boxes and firing emplacements of their main position were also clearly visible; we could hear the enemy soldiers when they talked. Naturally, it was even easier for the enemy to see us from their vantage points on higher ground. We had to lie absolutely still. A cough or the least movement of a leg might attract the attention of an enemy sentry.

Everything depended on our camouflage. I peered ahead through the wild grass. Our squad leader and several of our men were lying in a thicket of dried-out yellow weeds, and their uniforms were tufted with clumps of the same thing. They blended in perfectly with the terrain. Although they were closer to the enemy than I, they lay so quietly I knew they would not be detected.

Slowly turning my head, I observed Comrade Chiu Shao-yun, lying a short distance to one side of me. His camouflage was excellent. Even though we were near each other, I had difficulty in discerning him. We all were very fond of this young comrade. He said very little, but whether at work or in battle, no one ever had to worry about him.

Actually, there was no need for me to be so concerned. Almost from dawn, our artillery kept up a continuous barrage of the enemy's position, draping the mountain top in blue smoke, blasting one pill-box after another in the enemy's outer line of defense. Our commanders had planned it well. The barrage was not only destroying enemy fortifications and cutting open a path for our coming night assault; it was driving the enemy back into their shelters and thus preventing them from spotting our hidden troops.

Observing the devastation our artillery was working on the mountain top, we longed for night to fall so that we could get into action. But the sun seemed to remain stationary, as if it were nailed to the sky.

About eleven in the morning, a smoke shell suddenly dropped near us, followed by round after round of high explosive. Plainly, the crafty enemy was uneasy about their outer lines, but they didn't dare brave our artillery barrage to come out and investigate. They therefore began probing for us with their own shells.

Bursting explosives set fire to the dried grass. The flames spread; soon the yellow weeds were crackling too.

Before long, the flames were right before me. I could feel their heat on my face. Luckily, in front of me was a bare stretch of rocks and stones. The fire was unable to spread to my body.

Suddenly, the acrid smell of burning cotton assailed my nostrils. I turned my head and looked. Flames were all around Comrade Chiu Shao-yun, and his uniform was burning. He had evidently been splashed with a napalm shell. The wind was sweeping the tongues of flame into one sheet of fire.

At that moment, if he had jumped up and rolled a couple of times, he could have extinguished the blaze. Or if any of us near him had dragged him out and stripped off his burning clothing, we could have saved our comrade. But that would have revealed us to the enemy sentries on the height. Not only would our squad have been wiped out and heavy losses inflicted on the troops lying concealed behind us, but the attack for which we had prepared so long would have ended in failure.

Several times I turned my head away. I couldn't bear to watch a comrade burn to death. But I had to look; I couldn't bear not to look. A knife seemed to be piercing my heart. I was blinded by tears.

After about half an hour, the flames on my friend's body finally died. Until his last breath, this great comrade never uttered a groan. He lay as motionless as a thousand-catty boulder.

To save his comrades' lives, to ensure victory, my friend Comrade Chiu Shao-yun stood the test of the cruel flames and died a hero's death!

At dusk, we rose up and charged. A stirring battle cry rang out on Height 391:

"Avenge Comrade Chiu Shao-yun!"

It seemed to me that Comrade Chiu Shao-yun had not died, that he was there with us charging into the enemy!

I shall never forget that day — October 12, 1952.

THE NAKED SOUL OF THE U.S. INVADERS

Tai Ching-shan, Cultural Officer

The sound of firing gradually faded into the distance as our front lines pushed south. Late that night I went through a snowstorm with an escort team to a height east of Kunu-ni to take over a batch of captives who had just been sent back from the front. They were being temporarily kept in a cave in the mountainside.

As we approached the entrance, two guards came up and told us laughingly, "This is an exhibition hall of invading armies. We've got not only Syngman Rhee puppets, but Americans, Englishmen, Canadians and Turks. It's really a complete assortment!"

"Yes, indeed," another soldier grinned. "MacArthur ordered them to drive across the Yalu River, but they've come to spend Christmas here instead. How disobedient of them! What a pity we don't have Christmas on our calendar."

We all laughed.

Still smiling, I entered the cave with Lao Ho, our English interpreter. Several hundred yards long, it was jammed with seated prisoners. There was barely room to walk. After pushing out a little space for ourselves, we turned on all our flashlights and began recording the names and nationalities of the captives.

While we were registering the Americans, English and Canadians, one prisoner only stared, speechless, and shook his head. Another prisoner beside the wall stood up and said:

"He's a Turk. He doesn't understand English." And he added with a proud smile, "I am an interpreter of the Turkish brigade. If you gentlemen wish, I can translate for you."

Lao Ho looked at me and laughed. "Truman is certainly thoughtful. He even sends us a Turkish translator."

After a half hour, the air in the cave was becoming rather stuffy. We let the prisoners go out for walks, in groups.

The second group contained an American major. As he emerged from the door he said to Lao Ho, "You ought to let the whites out first. That's the usual rule."

"We treat all prisoners alike, regardless of their nationality or colour," Lao Ho replied evenly.

"But in the United States, white men always get preference," the tactless major argued. "Negroes are born inferior. Their blood. . . ."

"Shut your mouth!" snapped Lao Ho. "This isn't the United States. You'll kindly refrain from slandering the Negro people. It's only under a

regime of Wall Street buccaneers that racial discrimination is preached as a cultural and moral virtue!"

The stupid major, apparently realizing his new status at last, silently hung his head and walked away.

*

Treading carefully on the hard-packed slippery snow, we escorted the prisoners towards the rear. They made a long snaking line on the highway; from where I was, neither its head nor its tail could be seen. One of our guards was spaced between every ten prisoners. Because I understood a little English I was put in charge of twelve enemy officers.

No sooner was the order to rest passed down the line than the captives immediately stretched out indolently on the ground. Hands clasped behind my back, I gazed off at distant artillery flashes in the night sky. How I wished we could deliver the prisoners quickly, so that I could catch up with our forces fighting their way south.

As I stood lost in thought, something hard and cold was thrust into my hand. I pulled away in surprise, and a shiny wrist-watch dropped to the snowy road. A U.S. captain standing beside me grinned ingratiatingly.

"What are you up to?" I demanded sternly.

"There are no other Chinese around." He picked up the watch and slyly proffered it to me.

I couldn't control my revulsion. Pointing my finger at him I said, "Listen to what I'm saying — I don't want your dirty bribe!"

He stared at me uncomprehendingly. "That's the sixth one who wouldn't take my watch," he muttered. "They're a strange crowd!"

"The seventh won't take it either," I told him. "Your American way of life doesn't work here."

"War gives men a chance to get rich," he assured me solemnly. "We all made money in Germany after World War II."

"We're not Hitler's Nazi army," I reminded him. "And we're not one of your money-mad armies from a capitalist country either. We are the Chinese People's Volunteers. Never forget that."

He slumped to the ground like a deflated balloon. Holding his precious watch, he gazed at it thoughtfully.

*

Shortly before dawn, we assembled all the prisoners on a river bank.

Peering through the night mists, I could see the river — a hundred and more yards wide — swirling rapidly between the mountains flanking it on both sides. I could clearly hear the thud of blocks of ice colliding in midstream. There was a temporary bridge, but it was very narrow. Only one man could cross at a time.

Just then, a large body of our forces began agilely crossing the bridge, heading south. Waiting troops stretched in a long line. I thought

to myself: We've got quite a big batch of prisoners who have to be sent north. If we use the bridge we'll hold up the troop movement. But if we wait, it will be daylight before we can deliver the prisoners to their destination. . . . I was growing very anxious when our escort commander called:

"We'll ford the river. Let our people go across first; then the prisoners."

As we took off our clothes and walked down to the river's edge, the prisoners stood on the bank and looked fearfully at the flowing chunks of ice. Persuasion, urging — nothing could induce them to move. The sight of the frigid water chilled their invaders' swagger.

What could we do? Finally, we talked the matter over with the commander of one of the waiting battalions. He agreed to order three of his companies to ford the river together with our escort guards, and let the prisoners use the bridge in their place.

The north-west wind howled through the river gorge. Step by step we waded forward. The frigid December water ate into our bones. Our teeth chattered; floating slabs of ice stabbed us like knives. In the middle, the river grew deeper. Waves threatened to knock us off our feet. Retaining our balance only with the greatest effort, we pushed on and reached the opposite shore.

We dressed and ran up and down the bank to get warm. The prisoners came slowly across the bridge. They looked at us with surprise and respect. The U.S. captain who had tried to bribe me held up his thumb in a gesture of admiration.

"Your treatment of prisoners is certainly the humanest in the world," he cried. "God will bless you!"

And God may even let a little light creep into that dirty soul of yours! I thought contemptuously.

DRUBBING THE GLOUCESTER REGIMENT

Company Commander Ho Yung-ching

After fighting all night, we occupied Kumyu — a height commanding the south bank of the Limjin-gang River — shortly before dawn. The British forces which had been entrenched on the hill fled south when they saw us coming, without firing a shot, abandoning arms and equipment.

"They're slow as a tortoise when they attack, but quicker than a hare when they run," our men said scornfully.

When the sun rose, from our position on the summit we could see only pine and cypress covered slopes and thick layers of mist drifting slowly at our feet. Far to the north, the Limjin-gang River wound towards the east. Our troops were crossing south at all the fording points. To the south, the mountains were like a line of rolling waves sweeping in the direction of Seoul. Along the yellow highway twisting through the mountains the enemy was fleeing in heavy trucks, while from all sides our forces were surging south to cut them off. From Solma-ni in the south-west to Matsa Mountain in the north-east, our attack was grinding forward irresistibly, to the accompaniment of booming smoking artillery, the chatter of machine-guns and the fierce cries of our men.

Our company was itching to get into action, and the men repeatedly begged for orders to go after the enemy. Only after considerable explanation of the importance of holding Kumyu Mountain, was I able to quiet them a bit. We remained there until the sun was in the west. Then a battalion messenger brought an order directing us to give the position over to Company Four; we were to come down the mountain immediately and undertake a new mission.

It was as hard going down as it had been coming up. The mountain was high, densely wooded, and faced with many precipitous cliffs. One false step and you'd go tumbling into the chasm. Our men descended in single file, gripping vines and finding footholes in fissures, clambering like monkeys; our uniforms were badly ripped in the process. It was already growing dark by the time we reached the foot of the mountain.

We found the vice-commander of our regiment to the south-east. He ordered us to raid the village of Gungpangdong west of Sagimok. We had information that the place was an enemy command post. After a few words of encouragement from the company political instructor, our company set out swiftly along a small road through the mountains in the direction of our target.

We passed Sagimok without incident. Before us was the Pyongyang-Seoul Highway. Once across it, we would have only a short distance to Gungpangdong. I ordered First Platoon to approach from the north, Second Platoon from the south, while I took Third Platoon through the middle. We shot across the highway together like arrows.

Before we had gone very far we suddenly heard ahead the tramping of leather boots; a dozen or more dark forms approached along the road. They were in ragged formation; we could hear them talking and see the glow of their cigarettes. Apparently they were a routed band of British soldiers. I was about to give the order to slip by them quietly, when they spotted us. I quickly shouted command to fire, and Third Platoon brought its machine-gun into play. The startled enemy ran north along the road — directly into First Platoon. There were a few shots; except for two who resisted to the end and were killed, the remaining

eleven enemy soldiers neatly dropped to their knees and held their rifles above their heads in surrender.

Leaving them with First Platoon, I led Second and Third Platoon hurrying on to complete our mission. We drove directly into Gungpang-dong and swept through the village from one end to the other. Our search revealed field telephone lines snaking all over the ground, drums of gasoline and a lot of canned food. But the command post had fled.

After a while, First Platoon came up with their prisoners. The news that we had captured eleven British soldiers quickly spread through the company. Our men's fatigue and hunger — they had been two days and two nights without food or sleep — melted away. Everyone crowded around to see these members of the "Royal Infantry."

Our little bugler, Wang Yi-ping, hopped up and demanded in surprise, "How come they've got two insignias on their caps?"

It was only then I noticed that their caps had insignias front and back. That meant they were the famed Gloucester Regiment of Britain. In 1801 this regiment, invading Egypt in a colonial war, had broken out of an encirclement to wrest victory from defeat. For this feat, the regiment had been decorated and was permitted to wear the insignia "Royal Infantry" on both the front and back of their caps.

But that was 150 years ago. Today in the war of aggression against Korea they could no longer exert their power, for in our era death is the only road open to the colonialists.

We couldn't relax just because we had captured a few prisoners. The enemy command post had escaped; we hadn't completed our mission. Our men asked permission to drive on. Their high spirits fitted in exactly with my own ideas. From the firing to the left and to the right of us, it was evident that brother units were attacking the enemy vigorously. Our commanding officers had often told us that the enemy feared nothing more than being surrounded and divided. Why shouldn't our company slash directly into the enemy's heart and cut off their road to retreat?

After talking the matter over with our political instructor and the company's vice-commander, I sent a small group to escort the prisoners to the rear and report on our situation. Then I led the company forward.

It was broad daylight already. I divided the company into two detachments. Advancing in parallel lines along the mountain ridges, we knifed into enemy territory. As we crossed one large mountain, we were strafed and bombed by enemy planes. The mountain paths were thick with smoke and flame. But we didn't let that stop us.

