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Volume Two

LU XUN

SELECTED WORKS



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YANG XIANYI *and* GLADYS YANG

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EDITOR'S NOTE

All the essays in this volume but three — “In the Belfry,” “Silent China” and “The Other Side of Celebrating the Recovery of Shanghai and Nanjing” — are from five collections entitled *The Grave*, *Hot Air*, *Bad Luck*, *Bad Luck (II)*, and *And That's That*.

The Grave, published in 1927, consists of 4 essays dating from 1907 and 19 written between 1918 and 1925. *Hot Air*, published in 1925, contains 41 essays written between 1918 and 1924. *Bad Luck*, published in 1926, has 31 essays written in 1925. *Bad Luck (II)*, published in 1927, consists of 32 essays written in 1926 and one written in 1927. *And That's That*, published in 1928, has 29 essays written in 1927 and one written in 1926. “In the Belfry” and “Silent China,” which also belong to 1927, were included in *Three Leisures* published in 1932. “The Other Side of Celebrating the Recovery of Shanghai and Nanjing,” written on April 10, 1927, and forgotten for nearly fifty years, was re-discovered in 1975.

As the contents show, all the essays in this volume were written between 1918 and 1927, the period of the May 4th Movement (1919) and the First Revolutionary Civil War (1924-27). They show how Lu Xun battled during these years and the extent of his contribution to the democratic revolution.

It is interesting to consider the things that drew his fire. In the early part of this period, about the time of the May 4th Movement, the feudal-minded literati were still giving active support to the foreign imperialists and the Northern warlords. Opposing democratic

reforms, they grumbled that the world had gone to the dogs. Upholding and praising feudal morality, they did their best to bolster up patriarchal authority, considering it right and proper for children to obey their fathers implicitly, and for widows to kill themselves. Advocates of sacrificing to Confucius, the reading of Confucian classics and the preservation of "national characteristics," they defended superstition and attacked science, considering all democratic ideas fraught with danger. In short, what they wanted was a return to the past. These hidebound conservatives supported the Northern warlords and were supported by them; thus the warlord government of the time passed decrees for the honouring of women who were chaste according to its inhuman standard, and repeatedly ordered the schools to sacrifice to Confucius and study the Confucian classics.

During this period, therefore, Lu Xun first attacked feudal conventions and morality, the feudal family system, and the die-hards, warlords and bureaucrats who upheld such ideas and systems. Lu Xun called on his readers to emancipate women and young people, and to win a better future for their children. At the same time, he indignantly tore away the sanctimonious masks of those evil-minded hypocrites.

The task of the democratic revolution in China to oppose imperialism and feudalism during those years was liberation of the people. This work was not completed by the 1911 Revolution, but was continued by the May 4th Movement.

But in the later part of this period, when the democratic movement was making headway, there was a split among the Chinese intelligentsia. The rightist bourgeois elements in the democratic front — mostly students returned from England and America, whose chief representative was Hu Shi — turned reactionary, and worked for the Northern warlords and later for the Kuomintang. So Lu Xun had to fight against these modern "gentlemen."

These Westernized renegades were much craftier than the earlier group of die-hards. Dubbing themselves "scholars" or "intellectuals" devoted to "science" and "knowledge," they proposed that the intellectuals should "discuss more concrete problems and fewer 'isms,'" "carry out gradual reforms," "study our cultural heritage," and "go into the laboratory," hoping by these means to distract the attention of intellectuals and students from the revolution. So it became an urgent task to unmask these Westernized gentlemen and scholars and expose their false liberalism and reformism. The fight Lu Xun started in 1925 against the reactionary journal *Modern Critic* and against Chen Yuan is an excellent example of the struggle between the revolutionaries and the reactionary intellectuals. Those unfamiliar with the actual circumstances of the time may be bewildered by all the names and incidents referred to in Lu Xun's essays. But as the well-known revolutionary and literary critic Qu Qiubai (1900-35) observed:

Perhaps some young folk today are not very much interested in these essays because they do not know the history of men like Chen Yuan. The fact is that the names of Chen Yuan, Zhang Shizhao and others in Lu Xun's essays can be taken as standing for certain types. There is no need to know all about their lives. The important thing is that China today is still crawling with such vermin "fawning cats," "dogs more snobbish than their masters," "mosquitoes which insist on making a long harangue before biting," "flies which after much preliminary buzzing and fuss lick off a little sweat and leave some filth." It is imperative in the struggle to tear off the masks of these shameless dastards, these savage time-servers and slaves.

In brief, to join battle with the die-hards, the reformists and the pseudo-liberals