We soon reached a ravine on the left flank of Solma-ni. The surrounding heights were ringing with the bursts of tommy-gun fire and exploding hand-grenades. One of our units was attacking a height on the right flank. On the Solma Mountain to the right of Solma-ni, another detachment of volunteers were shouting as they charged; countless enemy troops,

running from them, poured down the slope. I hastily ordered Second and Third Platoon to set up on a hill and stem the enemy's retreating tide. At the same time, I sent the vice-commander with First Platoon around to the rear of the hill to help the unit attacking the height on the right.

Just as Second and Third Platoon had taken their positions on the hill, the enemy soldiers fleeing from Solma Mountain ran towards us through the narrow ravine. First the machine-gun of Fourth Squad began to bark. The leader of the mortar squad hadn't had time to set his weapon on its carriage; he fired holding it in his hands. Machine-guns, rifles, tommy-guns raked the enemy from all sides. Hand-grenades rained down on them in a deluge.

The enemy was thrown into a complete panic. They milled around and ran wildly in every direction, casting aside their weapons.

"Charge! Get them alive!" cried our fighters, dashing down the slopes, skipping over enemy corpses. Crammed in the ravine, some of the enemy soldiers were paralysed with fear; they stood woodenly with their guns in their hands. Others ran crouching, their heads pulled in between their shoulders, firing at random. Some threw themselves face down on the ground, and lay there trembling. Some, empty-handed, rushed off madly into the hills. . . . When a squad of First Platoon charged into the ravine, many of the enemy gave up their arms immediately.

A lively hunt for prisoners began. Our men spread out in pursuit of the fleeing English soldiers. No one was willing to remain behind. Even our young messenger, Wang Li-fa, joined the chase. Before long he returned with two captives trailing behind him — I don't know where he got them. They were both a head taller than he, with bushy golden beards and reluctant blue eyes. It was an incredible sight — how in the world had these big English soldiers surrendered to this mere boy? But here he was, proudly reporting to me about their capture. Watching his stern boyish face, my heart warmed towards the brave lad.

Our men were soon bringing back prisoners in batches. No one returned empty-handed. Even the leader of Squad Nine, who had an arm broken by a bullet during the charge, brought in well over a dozen captives. An even more interesting incident was this:

When the enemy soldiers fled, our men chased them up hill and down dale. Liu Kuang-tzu, a soldier of Squad Six, slipped off his knapsack and, under cover of machine-gun fire from Squad Four, plunged towards the enemy carrying dynamite sticks and a tommy-gun. Enemy fire ripped his trousers, but he never paused, charging directly at the enemy ranks. He took shelter behind a bluff and brought his tommy-gun into action.

Suddenly, in the hollow beneath him, another swarm of enemy soldiers appeared. Liu hastily swung his tommy-gun around and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. He had forgotten to put in a fresh load of ammunition. But there was no time for that now. He threw a dynamite

stick with his left hand. In the confusion of the explosion and smoke that followed, Liu quickly reloaded his gun, jumped down from the bluff and pointed his gun at the enemy, shouting: "Halt! Give up your weapons and live!"

Terrified, all the enemy soldiers dropped to their knees, raising their hands high above their heads. He looked them over as he brought them back; every man wore two insignias on his cap, one in front and one in back. A fine show of valour from the famed Gloucester Regiment!

VAN FLEET'S LAST PERFORMANCE

Vice-Regimental Commander Huang Hao

At the beginning of 1953, the First Battalion of our regiment was holding Height 205 north-west of Chulwon in the Songsan-Chisandong sector. To the enemy it was known as "T-Bone Hill." We called it "Nail Hill." The point of it drove deep into enemy territory.

Because of its shape it was exposed to the enemy on three sides, which made it easy for them to attack. At the same time, it seriously menaced them. The men holding Height 205 used to say, "This nail of ours stabs straight into the enemy's living heart!"

The enemy never stopped trying to extract this nail; battles big and small followed one after another. But no matter what tactics and tricks the enemy used, we always sent them rolling down the hill. Our men guarding the height were quite accustomed to fighting battle after battle day in and day out.

Starting on the twentieth of January, there was a sudden obvious change in the region of the front. Enemy shelling increased from five hundred to over two thousand rounds a day. On the twenty-fourth, enemy planes came over in 148 sorties and bombed us for six hours; more than a dozen bombs fell in the neighbourhood of the regimental command post and on the roof of its cave. Enemy reconnaissance patrols were active every night. There was a great deal of moving of supplies behind heavy smoke-screens. Jeeps darted up to the front to make observations. . . .

All this told us that the enemy was preparing to launch a large-scale attack. We got busy preparing to meet it. I was sent to First Battalion to take direct command of the fighting; the battalion chief of staff moved into the cave-tunnel of Company One, which held our foremost position.

At about eight in the morning, on the twenty-fifth, I was in an observation post at the front. Three enemy scout planes came over,

circled a couple times above the battalion command post, then dropped two red smoke bombs on "Nail Hill." I had no sooner entered our cave shelter than the whole mountain began to shake. The enemy was bombarding us with its planes and heavy artillery. Outside was an uninterrupted fury of roaring thunder. In less than an hour all telephone lines between division, regiment and company were snapped. Using a walkie-talkie, I instructed Company One to get ready for battle.

The shelling and bombing lasted until twelve thirty. Then an over-strength battalion, preceded by thirty tanks, moved up towards our position. First, an enemy company rushed us in a fierce charge.

Waiting to meet them was First Platoon of Company One. One squad of our men leaped from their cave-shelter and spread out in the trench. Because the enemy assaulted in continuous waves, our men couldn't mow them down fast enough; they put aside their tommy-guns and blasted back the attackers with clusters of hand-grenades.

I directed our men through the walkie-talkie. I could see that the enemy was trying to exhaust us with unremitting attacks. This enemy tactic of recklessly throwing their men's lives away was not unfamiliar to us. I immediately gave instructions to the battalion chief of staff who was commanding Company One: Save your bullets; don't waste your fighting strength; get ready for an even bigger enemy assault.

Except for the small number of men holding off the attackers, the rest of our fighters remained in their cave shelters, breaking open cases of hand-grenades and passing them down to the men in the front lines. We thus conserved bullets and avoided needless casualties.

Before the fighting had lasted very long, the leader of First Platoon was wounded. Comrade Chen Chih, assistant leader of Squad Three, was appointed to take command.

An enemy rush brought several of them to the edge of our communication trench, where they set up a machine-gun. With one grenade, Chen blew the men and their gun right back again. An incendiary shell landed in the trench during another assault; the flames were licking Chen's body. Only after the enemy had been repelled did he pick up handfuls of earth and extinguish his burning uniform.

Soldier Liu Kai-fa insisted on remaining in the fight even after his left eye was blinded. He stuck to his gun until he fainted and was carried away.

The report of the courage of these men spread quickly through the front line, stirring our men's fighting spirit.

The ferocity of this battle exceeded all previous encounters. So heavy was the enemy artillery fire that all communication between our units was cut off. In some places communication trenches were completely levelled. But their frenzied bombardment didn't do the enemy a bit of

Hail the Great Victory of the Iraqi People by Huang Yung-yu

good. We sent them rolling down the mountain each time they attacked. They left piles of bodies before our emplacements.

At four in the afternoon the battle was still raging. The enemy had launched eight intensive assaults. In three of these they had used the strength of two companies as a combined spearhead. But we smashed their every attempt.

In the few hours of fighting we had already used five or six days' supply of hand-grenades. The men at the front asked for more. I ordered them to conserve their munitions and stick it out. At the same time I brought the battalion artillery into action, and advised regiment to get ready to use divisional artillery and to alert all troops for a possible enemy night attack.

But none of these preparations proved necessary. From the front line came the report: "The enemy is using tanks, heavy artillery, machine-guns and smoke-screens to cover the retreat of its infantry." They were running before we could take the initiative!

But we weren't going to let them get away! I immediately ordered our men to plaster them with every weapon at our command. By five in the afternoon, those of the enemy who were still alive had all fled. On the battlefield were only a few tanks, hiding behind a smoke-screen, giving cover to the removal of bodies by armoured cars.

When we collected booty on the field at dusk that day we found plenty of riddled American helmets and pierced nylon bullet-proof vests. One of the most interesting prizes was a huge store of high explosive packs. The enemy were going to use these to blow open our cave shelters, but the scoundrels never even came within sight of them!

In this attack, except for their battleships, the U.S. invaders threw in everything they had — planes, tanks, artillery. And we, from beginning to end, held them off with a platoon of seventeen men, using only 838 hand-grenades, a few tommy-guns, and other light infantry weapons. Our heavy artillery never fired a shot. Our one little platoon smashed this "combined land and air operations" of the enemy.

So far as we were concerned, the battle — though somewhat bigger and fiercer than most — was nothing remarkable in our experience of a year and more. We made our "detailed battle report" to our commanders, as usual, summing up what we had learned. Our staff officers and colleagues were busy for a while preparing the report, and that was all.

Much to our surprise, two days later, divisional command informed us by telephone that the attack had been something special indeed. On the twenty-fifth of January not only had we inflicted tremendous casualties on the enemy, as stated in our report, but we had given General Van Fleet his "farewell party."

Van Fleet had been the commanding general of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea. He had sent thousands of U.S. soldiers to their death in the

previous two years, winning in exchange nothing but a whole series of disasters in his "limited offensive," "autumn offensive" on "Heartbreak Ridge," "Old Baldy," "Sangkumryung". . . . His disappointed Wall Street bosses decided to remove him. The attack on "T-Bone Hill" was his last attempt to win a little glory to gloss over the disgrace of his removal.

The day of the twenty-fifth, as our men were braving plane and artillery bombardment and blasting the attackers with clumps of hand-grenades, behind the enemy lines were gathered "high-ranking officials" and foreign correspondents whom Van Fleet had invited to witness his "last great performance." Each had been issued a well-bound map of the attack, printed in three colours, together with a "time schedule." All waited expectantly for the attackers to quickly reach the summit, so that they could give this oft defeated general some favourable publicity to lend him a bit of face on his departure.

But what was the result? The U.S. and British press were compelled to admit that the Chinese People's Volunteers had made the imperialist invaders look like fools on "T-Bone Hill"; many U.S. Congress-men demanded an answer for this from the Defense Department. Even members of the British Parliament joined in the clamour.

That was Van Fleet's final crushing defeat. He left Korea with his tail between his legs.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE FICTION *(cont'd)*

LU HSUN

IV

SUNG STORIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE

I said last time that the *chuan chi* or strange tales died out at the end of the Tang dynasty, for though tales in this genre were written in the Sung dynasty they were quite different. Whereas the Tang scholars had for the most part described contemporary affairs, the Sung writers spoke mainly of the past. The Tang stories contained very little moral teaching, the Sung stories a great deal. Probably there was more freedom of speech in the Tang dynasty and writers did not get into trouble for discussing current events; but in the Sung dynasty there were more and more taboos, and in an attempt to avoid these the men of letters spoke of ancient things instead. Furthermore, because Neo-Confucianism was in such vogue during the Sung dynasty, even fiction acquired a Confucian flavour and stories without morals were thought rather worthless. But literature is not literature by virtue of its moral teaching. In fact if stories are made into textbooks for ethics, they cannot be literature. This is what I meant when I said that the *chuan chi* died out, although Sung writers did continue to produce some such stories.

The best thing the Sung scholars did was to compile the *Records of the Tai Ping Era.* These five hundred volumes of fiction from the Han to the beginning of the Sung dynasty are a veritable treasure-house of stories. The scholars did not do this on their own initiative, however, but by order of the government. For at the beginning of the Sung dynasty, when the empire was united and at peace, scholars were summoned from all parts of the country, offered good salaries, and ordered to compile books. Then they produced *Choice Blossoms from the Garden of Literature* (文苑英华), *Readings for the Sovereign of the Tai Ping Era* (太平御覽), and *Records of the Tai Ping Era.* The government's aim was simply to gather the most prominent scholars together by this means, so that they would not turn against the state — it was not really interested in literature. But incidentally they left us a wealth of old stories. As far as original writing

was concerned, the Sung scholars did not achieve much. But at that time another kind of story-telling arose among the people and took the place of the earlier tales. These stories were different in form as well as in language, for they used the vernacular — a tremendous change in the history of Chinese fiction. Though most of the literati of that time were interested in Neo-Confucian philosophy and despised fiction, the people still wanted their pleasure. It is therefore not strange that these popular stories appeared.

After Kaifeng became the capital, the country prospered and many different kinds of entertainment appeared. The townsfolk had a type of variety show which included story-telling. This was divided into four categories: "history," "Buddhist teaching for laymen," "story-telling," and skits or puns called *ho sheng* (合生). The "history" meant narrating episodes from history or the lives of famous men, and this later developed into historical romances. The "Buddhist teaching" was done in the vernacular too. The "story-telling" generally consisted of short tales. The *ho sheng* usually started with an ambiguous couplet, after which a few more verses explained the meaning, and they were often satire against contemporary figures. Of these four categories, only the narrating of history and the story-telling had any bearing on the subsequent development of Chinese fiction. The professional story-tellers had their own organizations which were known as "Orators' Clubs." They also had certain scripts to help them, which were called *hua pen* (話本, story-texts). At the beginning of the Southern Sung dynasty (1127-1279) such scripts were still popular; but when the Sung dynasty fell and the Mongols conquered China these variety shows declined and most scripts were lost. Though there were still story-tellers during the Ming dynasty, some of them as well-known as Liu Ching-ting,* they were no longer the same. They were not attached to variety shows and had no organizations of their own. So now we know very little about the story-tellers of the Sung dynasty and their scripts. Luckily a few reprints have recently been made which serve as specimens.

One of these is *Popular History of the Five Dynasties* (五代史平話). This is a historical narrative, a type of recital which usually starts with the beginning of history and goes down to the period concerned. It begins with a verse, then follows the account itself, and it concludes with more verse. It is divided into sections, which are split up by verses. Unfortunately there is too much empty talk and too little on history itself. To my mind, the use of the verse shows the influence of the Tang dynasty, for the Tang people had great respect for versification, and writing poetry was considered cultured. In imitation of this, the story-tellers usually interspersed their stories with verses, and indeed this is still done by many

*A famous story-teller in Taichow at the end of the Ming dynasty.

present-day novelists. Another feature of the later historical romances is that each chapter usually ends with the same phrase: "If you want to know what happened afterwards, you will find the answer in the next chapter." I think this fashion also started with the story-tellers, because if they wanted the customers to come again it was necessary to leave some dramatic episode half-told in order to hold their interest. As for the fact that this is still done by modern novelists, that is just an anachronism like the human appendix — it serves no purpose today.

The other reprint is the *Popular Story-Scripts from the Capital* (京本通俗小說). This text is incomplete, only about ten stories being left. These *hsiao shuo* are not novels. Very short, they often deal with contemporary affairs. They start with a sort of introduction, a long verse or an anecdote, which was called the *Triumphant Beginning* (得胜头回, *teh-sheng-tou-huei*) and was by way of a preamble to invoke good luck. The story itself follows, but this is hardly longer than the introduction, and could be told fairly quickly. So the Sung dynasty *hsiao shuo* were actually short stories. And though the *Popular Story-Scripts from the Capital* is incomplete, from it we can see what these stories were like.

In addition to these two works, we have *Incidents of the Hsuan Ho Era (1119-1125) in the Sung Dynasty* (大宋宣和遺事). This story starts and ends with verses, and is interspersed with them like the historical narratives, though it is not in the vernacular. It also resembles the story-tellers' scripts in some respects, though not so short and concise. Since it tells of the outlaws of Liangshan,* it is a precursor of the novel *Water Margin* (水滸傳), a fact worth noting. Another recently discovered text is *The Search for Buddhist Canons by the Monk Tripitaka of the Tang Dynasty, a Chantefable* (大唐三藏法师取經詩話). Long lost in China, this work came to light in Japan. This kind of chantefable is also a form of fiction punctuated by verses. Though it is a forerunner of the *Pilgrimage to the West,* the story is slightly different. For instance, in the chapter of the novel, "Stealing the Fruit of Immortality," Monkey wants to steal the fruit but the monk will not let him. In this early version the fruit is a fairy peach, and Tripitaka orders Monkey to steal it. This shows not so much a difference in age as a difference in the writers' ideas. For the author of the novel was a scholarly gentleman, while the writer of this chantefable was a common townsman. As the strict scholar felt a monk should not steal fruit, he put the blame on Monkey. The townsman was not so strict and did not mind if the monk stole a few fairy peaches; he came out with the facts quite bluntly, not troubling to hide them.

In short, the influence of these Sung story-tellers was very great, for most later fiction was based on their work. Certain stories of later ages like

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*The peasant revolt at Liangshan at the beginning of the twelfth century is famous in popular lore.

those in *Strange Stories Past and Present* (今古奇观)* were modelled on them, while some long romances like the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三国演义) were based on Sung historical narratives. This second category was the more influential, and ever since the Ming dynasty the history of earlier times has all been told in romances.

A famous writer of historical romances was Lo Kuan-chung, or Lo Pen. He was a native of Hangchow, who probably lived at the end of the Yuan and the beginning of the Ming dynasty. He wrote a number of novels, but unfortunately only four of them are left, and these have been so much changed by later editors that they are no longer authentic. (I suppose it is because the Chinese have always considered works of fiction trivial, unlike the Confucian classics, that they cannot resist making alterations.) Of Lo Kuan-chung's life we know nothing. Some say that because he wrote *Water Margin* for three generations his descendants were deaf and dumb, but of course this is pure slander. His four works are: The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Water Margin, Romance of the Sui and Tang History* (隋唐志傳) and *The Vanquishing of Evil* (北宋三遂平妖傳). The last novel describes how Wang Tse, a citizen of Peichow, started a rebellion by magic means but was finally vanquished by three men, all of whom had the character *"sui"* in their names. So the complete title is *The Vanquishing of Evil by the Three Suis.* The *Romance of the Sui and Tang History* relates historical incidents from the Sui dynasty to the reign of Emperor Ming Huang (712-756) of the Tang dynasty. As neither the plot nor language of either these romances is outstanding, they are not very popular. The most widely read and influential works are the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin.*

I. The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms.* Lò Kuan-chung was not the first to tell the story of the Three Kingdoms. In the Sung dynasty some village story-tellers specialized in tales about the Three Kingdoms period, and it was about this time that Su Tung-po** wrote: "Wang Peng used to describe to me how children in the streets . . . would sit down to listen to old stories, including ones about the Three Kingdoms. When they heard of Liu Pei's*** defeat, they would fret and even shed tears. When they heard of Tsao Tsao's defeat, they would brighten up and applaud. This shows that even after a hundred generations good and bad men leave their mark." From this account we know that before Lo Kuan-chung's time there were already stories like that of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms.* This is because the history of that period was not so confused

*A collection of forty stories, compiled towards the end of the Ming dynasty.

** A famous Sung dynasty poet, who lived in the first half of the eleventh century.

*** The hero of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* and ruler of the kingdom of Shu in west China.

as that of the Five Dynasties, nor so simple as that of the war between Chu and Han.* It was exactly right for the subject of a romance. Besides, the heroes of that day were clever and brave and had most dramatic adventures; so men liked to use them as material for romances. Pei Sung-chih's very detailed commentary on the *History of the Three Kingdoms* (三国志)** also helped to interest readers in that period. Of course we cannot leap to hasty conclusions on the question of whether this romance was Lo Kuan-chung's own work or an adaptation from some earlier tale. In the Chia Ching (1522-1566) edition of the novel we find this statement: "Lo Pen of the Ming dynasty compiled this romance from material in the history by Chen Shou, Marquis of Pingyang, of the Tsin dynasty." So it seems to have been based directly on the *History of the Three Kingdoms.* The romance as we know it today, however, has been altered so many times by later writers that it must be very different from the original. Critics think it has the following three defects:

(1) It is easy to mistake it for actual history. About seven-tenths of the episodes described are true, and three-tenths fictitious. Since there is more fact than fiction, it is easy for readers to believe the fictitious parts are real. For example, Wang Yu-yang, a well-known poet and scholar of the seventeenth century, wrote a poem called "Lamenting Pang Tung at Phoenix-Falling Slope." Phoenix-Falling Slope appears only in the novel and has no basis in fact, yet Wang took it to be a real place.

(2) The characters are too black and white. A good character is described with no faults, while a bad man has no good qualities at all. Actually this is not true to life, for a man cannot be entirely good or entirely bad. Thus Tsao Tsao, from the political standpoint, has his virtues; while Liu Pei and Kuan Yu cannot be said to have had no shortcomings. But as the author did not trouble about this and made subjective judgements, his characters often appear unnatural.

(3) The finished result is not what the writer intended. In other words, what Lo Kuan-chung actually expressed is not what he imagined. For instance, he wanted to show Tsao Tsao's craftiness, but instead he gives us a picture of Tsao Tsao's wisdom and chivalry. He wanted to bring out Chuko Liang's wisdom, but the impression made is more one of craftiness. There is also some fine characterization, however, as in the dramatic and colourful passages which describe how Kuan Yu killed General Hua Hsiung and how he let Tsao Tsao escape on the Huayung path — here he gives a lifelike picture of courage and justice. Many historical romances were written later, on the origin of the world, or the Han, Tsin,

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* The war between Liu Pang and Hsiang Yu in 206-203 B.C. Liu Pang finally defeated his rival and set up the Han dynasty.

** The *History of the Three Kingdoms* was written at the end of the third century. Pei Sung-chih added his notes about two centuries later.

Tang, Sung and Ching dynasties; but none of these can compare with the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms.* Everyone likes this book, and it will remain highly valued in future too.

II. *Water Margin.* This novel deals with the adventures of Sung Chiang and others. Lo Kuan-chung was not the first to tell this story either, for Sung Chiang was a historical figure, an outlaw whose exploits had been popular legends since the Southern Sung dynasty. During the Sung and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties, Kao Ju, Li Sung and others wrote about him. After the fall of the Sung dynasty Kung Sheng-yu* wrote in praise of the thirty-six men headed by Sung Chiang. In the *Incidents of the Hsuan Ho Era* it was already recorded that Sung Chiang captured the outlaw Fang La** and was made a military governor. Thus such legends were already widespread, and some simple texts probably existed. Lo Kuan-chung collected the different versions of this story and re-wrote them into a long novel. The original book is now lost, however, and we are left with two popular editions, one with seventy chapters only, the other with more. The latter starts with a Marshal Hung who accidentally let loose some evil spirits; then a hundred and eight men gathered at Liang-shan and attacked landlords in the vicinity. Later they surrendered to the government and achieved great deeds by defeating the Khitans, putting down the rebellion of Tien Hu and Wang Ching, and capturing Fang La. But as the government did not trust them, Sung Chiang finally took poison and died, after which he became a god. This story of Sung Chiang's surrender reflects the ideas at the end of the Sung dynasty, when the country was in a turmoil and government troops were riding roughshod over the people. Those who kept the peace had to bear a heavy yoke, while those who were not so submissive were driven to revolt. The outlaws fought and defeated the government troops, and preyed on the people too. But when foreign troops attacked and the government was unable to resist, the people preferred to fight the invaders with the outlaws, who were stronger than the government forces. Thus outlaws became popular heroes. The account of Sung Chiang's death by poison was added at the beginning of the Ming dynasty. After the first emperor of Ming united the country, he was suspicious of his supporters and had many of them killed. Few of his followers died a natural death. Since the people sympathized with these men, they made up this story of Sung Chiang's death and deification. This was the old tradition of Chinese fiction — change a sad ending into a happy one.

Shih Nai-an is often spoken of as the author of *Water Margin,* because there were two editions with more than seventy chapters, and the one which contains additional episodes bears his name. In my opinion,

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*A scholar of the early fourteenth century.

**Fang La's revolt started in 1120 and was suppressed the next year.

however, Shih Nai-an may have lived after Lo Kuan-chung and written the longer version. When later readers saw his name to this, they assumed that the shorter version was an abridged text and that Shih had lived earlier than Lo. Chin Sheng-tan* at the beginning of the Ching dynasty said that this novel was good down to the surrender of the outlaws, after which it deteriorated. He claimed to have found an old text which proved that the first part was written by Shih Nai-an, and the end added by Lo Kuan-chung. As he condemned the latter part he cut it out, leaving only the first seventy chapters — the popular edition which we have today. I doubt, however, whether he had any earlier version, and suspect that he made the abridgement to suit himself, justifying himself by this talk of an older text. It is true that there are certain discrepancies in the text, as he pointed out. Still, we have already noted that this novel was written by combining many legends and short accounts. Naturally it could not be consistent throughout. Besides, what happened to the rebels after their success would be more difficult to describe than their life as outlaws, and it is quite common for a long novel to have a weak ending. One cannot use this as evidence to prove that the end was added by Lo Kuan-chung. As for Chin Sheng-tan's reasons for cutting the latter part, I fancy they were due to the social conditions of his time. Mr. Hu Shih has said: "Chin Sheng-tan lived during an age when bandits were rising everywhere. He witnessed the depredations of brigands like Chang Hsien-chung and Li Tzu-cheng,** and felt they should not be encouraged but condemned in literature." Because Chin Sheng-tan was unwilling to rely on outlaws to repel foreign invaders, he did not like the legend of Sung Chiang's valour.

After the fall of the Ming dynasty, however, when the foreign invaders became masters, those loyal to the fallen dynasty mourned in secret and forgot the sufferings caused by the outlaws, feeling a new sympathy for them. For instance, one such scholar, Chen Ch'en, under the pen-name of "Woodcutter in Yentang Mountain" wrote a sequel to the novel. In this he made the outlaws who survived Sung Chiang fight against the Golden Tartars. When they were defeated, Li Tsun*** took them across the sea and became king of Siam. This shows that Chen's sympathy for the outlaws was due to the conquest of China by foreign foes. Later, when circumstances changed again and men forgot their patriotism, during the Tao Kuang era (1821-1850) Yu Wan-chun wrote another sequel to the novel, in which all the outlaws, including Sung Chiang, were wiped out by government troops. His style is spirited and he paints a vivid picture, but his ideas are rather depressing.

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*A scholar and literary critic at the beginning of the Ching dynasty; he was executed in 1661 for criticizing the corrupt officials of the Ching government.

**Leaders of the peasant revolt at the end of the Ming dynasty.

***One of the outlaw heroes of the novel.

V

THE TWO MAIN TRENDS IN MING NOVELS

Though the Yuan dynasty was a splendid age for drama, there was little written in the way of fiction; we shall therefore pass on to the novels of the Ming dynasty. In the middle of this dynasty, during the first half of the sixteenth century, a number of novels appeared. These show two main trends: they deal either with wars between gods and demons, or else with human affairs. Let us examine them one by one.

Clashes between gods and demons became a common topic owing to the influence of religion and alchemy at that time. During the Hsuan Ho era of the Sung dynasty there was much Taoist worship; in the Yuan dynasty both Buddhism and Taoism flourished and alchemists were highly influential. In the Ming dynasty these religions began to lose ground, but during the Cheng Hua era (1465-1487) they gained strength again and we read of the celebrated alchemist Li Tzu and the Buddhist monk Chi Hsiao, while in the Cheng Teh era (1506-1521) there was the foreign priest Yu Yung. As all these men became officials, thanks to their religion or magic arts, there was an upsurge of superstition, the influence of which can be seen in literature. Through the ages the struggle between the three main religions of China — Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism — has never been resolved. In general, however, they compromised and tolerated each other, until finally they were considered to stem from "one origin." When a new religion arose, it was regarded as heterodox and there would be arguments. But once it was looked upon as coming from the same origin, all persecution ceased. Not till the next new school appeared would those who prided themselves on being orthodox attack the unorthodox heretics again. Religious conceptions were very vague, and what was described as orthodox or unorthodox in fiction did not mean Confucianism versus Buddhism, Taoism versus Buddhism, or Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism versus the White Lotus Cult.* It simply meant a struggle between two beliefs not clearly defined. So I give it the general description of story about gods and demons. Let us take three novels to illustrate this trend: The *Pilgrimage to the West, The Canonization of the Gods* (封神傳) and the *Expedition to the Western Ocean* (三宝太监西洋記).

1. The *Pilgrimage to the West.* For a long time this book was wrongly attributed to a Yuan dynasty priest, Chiu Chang-chun; but Chiu's *Pilgrimage to the West* in three volumes is a travel account which can still be found in collections of Taoist canons. This confusion arose because the two books have the same name, and the novel was printed at the be-

*A popular religious cult that started towards the end of the Yuan dynasty and flourished during the Ching dynasty.

ginning of the Ching dynasty with the preface of Chiu Chang-chun's book. In fact the author of the novel was Wu Cheng-en of Shanyang County, Kiangsu. This was stated in the *Records of Huainan Prefecture* compiled in the Ming dynasty, but the Ching dynasty edition of these records omitted this fact. The novel as we have it now consists of a hundred chapters. First it tells how Monkey Sun Wu-kung reached sainthood, why the monk Tripitaka set out to look for Buddhist canons, how they passed through eighty-one perils and finally returned to China. This novel was not entirely Wu's creation, for earlier we have referred to the chantefable dealing with Tripitaka's search for Buddhist canons, which already contained such characters as Monkey and the river-god and accounts of various strange incidents. Some Yuan dynasty dramas also used material from this story, and in the early Ming dynasty there was another brief version of it. From this we can see that the story of Tripitaka's journey to the west in search of Buddhist canons grew by degrees into a legend between the end of the Tang and the Yuan dynasties, and was often written in simple story form. In the Ming dynasty, Wu Cheng-en gathered these legends together and wrote this long novel. Wu Cheng-en was an adept at humorous sketches, and he made the monsters in this story so human that everyone enjoys reading about them. This is his art. He also makes readers accept the story light-heartedly instead of feeling overjoyed or wretched, as they do when reading the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* about the victories and defeats of Liu Pei. For in this novel all the characters are monsters, the entire thing is amusing, and no personal feelings obtrude to mar our enjoyment. That is another virtue of the book. As for the purpose of the novel, some say it is meant to encourage men to study, others that it is Buddhist, yet others that it is Taoist. There are many views on the subject, but to my mind the book was written solely to give pleasure. Because the author was influenced by China's three religions, he put in a little of them all: Buddha, Kuanyin, the Taoist supreme deity, Nature and so on and so forth. Thus Confucians, Buddhists or Taoists could read what they wanted into it. If we insist that the novel has a moral, the explanation given by the Ming dynasty scholar Hsieh Chao-chih is quite adequate: "Monkey represents the mind, and Pigsy the will. At first Monkey ran wild, ascending to heaven or descending to the earth just as he pleased. Then one incantation controlled him, and made him obedient and steadfast. This is simply a parable of the control of the mind." Later there were several sequels to this novel, but they were merely imitations. Tung Yueh's *More About the Pilgrimage to the West* (西游补) is really a satire, belonging to a different genre.

2. *The Canonization of the Gods* is another popular novel. Nothing is known of its author. Some say that he was a poor man, who wrote this book to provide his daughter with a dowry; but this story has no

foundation. The ideas in the book seem to be vaguely influenced by the concept of three religions arising from one origin. According to the novel, Shou-hsin, the last king of the Shang dynasty, went to sacrifice to the goddess Nukua and wrote a poem which offended her. The goddess sent three vampires to lead him astray, and helped the Chous to overthrow him. There were many battles between gods and Buddhist saints. On the Chou side were the orthodox deities, while the Shangs were helped by the unorthodox ones. At all events, this book reveals the combined influence of the three religions, which represent the side of the gods, opposed to whom are the demons.

3. The *Expedition to the Western Ocean.* This novel, written during the Wan Li era (1573-1620), is seldom seen nowadays. It tells how the eunuch Cheng Ho led an expedition to the western ocean during the Yung Lo era (1403-1424) and pacified thirty-nine foreign states, making them send tribute to China. According to the story, a monk named Pi Feng helped Cheng Ho to transport his expedition across the ocean and conquer other countries by means of magic art, so that he returned in triumph. This story belongs to the same category, for though it deals with wars between different states, China stands for orthodoxy and the gods, while the foreign lands stand for heresy and the demons. And this novel reflects something of the political situation of the time. Because Cheng Ho had great fame in the Ming dynasty and was a legendary figure, after the Chia Ching era (1522-1566), when Japanese pirates pillaged China's south-east coast and the empire was weak, the people naturally remembered the good old days. That is why this novel was written. A eunuch was made the hero instead of a general and magic relied on instead of military strength owing to the influence of traditional thought, and because eunuchs in the Ming dynasty often controlled the army and had great authority. This idea of defeating foreigners with magic was handed down to the Ching dynasty, and widely believed in. Indeed, the Boxers* made such an experiment..

The second type of novel, which dealt with human affairs, was also written during the heyday of the novels describing wars between gods and demons. These books also grew out of the social conditions of the time, and some of them, like the first type, were closely connected with the ideas of the alchemists. Such books usually describe love and wanton lust, and in the episodes depicting happy encounters and sad partings considerable psychological insight is revealed. The most famous book of this kind is *Chin Ping Mei* (金瓶梅). Hsimen Ching, a character who appeared in *Water Margin,* is the hero, and the novel describes his adventures. This man had one wife and three concubines. Then he fell in love

*An anti-imperialist uprising in 1900. The leaders were superstitious, and thought they could ward off bullets and shells by means of magic incantations.

with Pan Chin-lien or Golden Lotus, poisoned her husband Wu Ta, and made her his concubine. Next he had an affair with her maid, Chun-mei (Spring Plum), and another affair with a woman named Ping-erh (Vase), whom he made his concubine too. Then Ping-erh and Hsimen Ching died, Golden Lotus was killed by her first husband's brother Wu Sung, and Spring Plum died after excessive debauchery. When the Golden Tartars invaded Chingho, Hsimen's wife took his son to Tsinan. A monk meeting them on the way escorted them to Yung Fu Monastery and converted the boy, who joined the order and took the name of Ming Wu. Because Chin-lien, Ping-erh and Chun-mei were the chief characters in the book, it was called *Chin Ping Mei* (Gold-Vase-Plum). Most Ming pornographic novels were aimed at contemporary figures, for this was the writers' way of working off a grudge. So Hsimen Ching was probably a man whom the author hated, but we have no means of identifying him. We do not even know who the author was. Some say that Wang Shih-chen wrote this book to avenge his father, Wang Shu, who was killed by Yen Sung.* Yen Sung's son Yen Shih-fan was all-powerful and suppressed all memorials to the throne which might injure his father. Wang Shih-chen is supposed to have found out that Yen Shih-fan was fond of novels, and to have written this so that he would forget all business while reading it; for then criticisms of Yen Sung could reach the court. That is why the early Ching editions had as preface an essay on filial piety. But this is simply a legend. The novel was attributed to Wang Shih-chen because it is well written and he was the foremost scholar of his day. Later editors adopted this view and inserted the essay on filial piety in order to forestall criticism of the pornographic nature of the book. There is no real evidence of the author's identity.

Another novel, more pornographic than *Chin Ping Mei,* was *Yu Chiao Li* (玉娇李, Jade-Charming-Prune). This was lost, however, by the beginning of the Ching dynasty, and what we have today is not the original. A sequel to *Chin Ping Mei* by Ting Yao-hang of Chucheng County, Shantung, is different from the earlier book. It preaches transmigration, aiming to show that evil will be repaid in the next life. The story describes how in a later existence Wu Ta becomes the amorous lover, while Golden Lotus becomes insatiable in lust and is killed in the end. Hsimen Ching becomes a fool and a cuckold, who lets his wife and concubines have lovers. All later such novels contained sermons. Stories like this about what happened to people in their different existences might go on for generations and never end. This is a strange and interesting phenomenon, but there were similar tales in ancient India, the *Angulimarya Sutra* being one example.

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*A high official of the Chia Ching era.

We see, then, that stories about human affairs could turn into moral talk about retribution. There was another kind: the "ladies and gentlemen" type. Examples of this are *Ping Shan Leng Yen* (平山冷燕), *Hao Chiu Chuan* (好逑傳) and *Yu Chiao Li* (玉娇梨 Jade-Charming-Pear). These titles are usually made up of names of different characters in the book, as in the case of *Chin Ping Mei.* Stories of this type deal not with amorous lovers and wanton women, but with talented young scholars and beautiful young ladies. The "talented" scholars can usually write poetry, which generally serves to bring the young people together. This seems counter to tradition and the idea that matches should be arranged by go-betweens according to the wishes of the parents. But as the final union usually takes place at the command of the emperor, the authors find a higher authority for this licence. None of these novels are well written, but some of them are well-known abroad; for *Yu Chiao Li** and *Ping Shan Leng Yen*** were translated into French, and *Hao Chiu Chuan**** into both French and German. Thus all foreign students of Chinese literature know them, and include them in their histories of Chinese literature. Another reason is that in countries where monogamy is the rule, if several girls fall in love with one man there will be trouble; but in these novels it does not matter — they can all get married. From the Western point of view, this is most exotic and interesting.

VI

FOUR SCHOOLS OF FICTION IN THE CHING DYNASTY AND THEIR LATER DEVELOPMENT

We find more variety and greater changes in the Ching dynasty than in the Ming dynasty fiction; but since time is short I shall simply deal with it very briefly, dividing it into four schools: "classical," satirical, romantic and adventurous.

(1) By "classical" I mean works modelled on the tales of the Six Dynasties or the Tang dynasty. As nearly all the Tang stories not in the large collections had been lost by the Ming dynasty, the occasional imitations appeared as great novelties. At the beginning of the Ming dynasty, a Hangchow scholar named Chu Yu wrote a number of pseudo-Tang stories entitled *New Tales Under the Lamplight* (剪灯新語). Thanks to his erotic descriptions, these tales were popular though poorly written.

**Les deux cousines,* translated by Abel Remusat, Paris, 1826.

***Les deux jeunes filles lettre'es,* Paris, 1860.

****L'union bien Assorté,* translated by Guillard d'Arcy, Paris, 1842. *Die angenehme Geschichte des Haoh Kjo'h,* translated by Christoph Gottlieb von Murr, 1766.

He had many imitators until the government prohibited this type of writing and the fashion changed. But towards the middle of the sixteenth century the Tang stories became popular again and there were more imitations. Indeed most scholars wrote a few stories of this sort. The most famous collection is *Strange Tales of Liaochai* by Pu Sung-ling, a native of Chihchuan in Shantung. It is said that before writing this book he had tea and tobacco ready at his gate every day, and asked passers-by to stop and tell him stories as material for his book. Most of these tales, however, he heard from friends or adapted from ancient books, especially from Tang stories like *The Scholar of Fengyang* (凤阳士人) and *A Sequal to the Dream.* That is why I place this book among the imitations of classical tales. Most of his stories are about spirits, fox-fairies, ghosts and other supernatural beings, like many other tales written in that period. Their superiority lies in the detailed descriptions, dramatic developments, fluent language, and the fact that the supernatural beings are depicted like men with a deep knowledge of the world, which makes them charming instead of frightening. The defect is that the author uses so many classical allusions that ordinary readers find the language rather difficult.

The *Strange Tales of Liaochai* enjoyed tremendous popularity for a whole century, and were much praised and imitated. But towards the end of Chien Lung's reign (1736-1795) a scholar named Chi Yun of Hsien County, Chihli, pointed out that this book had two serious faults. In the first place, he said, the language was too mixed. He objected to finding a medley of different styles in one book; some of the longer tales were imitations of Tang stories, while some of the shorter ones were modelled on the writing of the Six Dynasties. In the second place, there were too many detailed descriptions. Most of these stories were told in the third person, but there were a number of details which only the individual concerned could know, and many of which he would not disclose. How, then, could the author know them?

In order to avoid these shortcomings, Chi Yun modelled his *Notes from the Yueh-wei Hermitage* (閱微草堂笔記) entirely on Six Dynasties tales. His plots were simple, his language concise and classical, unlike the Tang style. He made up most of his stories himself, using fox-fairies and ghosts to criticize the society of his time. To my mind, he did not believe in the supernatural but felt this was the best way to educate ignorant people. There is something very admirable about this man, who lived under the repressive rule of Chien Lung yet dared to write, attacking ridiculous conventions and social customs. He had great courage. His imitators, however, did not realize that his purpose was to criticize social conventions, and they simply aped his moralizing vein, until books of this type became virtually sermons.

Later imitators of classical tales took these two books as models. Even today in Shanghai, for instance, some so-called scholars are copying their

styles. But far from achieving anything good, they have merely preserved the dregs. In fact, this school of fiction has been trampled to death by these disciples.

(2) Satirical stories were written even before the Tang dynasty, and many of the Ming novels about human affairs were satires. In the Ching dynasty, however, we find very few satirical novels. The most famous and practically the only one is *The Scholars* (儒林外史) by Wu Ching-tzu of Chuanchiao, Anhwei. As this author had a rich experience of life and was skilled in expressing his ideas, the different characters he draws are extremely lifelike. He portrays all sorts of scholars, including many strange types, in considerable detail. This novel was written within a century of the fall of the Ming dynasty, when the literati still retained some of the old characteristics: they studied nothing but the examination essays, and were good for nothing else. As a scholar himself who was familiar with this group, Wu could give very detailed exposures of their ludicrous ways. Though this novel is made up of different episodes which are not sufficiently well integrated, it offers us infinite variety and holds our interest. So it is the best satirical novel in China.

At the end of the Ching dynasty, when China was at the mercy of foreign powers, men wanted to find out why the country was declining. Novelists, too, tried to discover the reason. Li Pao-chia blamed bureaucracy, and under the pen-name of Nan-ting-ting-chang wrote his *Exposure of the Official World* (官場現形記). This novel was very popular at the time, but as literature it is much inferior to *The Scholars*. Besides, as the author was not too well-acquainted with the official world, certain passages are not entirely realistic. After him Wu Wo-yao of Nanhai, Kwangtung, laid the blame for China's decline on the disappearance of the traditional morality. Using the pen-name Wo-fo-shan-jen, he wrote *Strange Things Seen in the Last Twenty Years* (二十年目睹之怪現狀). Though this book also enjoyed great popularity, his descriptions of social evils are often exaggerated and superficial, for he wrote to give vent to his own indignation. He shared the faults of Li Pao-chia. Both these novels consist of separate episodes with no strong connecting thread or chief characters. In this sense they resemble *The Scholars*, but as writing they rank far below it. The most obvious difference is that *The Scholars* is a genuine satire, while these two books approach downright abuse.

Innuendo and subtlety are essential in satirical writing. If the author exaggerates or puts the case too bluntly, his work loses its literary value. But later novelists did not pay enough attention to this, with the result that after *The Scholars* we can say there was no real satire.

(3) Romance. This type of fiction is best represented by the famous *Dream of the Red Chamber* or *Hung Lou Meng* (紅樓夢). This novel was first entitled *Story of the Rock* (石头記), had eighty chapters, and appeared in Peking during the reign of Chien Lung. The first copies were all hand-

written. In 1792 the first printed edition was published by Cheng Wei-yuan with an additional forty chapters, making a hundred and twenty in all, and the name was changed to the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. According to Cheng, he collected various manuscripts from different families and street-vendors to obtain the complete novel. The early copies are hard to find today. A lithographic print exists, but we do not know whether it was made from the original or not. The novel is about the Chia family in Shihtou City, which may or may not be Nanking. Chia Cheng has a son named Pao-yu, who is very intelligent and fond of female company. There are many beautiful women in the household: the ladies and servants of the house, numerous relatives, and young guests like Tai-yu and Pao-chai; another girl, Shih Hsiang-yun, also often visits them. Pao-yu loves Tai-yu best, but his father chooses Pao-chai to be his wife. When Tai-yu hears of this she coughs blood and dies, and Pao-yu falls ill of unhappiness. Later, Chia Cheng's brother is demoted, his property is confiscated, and Chia Cheng is involved. So the family fortunes decline. Pao-yu becomes deranged for a time, then recovers and passes the government examination; but soon after that he disappears. When Chia Cheng passes Piling to bury his mother, a man with a shaved head and bare feet bows to him, and he recognizes Pao-yu. Before he can talk to his son, however, a Buddhist monk and a Taoist priest take the youth away, and he is left alone in the wild country.

We know that the author of this book is Tsao Hsueh-chin, for his name appears in the novel; but we have little information about him. Thanks to Professor Hu Shih's researches, some material is now available. Tsao Hsueh-chin was otherwise known as Tsao Chan or Tsao Chin-fu. Some of his ancestors served in the Manchu army. His grandfather, Tsao Yin, was in charge of the Silk Bureau in Nanking during the reign of Kang Hsi (1662-1722), and when the emperor travelled south he put up in this bureau. The author's father, Tsao Fu, held the same post. We know, then, that the novelist came from a wealthy family, was born in Nanking, and went to Peking at the age of ten with his father. Then for some reason the family suffered such a reversal that in his thirties he was reduced to living in the west suburb of Peking, not always with enough to eat. Still he continued to amuse himself with poetry and wine, and during this period he wrote the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Unfortunately his son died young, and he himself died of grief in his early forties, having written eighty chapters only of his novel. Though Cheng Wei-yuan claimed to have compiled his edition of a hundred and twenty chapters from various manuscripts, it was actually completed by his friend Kao Ngo.

There has been much speculation about the purpose of this novel. Here are some of the chief theories.

1. Some think this book refers to the Manchu poet, Nalan Hsingteh,* and the twelve beautiful girls in the novel stand for his friends. For Nalan Hsingteh was a poet who passed the government examination at an early age, whose family property was later confiscated. He therefore had much in common with Pao-yu. But the Chia property was confiscated during Pao-yu's life time, while in Nalan's case it was after his death. There are many other discrepancies, and not actually much similarity.

2. Another theory is that the novel tells the story of Emperor Shun Chih** and his concubine Tung. According to one tradition, Tung Hsiao-wan, a famous Nanking courtesan, was captured by the Manchu forces when they went south, and taken to Peking. She became the emperor's favourite and was made an imperial concubine; and at her death the emperor was so overcome with grief that he went to Wutai Mountain and became a monk. As Pao-yu also becomes a monk in the end, this might refer to the emperor's romance. But we know that the imperial concubine Tung was a Manchu girl, not the famous courtesan; and when the Manchus took the Yangtse Valley, Tung Hsiao-wan was twenty-eight while Emperor Shun Chih was only fourteen. As he could not have made her his concubine, that disposes of this theory.

3. Another hypothesis is that this was a political allegory about Kang Hsi's reign, to lament the fall of the Ming dynasty and expose the corruption of Manchu rule. For example, the word *"hung"* (red) in *Hung Lou Meng* was a substitute for "chu"*** (red). Shihtou city**** meant Nanking. The name "Chia" means "false," and this was an attack on the Manchu regime. The twelve beautiful women in the novel represented the famous scholars who surrendered to the Manchus. This theory is too fantastic to be tenable. Besides, as we now know that the author's family joined the Manchu side from the start, it is unlikely that he would regret the fall of the Ming dynasty.

4. Others believe that the work is based on the author's own life. This was the earliest theory to be put forward, but it found little support in the past. Recently, however, more and more people are coming round to this view, for what we have now learned of the author's life seems to fit the incidents in the novel very well. His grandfather and father were in charge of the Silk Bureau in Nanking, and the family was a very wealthy one — like the Chia household in the book. Tsao Hsueh-chin in his youth was handsome and intelligent, rather like Pao-yu. And his family fortunes suddenly declined — their property may have been confiscated. So

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*A scholar of Kang Hsi's reign, son of the famous minister Ming Chu.

**Who reigned from 1644 to 1661.

*** Surname of the Ming emperors.

**** Shihtou was one of the old names for Nanking.

it does seem likely that the *Dream of the Red Chamber* is largely autobiographical.

As for the novel itself, it is one of the gems of Chinese literature. The author's greatest virtue is that he dares to describe life realistically without subterfuge or concealment, unlike earlier writers who made their characters either black or white. Hence all the people in this book are real. The most significant thing about this work is that it put an end to the traditional view of novels and how to write them, the beauty of the language is only of secondary importance. It has many opponents, though, who think it a bad influence for the young. This is because when the Chinese read a book they cannot enjoy it as a work of art, but must identify themselves with the characters in it. Boys and girls imagine they are Pao-yu or Tai-yu, while their elders put themselves in the place of Chia Cheng, who has to control his son. Such limited views prevent them from seeing any more in the novel.

Many sequels were written to this novel, all designed to continue the love story and give it a happy ending. This went on till the Tao Kuang era (1821-1850), when readers tired of the subject. But as love stories set in ordinary families could not introduce so many attractive girls and romantic incidents, novelists started writing in the style of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* about actors and prostitutes; and so this type of novel underwent a change. Let us consider the two novels: The *Dream of the Green Chamber* (青楼夢) and *A Mirror of Theatrical Life* (品花宝鑑). The latter is about actors in Peking after Chien Lung's reign. Though the characters have a very different social status from those in the *Dream of the Red Chamber,* they are all most romantic too, and the young actors and their lovers or patrons are described in the same way as the earlier scholars and young ladies. The *Dream of the Green Chamber* is a rather idealized story about prostitutes, which fails to carry conviction. The writer felt that singsong girls were the only people who could truly appreciate scholars, and after certain adventures a happy ending was reached. This was like the "scholar and beautiful girl" type of writing at the end of the Ming dynasty. Towards the middle of Kuang Hsu's reign (1875-1908), *Lives of Shanghai Singsong Girls* (海上花列傳) appeared. The girls in this book are not so idealized as those in the *Dream of the Green Chamber.* Some are good and some are bad, which is more realistic. At the end of the nineteenth century novels like *The Nine-tailed Tortoise* (九尾龟) were written. These are different again, as all the prostitutes are bad characters and all their patrons are rogues. So there have been three approaches to prostitutes: first there was undue praise, then a more realistic attitude was adopted, and finally the writers became hypercritical, using deliberate exaggeration and abuse, which sometimes amounted to slander and blackmail. It really is amazing how this type of novel evolved.

4. Adventure. An example of this type of novel is *Three Heroes and Five Gallants* (三俠五义). A scholar heard this tale from some story-teller in a tea-house, and wrote it down; then it became well known. I suppose readers were tired of novels like the *Dream of the Red Chamber* which concentrated on love, or the *Pilgrimage to the West* which dealt entirely with supernatural beings. This novel about swordsmen and adventurers struck a fresh note, and therefore had immediate popularity. Pan Tsu-yin* took the book from Peking to Soochow to show it to Yu Chu-yuan,** who was greatly taken with it. But as he felt it was unhistorical, he rewrote the first chapter. And because there were really four chief characters — the Southern Hero, the Northern Hero and the Twin Heroes — the title *Three Heroes* was inaccurate. Accordingly he added two characters,*** Ai Hu and Shen Chung-yuan, and changed the title to *Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* (七俠五义). This revised edition is popular today south of the Yangtse. But this novel was not made up by one story-teller. Pao Cheng, the Sung dynasty prefect, was a strict and just official whose life is recorded in the *Sung Dynasty History*. Many legends about his miraculous adventures were popular in the Yuan dynasty and were written up as stories in the Ming dynasty to form the collection *The Cases of Prefect Pao.* Then further improvements were made in the plot and a big book was written, on which *Three Heroes and Five Gallants* was based. After this novel proved such a success, many similar books appeared: *Five Lesser Gallants, A Sequel to Five Lesser Gallants, Eight Great Gallants, Eight Lesser Gallants, Seven Swordsmen and Thirteen Heroes, Seven Swordsmen and Eighteen Gallants.* Most of these novels dealt with swordsmen and adventurers who killed bandits and rebels and were usually under the command of high officials. *The Cases of Lord Shih* (施公案) and *The Cases of Lord Peng* (彭公案) were both widely read. The heroes of these books are for the most part adventurers, rather like the characters in *Water Margin.* So though these stories developed from *The Cases of Prefect Pao,* we can also trace their origin back to the great classic. But the heroes in *Water Margin* were rebels, while the characters in these books help the government. Presumably this big divergence in outlook was caused by different social conditions. For most of these books were written in the 1870s and '80s after several wars in China. The Tai-

*A scholar and collector who was minister of the Board of Works in the Kuang Hsu era.

**Yu Yueh, a famous classical scholar.

***According to Lu Hsun's *Outlines History of Chinese Fiction,* three characters were added which conform to the changed title of seven heroes.

ping Rebellion* had been suppressed; so had the Nien Rebellion and the rebellions of various religious sects.** Many rough country fellows and rogues had joined the army, distinguished themselves and received official honours. Since these men and their "exploits" for the authorities were much talked about, the story-tellers in the tea-houses catered for the demand. There are already twenty-four sequels to *Seven Heroes and Five Gallants,* ten sequels to *The Cases of Lord Shih* and seventeen sequels to *The Cases of Lord Peng.* These books are so repetitious and badly written that we need not comment on them except to wonder how authors and readers can waste so much time on such trash.

These four types of fiction are still very popular today. There are other minor types, but I have no time to go into them now. As for the new fiction written since the republic was founded, this is still in its infancy and no really important works have yet appeared. I shall not, therefore, speak of this either.

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

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*1851-1868.

** These rebellions went on for a long time during the Ching dynasty, but were finally suppressed in 1891.

NOTES ON LITERATURE AND ART

EUPHUISTIC PROSE AND FREE PROSE

Wu Hsiao-ju

During the Chou and Chin dynasties most Chinese prose, whether narrative or philosophical, was written in a free style. Though parallelisms and rhythmic patterns occurred, euphuism did not predominate, being neither deliberately attempted nor fashionable. In the four centuries of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.) the general trend of prose was towards euphuism: from a simple, unadorned style to magnificent verbiage, from a straightforward narrative to the use of many allusions. This tendency is clearly evident if we look at the anthologies made by Hsiao Tung of the Liang dynasty (502-557) or by Li Shen-chi of the Ching dynasty (1644-1911), and was obviously due to the influence of the Han dynasty poems known as *fu*.

The political unification of the Western Han empire (206 B.C. to 24 A.D.) helped to stabilize the economic basis of feudal society and consolidate the central authority. After Emperor Wu exalted Confucianism at the expense of other schools of thought, a period of comparative conservatism and intellectual stagnancy set in. During this period many scholars wrote *fu*, grandiloquent poems filled with extravagant images, to paint a glowing picture of society, flatter their patrons, laud the emperor, and pay tribute to the luxury and magnificence of the ruling class. This fashion had a great influence on the prose of that period, introducing greater regularity, elegance and refinement into free prose. Writers at the beginning of the Western Han dynasty, like Chia Yi and Chao Tso, might use certain parallelisms and beautiful imagery, but they still followed the earlier tradition and wrote comparatively simple and fluent prose. By the end of the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.), however, men like Tsai Yung and Kung Yung — no matter what their subject matter — paid great attention to a measured cadence and parallel constructions. Apart from a few sentences in free prose by way of introduction and conclusion, virtually all their writing was euphuistic. By the time of the Six Dynasties this tendency had gone so far that prose was completely euphuistic, with regular parallelisms and sentences consisting of four or six characters, often rhymed. Very few traces of free prose were left.

This is the second of three articles on Chinese prose, the first of which was published in our last number. This article deals with the development of Chinese prose from the Han to the Tang dynasty.

Amidst this trend towards artificial prose, one remarkable Han dynasty work stands out as a landmark in the history of Chinese prose and a model for later writers. This was the *Historical Records* of Ssuma Chien,* great historian and writer of the time of Emperor Wu. This monumental work gives us an invaluable account of Chinese history up to that time, summarizing the scientific achievements up to that date. It was a lifetime's work. Ssuma Chien made ten chronological tables, wrote accounts of eight different important sciences and one hundred and twelve lives of famous historical figures. He was the first biographer of China. He dealt with real persons and historical facts, meting out praise or censure according to his own criteria which were closer to those of ordinary people than to those of the ruling class. He selected his materials with skill and compiled them with such a combination of realism and artistic exaggeration that he succeeded in creating many significant types. Thus the historical figures he presents are idealized characters too. He depicts their role in history so vividly that his readers love or hate them. In his narratives as well as his biographies he pays attention to the smallest details as well as to the general outline; and in this way his characters are completely convincing and historical happenings become as dramatic as fiction. Indeed, a number of his biographies are true stories written according to the principles of realism. He achieved this thanks to his deep understanding of the characters he describes, his just appraisal of history, and his skill in selecting and arranging material. Because he drew heavily on old records, popular traditions and legends, and excelled in reproducing the spoken language, his prose is close to daily speech: lively, rich, highly expressive and appropriate to the characters presented. His narratives continue the fine old tradition of writing concisely and succinctly. Ssuma Chien is an unrivalled master of classical Chinese prose.

Another famous historian of the Eastern Han dynasty was Pan Ku, author of the *Han Dynasty History*. This work is often compared to Ssuma Chien's *Historical Records*, though it falls short of that great masterpiece. It possesses considerable literary value, but suffers because Pan Ku often viewed events through the eyes of the ruling class. As he was fond of magnificent verbiage and given to imitating other writers, his language is more stately than lively and does not read as well as the *Historical Records*. But as he recorded the truth and reality to a certain extent and paid attention to characterization as well, many accounts in his history are still good literature, and this work is an important example of ancient Chinese prose.

The euphuistic style in prose was conditioned by the characteristics of the ancient Chinese written language. Since this consisted of monosyllabic words, it lent itself to regular sentence-patterns; moreover a parallelism of the same parts of speech and same tones was easily achieved in two or more sentences. The fact that euphuistic prose consists mainly of sentences of four or six characters is owing to the influence of ancient verse forms. Most lines in the *Book of Songs* have four characters, while those of Chu Yuan and other Chu poets have six. The folk poetry from

* See *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1955, p. 79.

the Han dynasty onwards often has five or seven-character lines; but the more ancient forms were adopted in the euphuistic prose fashionable from the end of the Han to the end of the Tang dynasty, in other words from the third to the tenth century. Since Han dynasty *fu* laid special emphasis on magniloquence, the euphuistic prose did the same. Instead of conveying ideas unaffectedly and plainly, the euphuists used innumerable allusions and stock phrases. And since most of them were gentlemen of leisure, they usually tried to conceal their dearth of ideas behind elegant diction and colourful imagery. They deliberately rejected the simplicity and succinctness of free prose.

The development of euphuistic prose coincided with the birth of yet another type of prose designed to express the writer's personal feelings. From the time of the Warring States to the Han dynasty, prose had seldom been used to express individual emotion — this was left to poetry. The only known exceptions are two letters from Ssuma Chien and his grandson Yang Yun to their friends, which express their feelings in a most moving way. After the Eastern Han dynasty as the euphuistic style evolved, this new "lyric prose" won favour too, till by degrees it had a great vogue among scholars. Now in addition to pouring out their hearts in poems, writers produced many passages of affecting prose. Examples are the letters of Tsao Pei and Tsao Chih to their friends, Chi Kang's letter to a friend terminating their friendship and Li Mi's memorandum, all of which were famed in later ages. While not euphuistic, they tend in that direction. By the fifth and sixth centuries, we find many descriptions of natural scenery in euphuistic prose. Thus the letters of Wu Chun, a celebrated prose writer and poet of the Liang dynasty, give exquisite pen pictures of scenery. But the greatest euphuist, who was at the same time a master of "lyric prose," was Yu Hsin of the kingdom of Liang (502-557), who later served in the court of Northern Chou (557-581). His *Lament of the South* is a masterpiece containing all that is best in the euphuistic literature of that period, and a model of its kind. The preface to it is also an excellent example of euphuistic prose.

The development of prose to express the emotions was closely connected with the folk poetry and poems with five characters to the line of the later part of the Han dynasty. Similarly the use of euphuistic prose to describe the beauties of nature is bound up with the work of such supreme nature poets as Hsieh Ling-yun, Pao Chao and Hsieh Tiao. Another development inspired by poetry was the use of euphuistic prose by the nobles of the Liang dynasty to describe love, romance and their life of luxury. In short, the writers of this period learned to express in prose the emotions which had hitherto been the preserve of poetry. Euphuistic prose was akin to poetry, and could produce a similar effect.

Although euphuistic prose was never so widespread as free prose, it was used in many types of writing. The first Chinese work of literary criticism, *Carving a Dragon at the Core of Literature** by Liu Hsieh of the Liang dynasty, was written in this style. The philosophical essay *On the Mortality of the Spirit* by that early materialist Fan Chen was also written

* See *Chinese Literature* No. 5, 1958, p. 132.

largely in euphuistic prose. Only in narrative work did it prove inadequate. This is why the outstanding narratives of that period are written in free prose, although euphuism was then the prevalent style. For instance, Tao Yuan-ming's account of Peach Blossom Springs is a well-known masterpiece in free prose. Other examples are *Records of Spirits,* a collection of tales of the supernatural by Kan Pao of the Tsin dynasty; *Social Talk,* anecdotes about historical figures and famous scholars by Prince Liu Yi-ching of the Sung dynasty; *Commentary to the Book of Rivers* by Li Tao-yuan and *Account of the Temples of Loyang* by Yang Hsuan-chih, both writers of the Northern Dynasties (386-581). These works, written in free prose, are of a high quality; and they gain added significance from the fact that this was the age when euphuism was in the ascendant.

By the Tang dynasty euphuistic prose was declining. Early in this dynasty the four famous writers Wang Po, Yang Chiung, Lu Chao-lin and Lo Pin-wang tried to combine euphuism with free prose to give it a new lease of life. Towards the middle of the dynasty, Chang Yueh and Su Ting, the two best prose writers north and south of the Yellow River, introduced archaisms in both vocabulary and syntax in an attempt to make euphuistic prose less monotonous and flat. But nothing could hold up the decline of this style which was by now empty of content, excessively verbose and quite divorced from life and the needs of the people. By the middle of the eighth century Li Hua, Hsiao Ying-shih and others began to advocate free prose that was simple and unadorned. They were followed by men like Tuku Chi and Liang Su, who wrote free prose themselves. But these scholars did not succeed in changing the fashion. During the first twenty years of the ninth century the famous writers Han Yu, Liu Tsung-yuan, Li Kao and Huangfu Shih raised high the banner of a classical revival and launched a fierce attack on euphuism. Then at last the euphuistic style which had predominated for several hundred years was overthrown from its pedestal. Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yuan by the force of their own example freed prose from the tyranny of parallelism and the ambiguity of allusions and verbiage. They strongly opposed all attempts to embellish literature with colourful images or other flowers of rhetoric in order to hide the absence of significant content. They were forceful champions of the use of simple, fluent language, taking ancient Chinese as their model. They brought the written language closer to the vernacular. They believed that the purpose of literature was to convey ideas. This momentous change in the history of Chinese literature is known as the classical revival. Referring to this movement, the Sung dynasty poet Su Tung-po declared that Han Yu's prose "inaugurated a new age after eight dynasties* of decline."

The classical revival was no accident. The Tang dynasty examination system gave intellectuals from poor families a chance to climb the official ladder, and as these scholars were closer than the nobility to the common people they naturally opposed the old, impractical euphuistic style which had become a plaything for the nobility. Again, since the middle of the Tang dynasty chantefables, ballads, story-

* The eight dynasties implied here are Eastern Han, Wei, Tsin, Sung, Chi, Liang, Chen and Sui.

telling and dramas — the new literature of the urban class — also shook the foundations of orthodox literature and broke through formalism, impelling writers to adopt a more popular and easily understood style. A good illustration of this is the rise of the prose romances or *chuan chi* (strange tales), which became fashionable during this period. Most of the writers of these stories were intellectuals from humble walks of life, who had been trained in the euphuistic tradition, yet were directly influenced by the popular literature of the time and the earlier narrative prose. On the one hand their language retains such characteristics of euphuism as assonance and colourful images; on the other it displays the freedom and simplicity of urban literature, dispensing with parallelism and an undue use of classical allusions — it is a cross between euphuism and free prose. It was under the influence of these prose romances, which were growing increasingly popular, that Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yuan started the movement for a classical revival; and as a result of this movement, many scholars started writing prose romances. This interaction of the one on the other explains the social origin of the revival of free prose. Furthermore, as Han Yu's philosophy was grounded on Confucianism, he deliberately followed the style of the ancient Confucian classics so that his subject matter and form were consistent. All these factors fostered the restoration of free prose and hastened the decline of euphuism, which never again became the predominant style in Chinese literature.

Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yuan used free prose to remarkable effect in narrative, philosophical argument, descriptions of natural beauty and the expression of personal emotions. This parable about horses is an example:

> *Only when you have a man with Po Lo's understanding of horses will you have steeds able to gallop a thousand* li *at a stretch. Because there are many such horses but few such connoisseurs, fine steeds may be ill-treated by servants and perish ignominiously in their stables, their worth unknown. Sometimes such a horse can eat a whole bushel of grain at one meal; but the groom may not feed it enough, nor realizing what manner of horse it is. Then although it can run far, not being properly fed it lacks energy and cannot show its mettle: far from galloping a thousand* li *it may not even do as well as a hack. Its master does not train it correctly, does not give it enough to eat, does not understand its needs. He simply brandishes his whip, complaining that there are no good steeds in the world. But does this mean that there are no good horses, or that he does not know a good horse when he sees one?*

Here Han Yu, while speaking of horses, is thinking of the relationship between scholars and the ruling class in feudal society. This essay is a philosophical narrative and rather like the poems of comparison and association. The variety of sentence construction is an example of the superiority of free prose in form as well as content. Liu Tsung-yuan's essays on nature and his fables also rank high as literature. Here are two examples:

> *A hundred and twenty paces west of the knoll, across the bamboos and bushes I heard with delight a gurgle like the tinkling of*

jade bracelets. So I cut a path through the bamboos till I came upon a small pool of limpid water. The bottom was of rock and a spring gushed out from the boulders near the bank. Rocks formed little islets and crags, overhung by a great profusion of green trees and vines. There were about a hundred fish in the tarn, apparently gliding unsupported through space. In the sunlight which reached the bottom, casting shadows over the rocks, the fish stayed motionless for a while before suddenly darting away. They scudded to and fro, as if sharing the visitor's pleasure.

Looking south-west in the chequered sunlight at the jagged, serpentine shore, you could not see the whole.

I sat by this tarn, with bamboos and trees all around me, in utter silence and solitude. The seclusion and quiet cast a chill over me, and the scene was one of such purity that I could not stay there long. Accordingly I marked the place and left.

—The Small Tarn West of the Knoll

There were no donkeys in Chienchow until an eccentric took one there by boat, but finding no use for it he set it loose in the hills. A tiger who saw this monstrous-looking beast thought it must be divine. It first surveyed the donkey from under cover, then ventured a little nearer, still keeping a respectable distance however.

One day the donkey brayed; and the tiger took fright and fled for fear of being bitten. It was utterly terrified. But coming back for another look, it decided this creature was not so formidable after all. By and by, growing used to the braying, it drew nearer, though still afraid to attack. Coming nearer still, it began to take liberties, shoving, jostling and charging roughly till the donkey lost its temper and kicked out.

"So that is all it can do!" The tiger exulted.

Then it leapt on the donkey and sank its teeth into it, severing its throat and devouring it before proceeding on its way.

—The Donkey of Chienchow

As explained earlier, the euphuistic style in Chinese prose came into being owing to the special characteristics of the Chinese language. There was a material and social basis for it. Due to the influence of the *fu*, writers deliberately chose this style and it grew increasingly popular; but by degrees it became separated from the people and unsuited for practical use. Moreover after it adopted definite patterns with four or six-character sentences and grew more and more limited in scope, it was inevitable that the people as a whole and the intellectuals from the lower classes who wielded the pen should turn away from it. The classical revival initiated by Han Yu, Liu Tsung-yuan and others was not simply a repudiation of a style which had been the mode for centuries, but a continuation of the ancient tradition of the Warring States period and the Chin and Western Han dynasties. These classicists took as their models the ancient classics, early historical and philosophical works and the *Historical Records* of Ssuma Chien, opposing all writing of later periods. But while calling for a classical revival they did not actually copy the classical style.

They stressed the need for language to convey ideas and their writing was close to the vernacular. Furthermore, though they opposed euphuism they absorbed some of its best features. In certain respects the euphuists extended the scope of Chinese prose, for they expressed personal feelings and wrote of scenery. Since Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yuan did the same, their classical revival was not merely a return to the old style but a further development. Other characteristics of euphuism taken over by the new free prose were the stress on rhythmic patterns, graphic images and other rhetorical devices. What Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yuan objected to were the shortcomings of euphuism: its emphasis on embellishments at the expense of sense, its monotony and formalism. It would be a mistake to suppose that the classical revival meant simply a return to the earlier tradition, for Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yuan swept away the defects of the euphuists and raised Chinese prose to new heights. Actually some of the parallelisms and rhythmic devices of euphuism are retained in prose writings today, and since these are characteristics of the Chinese prose they cannot and should not be completely rejected.

Chronicle

A Conference on Folk Literature

A mighty movement to collect folk songs is now going on throughout the country in gigantic strides. It is one of the most important events in China's social and cultural life, and a great job too. It will have inestimable significance for the development of Chinese art and literature.

In the winter of 1957, while the "great leap forward" on the production front in agriculture and industry was in full swing, workers and peasants expressed their wisdom and their fervour for work in millions of new folk songs. The appearance of so many songs was followed by an enthusiastic movement to collect folk literature, and to meet the new situation a conference on folk literature was held this July in Peking. Folk poets and singers, those engaged in collecting folk literature, as well as writers and artists from all over the country, discussed how to improve their work so to enable folk literature to make an even better contribution to the drive for socialist production.

At the conference many of the two hundred delegates gave vivid descriptions of the spontaneous rise of folk songs since the "great leap forward" and the part they have played in socialist construction. In many areas, the faster production develops the more folk songs are composed and sung. The people of Nanking composed 1,300,000 songs in fifty days; in Kiangsi folk poets have organized themselves into more than 5,000 groups; half a million songs have been written on wall newspapers at the Wuhan steel plant; Hungan County in Hupeh can boast more than a thousand folk poets and singers. . . . In different provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions, counties and villages, thousands of collections of folk songs are being published, while the workers in factories and mines are putting out literary magazines. This is something unprecedented in Chinese history.

The rapid growth of the new folk songs is worthy of special note. These songs vividly reflect the "great leap forward" throughout China and the rise of the spirit of communism. In the old society, as class exploitation deprived the labouring people of education, their hatred of the oppressors and longing for a better life could find expression only through their songs. But now that they have be-

come the masters of their own fate their songs voice the joy and the heroic aspirations in their hearts. These new songs are a brand-new literature, the product of a new state of mind and enthusiasm for labour aimed at building socialism and communism. In the communist society the distinction between mental and physical labour will be finally obliterated. Communist literature and art are those created by men who have combined mental and physical labour; so the new songs thus created by the new workers and peasants may be considered communist literature in its embryonic stage.

Speakers at the conference referred to the old Chinese tradition of collecting folk songs which reflect the life and thought of the people. Among the more than three hundred songs in the *Book of Songs,* the earliest collection of poetry in China, the great majority are folk songs. During the May the Fourth Movement, members of Peking University paid great attention to folk songs and made great efforts to collect them. After the publication of Chairman Mao Tse-tung's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* the collection of folk songs entered upon a new stage. And the present movement to collect folk songs which started this spring has grown to proportions never yet known in history. The development of folk literature has not all been plain sailing, however. From the May the Fourth Movement onwards there has been a struggle between two lines of thought. Bourgeois writers either despised folk literature or treated it as a curiosity, considering the enjoyment of folk literature as an idle pastime or suitable hobby for a "learned" man. Lu Hsun, on the other hand, always valued folk literature very highly, saying that popular singers and story-tellers might produce a Tolstoy or Flaubert, and effectively refuting the reactionary ideas expounded by bourgeois literary aristocrats. Not only did he often write on and quote from folk literature, but he made a scientific Marxist interpretation of many aspects of it: he discussed how to collect, edit and revalue it and how to approach the question of national form. In fact it was Lu Hsun who laid the foundation-stone for a Marxist approach to Chinese folk literature. Chairman Mao Tse-tung in his *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* in 1942 further pointed out the correct path for folk literature. Since then much has been done to collect, edit and encourage folk literature and art, and this in turn has enriched China's new literature and art and hastened their development and popularization. In direct opposition to this proletarian approach was the bourgeois line of such writers as Hu Feng and Feng Hsueh-feng who, posing as Marxists, tried to distort the correct and Marxist approach to folk literature and virtually denied its existence.

It was stressed at the conference that since folk literature is the creation of the labouring people themselves, it directly expresses their thoughts, feelings and aspirations. Many works by the folk artists of previous ages are among the finest flowers of our national culture. They are also a historical record of the people's life and struggles. The new folk songs, which reflect the workers and peasants' "great leap forward" in socialist construction, reveal the heroism of the labouring people as they conquer nature and build a better life.

These songs, so virile, so fresh and full of variety in form and style have become an effective weapon to inspire the people in their efforts to speed up socialist construction.

The conference condemned different manifestations of bourgeois ideas in connection with folk literature, attacking the fallacy that this is a field for a few folk-lore scholars only. Now that people in all walks of life are writing on such an unprecedented scale, the study of folk literature has broken through its former narrow confines. It is certainly not to be left to a few research scholars in their studies. This great mass of writing cannot possibly be collected and edited by a handful of experts here and there. This should be the responsibility of the whole Party and the whole people. So the delegates to the conference agreed that the future task should be to collect folk literature on a mass scale, edit it in the order of importance, and make a deeper and more extensive study of it.

It was felt that as far as collecting is concerned, priority should be given to recent works. Since the people are constantly producing more and better works, the collecting must go on. Like gathering in the harvest, this should be done every year. In addition to folk songs, attention should be paid to folk tales, ballads, folk dramas, folk art, music and dancing.

At the same time we must not ignore good works from the past. Everywhere in China, among the different nationalities, there are rich stores of folk literature. In the last century, especially during the last forty years, the best folk literature produced during the different stages of the people's revolution has great value both as literature and as a record of the history of the revolution. We must lose no time in collecting such works too.

The folk literature of China's different nationalities throughout the ages is a precious part of our national culture, and a valuable part of world culture. It can have a profound influence on our literature and art, giving them a national character and a broad mass basis. It was therefore agreed at the conference that our writers must study the folk literature of our different nationalities in order to gain a better understanding of national psychology and customs, as well as the communist thoughts, feelings and behaviour of our labouring people so as to improve our writing. Only on the basis of a mass culture can socialist literature and art develop fully.

The conference resolved that the collecting and editing of folk literature should be carried out in a responsible way by district, county, provincial and central organizations. Each region should compile a selection of folk songs, local stories, local ballads and local operas. In minority areas, the important works of the minority people should be edited and published. The Chinese Folk Literature and Arts Research Institute and the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences will compile anthologies based on these local publications.

In order to provide a general view of Chinese folk literature, after the conference an exhibition of folk literature was held in Peking. The exhibition introduced in the main folk songs reflecting the spirit of the "great leap forward," but also included songs and other folk literature of past revolutionary periods as well as some examples of ancient folk literature.

A New Development in Traditional Chinese Opera

Performances have recently been given in Peking of new operas with modern themes presented in the traditional style. More than thirty companies from all over China presented more than forty operas on topical subjects in the capital. Moreover this is happening throughout the country: actors and actresses in the traditional theatre are enthusiastically performing new operas with modern themes on the streets, in factories and in the villages. Because these new operas reflect present-day problems and struggles, they mean a further development of this traditional art form to educate the people with socialist and communist ideas, and to spur them on to greater efforts in their work and in the revolutionary struggle. These new operas have proved immensely popular.

The themes of Chinese operas in the past were usually historical, and their art was highly stylized and conventional. The artistic exaggeration of certain gestures was handed down unchanged from generation to generation. As the audience was used to this type of formalized presentation, actors were very hesitant to tackle modern themes in the traditional theatre.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China reforms were made in Chinese opera; many old plays were revived or adapted, while new operas reflecting life today are now being written. The "great leap forward" in production is being accompanied by a high tide in the theatre.

Early in June this year, the Ministry of Culture sponsored a discussion in Peking on the problem of presenting present-day themes in traditional opera. Playwrights, directors, designers and experienced actors from different provinces and cities took part in this discussion. They agreed that the technical and cultural revolutions which are sweeping the country make it imperative for the traditional theatre to produce new operas with a socialist content. Our great age must be reflected in this popular traditional art form, and the labouring people who are building socialism should have big parts on the stage. This new age makes new demands on Chinese opera, and the people's taste has undergone a great change. They are no longer satisfied with historical characters only. Indeed all art forms, traditional or otherwise, should be able to portray modern life as well as stories from the past. The success of operas on modern themes performed in different parts of the country fully proves this, and all taking part in the discussion agreed that this should be the future direction of Chinese opera. In order to produce good modern operas, writers and actors must live closer to the people, study the great body of folk drama and learn from it. Only so can the new operas express the ideas and feelings of the masses and breathe the spirit of the age. Only so can they educate and inspire our people.

It was also pointed out that we must not despise or abandon our traditional repertoire. Many old operas reflect the true feelings of the people at different periods of history or testify to their fine qualities, and are such good theatre that all audiences like them. These old operas must be fully utilized,

for ancient art can still serve the needs of the present. Emphasis was laid on the fact that it would be wrong to neglect traditional operas and not to develop and revise them.

This discussion was a timely one. It has pointed out the future direction of the Chinese theatre, and is a landmark in the development of a new socialist opera.

Writers and Artists Visit Northern Villages

Early in the morning of a fine Summer day, a group of writers and artists including the poets Kuo Mo-jo and Emi Siao, the novelists Yeh Sheng-tao and Shen Tsung-wen, and the artists Yeh Chien-yu, Wu Tso-jen, Shao Yu and Chiang Chao-ho, set out from Peking for Changchiakou in northern Hopei, to see something of the villages there during the "great leap forward." Though most of the party were advanced in years, they all felt young in heart as they started off. Just before noon they reached one of their objectives, Huayuan Township in Huailai County, a district lovely as a painting. Before liberation this was the poorest part of the county with its endless marshes and sandy soil. Today it looks nearly as prosperous as the rich Yangtse River Valley.

The peasants of South Spring Co-operative, where the township people's committee is located, brought four well-cushioned carts to welcome the writers and artists from the capital; but the elderly visitors declined their kind offer to ride and walked with them to the village. They were enchanted by all they saw on the way: great paddy fields, luxuriant orchards, new houses being built, and, when they reached the village, wall paintings and poems everywhere. The co-operative's plans for its leap forward in 1958 are clearly expressed in such words as: "In one year irrigation, in three years electrification, in five years mechanization"; and "This year a million catties of surplus grain will turn South Spring into a second, smaller Yangtse plain." Everywhere were posted such slogans as: "We fear no hardships or difficulties! We shall race with the rich Yangtse Valley!"

Kuo Mo-jo, in a poetic mood, wrote:

This is the home of flowers and fruit,
This is the land of poetry and song;
Here are thousands of trees in the orchards,
Thousands of songs on the walls. . . .

And Emi Siao wrote a poem called: "This is a big garden."

Kuo Mo-jo writes a poem on a village wall

While the sun blazed overhead, the writers and artists chatted with the model workers of this village in the shade of a magnificent crab-apple tree. They met labour heroes old and young: women of over sixty who work with more zest than youngsters, mothers of four who still manage to work in the fields all the year round, and local functionaries who get as much farming done as the peasants themselves. They contrasted the poverty and bitterness they had known in the old society with the tremendous changes since liberation, and spoke with deep feeling of the happy life being built. Chi Chien-hsin, the county Party secretary, gave them the general background of the county, quoting verses by the peasants which show a magnificent spirit:

Oh, our ambition's mountain-high,
We bare our heads to butt the sky;
Our steeds are fast and off we drive
To finish ten years' work in five!

Soon the sound of gongs and drums was carried over on the breeze. The peasants building a hydroelectric station nearby had come with a large announcement of their determination to finish the project by July 1, the Party's birthday. The station would change sandy soil to irrigated fields and generate electricity. The writers and artists were carried away by this sudden good news and the peasants' enthusiasm. On the spot Kuo Mo-jo made up this poem:

Leaves are rustling,
The breeze is fragrant;
The crab-apple's shade is a classroom
Where we are learning from the peasants' reports.
Suddenly there is gonging and drumming,
The sunlight seems brighter than ever,
The bearers of good news are here,
And the hydroelectric station is nearly finished.

Innumerable moving episodes made the writers and artists feel that they were floating in an ocean of poetry. When half a dozen of them had written poems or painted pictures on the walls, they said goodbye to this village which was their first stop on this trip to see the northern villages.

From there the group went to Cholu County on the Sangkan River where a rich and sturdy crop of wheat and sweet-smelling bean flowers welcomed the visitors from Peking. The next day they went to the site of the largest water conservancy project there — a canal cut through the mountains. This canal will pass through nearly thirty miles of hilly land and irrigate about six thousand acres. A way is being cut through twenty-two hills, and fifty gullies are being filled up so that the Sangkan River can climb approximately ninety yards and benefit thirty-three mountain villages.

Here they met some old men who were full of go. Since these old peasants are seeing their lifelong dreams come true during the "great leap forward," they have become the best workers on this site. Old Kuo Chuan-chu volunteered to join the prospecting team when it first came, and trudged up hill and down dale for two months in the bitter cold, refusing to go home to rest. Now he is in charge of the group which checks up on the quality of the work. He hurries here, there and everywhere, and never tires

of describing the wonderful future when they can breed fish in the reservoir and irrigate their land with the canal. Liu Chun-man and Liu Chun-kuei are two brothers who seldom say a word but work with might and main to dig up stones and cut through the hills. Since the excavations began last winter they have exerted every ounce of their strength. These two old men can dig up enough stones for a dozen youngsters to carry. Their cracked, horny hands, as brown as the bark of a tree, testify to the way they worked through the cold winter. Clasping their hands and looking into their wrinkled faces, many writers were very moved. The artist Yeh Chien-yu drew the portraits of these two splendid old men.

The artists Shao Yu, Yeh Chien-yu, Wu Tso-jen and Chiang Chao-ho (right to left) paint pictures on a village wall at Huayuan Township

At sunset the writers and artists climbed a hill to watch the blasting being done. The experiences of this day left a deep impression on them. Kuo Mo-jo wrote:

Gullies may be deep,
But they are not as deep as the Party's love;
Dams may be strong,
But they are not as strong as the Party's light.
A liberated people
Think nothing of levelling hills or making seas;
They cut open Brown Goat Mountain
As easily as slaughtering a sheep.

Yeh Sheng-tao paid his tribute to the workers in these lines:

This canal that cuts through the hills
*Is a greater achievement than any of Great Yu.**
Now the leadership of the Party
Has made men the masters of nature.

One bright sunny morning the writers and artists left Changchiakou to visit the grassland.

That afternoon they reached the cattle-herding team of Red Flag Co-operative in Changpei County. Mongolian women wearing blue cloth gowns and silver trinkets came out to welcome them, and, speaking fluent Chinese, offered the visitors milk-tea. The team leader, Dugortsabo, gave them an account of conditions there and how their life had improved since liberation. He spoke, too, of the friendship between the Mongolian and Han peoples there. Then the visitors were taken to see the cattle, horses and sheep, and some children put on a riding display for them. The writers

*See note on page 10.

Kuo Mo-jo tries his hand at digging in Huayuan Township

and artists visited the site of the Hailiutu Reservoir — something of which the local people had never dreamed. They found the huge dam nearing completion, and were told that this reservoir would convert nine thousand acres of barren land into watered fields. A wall newspaper there declared: "We are determined to change dry, barren hills into rich green hills and reservoirs." Among the workers filing to and fro with stones and earth the visitors saw sturdy young men as well as old women and girls with plaits. They chatted with them and heard many stories about the heroism of these workers: some would not stop work in a temperature forty degrees below zero, and the women worked just as hard as the men.

As they left that evening, congratulating themselves on the clear weather, a wind suddenly sprang up and the temperature dropped. The leather jackets which some of them had taken came in very useful. Emi Siao, putting on his jacket, changed his summer costume for a winter one; and the others remarked that they should be grateful for this sandstorm which enabled them to understand the local saying: "Wear furs in the morning and linen at noon; eat melon by the fire." Thus Kuo Mo-jo wrote in "The Grassland":

Suddenly the west wind sprang up,
And it was late autumn in the grassland.

The visitors were stimulated and inspired by the collective spirit of the people and the infinite wisdom expressed in their literature and art. Kuo Mo-jo jotted down one confident folk song which impressed him greatly:

My pole is only seven foot three,
My crates are wicker, as you see;
But don't despise this tackle, pray —
It moved two mountains yesterday!

The poets also admired the slogan of the iron-mine workers at Hsuanhua: "Let the mountains present their treasures, and we shall overtake England. Determination and scientific technique will make even the stones soft as beancurd." The writers were struck by the graphic image here, and felt this was one that only men actually working on excavation could produce.

The artists could not wait to return to their studios to paint, for they were inspired by the many pictures filled with socialist romanticism on the village walls. Yeh Chien-yu, Wu Tso-jen, Shao Yu, Chiang Chao-ho and Hsiao Shu-fang, impressed by the strength and wisdom of the workers and peasants who were cutting through mountains, co-operated to make one

large wall painting called "Let mountains present their treasures and water obey our will!"

Before leaving Changchiakou, Kuo Mo-jo expressed the enthusiastic appreciation of all the writers and artists who had learned so much during this trip. It was their fervent hope that they would have opportunities to settle down for some time among the peasants and workers, to live close to them and produce better works.

An Anthology of Asian and African Literature

Yi Wen, the monthly magazine of Chinese translations of world literature, welcomes the coming Asian-African Writers' Conference in Tashkent with a special two-part number devoted to the literature of the two continents.

Part one of this special number appeared on September 1 with a preface by Mao Tun, Chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers. He pays tribute to the militant spirit of the works republished in the issue and to its role in enabling the Chinese people to better understand the literature and life of the people in the Asian and African countries.

It carries the works of contemporary writers from Indonesia to Iran and from Japan to Southwest Africa.

Among the representative African poets included are A. Ford of the United Arab Republic, Bayate of Iraq, L. Mikaya and R. de Noronia of Mozambique, F. Ranaivo and J. Rabemanajara of Madagascar, and D. Diop of Senegal. Their poems are inspired by a deep love for their peoples and their countries and therefore an uncompromising hatred for the colonialists who have for so long tormented and torment the African peoples condemning them to bitter toil and poverty. But it is a sign of the times that these poets feel in their very bones that the African peoples are the real masters of Africa and so they sing with confidence of tomorrow's victory.

The stories selected come from India, Japan, the Near and Middle East, Southeast Asia and the Union of South Africa. "His Face," by the Indian writer K. Chander, tells the story of a Soviet collective farm which the author visited in 1956. R.K. Narayan's two stories — "Forty-five a Month" and "The Evening Gift" — are satirical but interesting human little vignettes from the life of Indian intellectuals.

Three pieces describe life in Japan during the Pacific war and the U.S. occupation: the short novel, "Foxes" by Yae-Ko Nogami, the veteran woman writer of Japan, and two short stories "The Ghost Train" by Kazero Heruzi and "The Campfire in the Night" by a new young writer, Tazikichi Nishino. "The Iron Front" by Al-Hamisi of the United Arab Republic is an adventure story of the revolution: it introduces the links of a chain that aids a courier of the revolutionary movement. "In the Cafe" by M. Dib of Algeria is a forceful and angry denunciation of life under colonial rule. The stories of the United Arab Republic writers M. Teimur and M. Negivan, the Lebanese writer Dakrub and the Iraqi writer Farman also

depict various aspects of the Arab people's struggle against imperialism.

The enlarged number also includes "Blood and Carpet," a one-act play by the Pakistan playwright Mirza Adeeb, and seven folk-tales distilled out of the wit and wisdom of the nations of Africa.

To mark the 700th anniversary of the publication of Saadi's "Rose Garden," a part of this poem by the great Iranian writer is printed together with a story, "Saadi's Last Spring" written by Isakyan, an Armenian poet, and based on the life of Saadi in his old age.

Part two of *Yi Wen's* special number which appears in October introduces the literature of the Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia and the literature of Vietnam and Mongolia.

"Song of Kashmir" by the great Uzbek poet S. Rashchidov is an allegory based on an old Kashmir legend, recounting the struggle between flowers and a storm, a story of the victory of friendly unity and pure love. The short story "In the Hospital" by the Tartar writer A. Shamov gives a touching description of the meeting between a wounded Red armyman and his mother. This part also includes the long poem "The Voice of Asia" by the Tadjik poet Tursun-Zade, poems and ballads by Jambul, the great poet of Kazakhastan, the Bashkirian poet N. Gafuri and the prominent Tadjik poet Rudaki. Mongolia is represented by a story by Z. Damdimsuron and poems by B. Sange and C. Lhamsuron, Korea by a story by Kim Pei Siang and a poem by Kim Shun Shih, and Vietnam by a story by Wu-Hui-Sin and poems by Tu-Huu and Cu-Hug-Can.

The number is completed by an article on the contemporary literary scene in the Asian and African countries, with special articles on the literature of the Eastern nationalities of the Soviet Union, contemporary Arabian literature, contemporary African poetry, post-war literature in Japan, and literature in Indonesia, Korea, Mongolia and South Africa.

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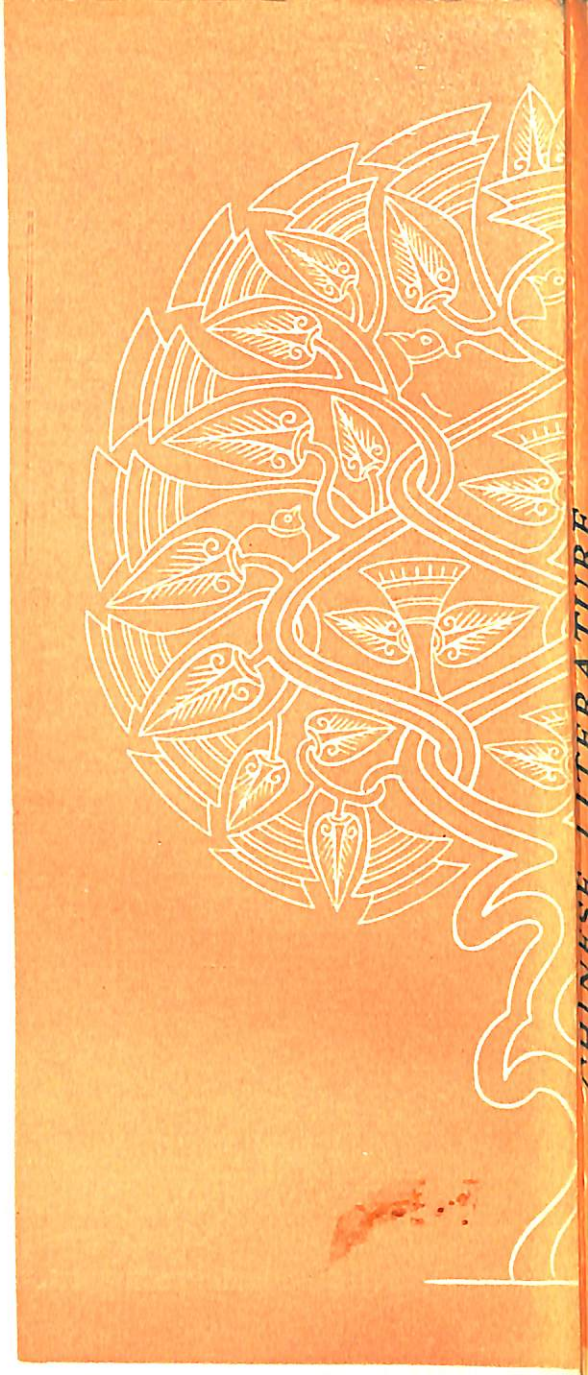

英文《中国文学》双月刊 1958 年第 6 期
本刊代号 61—13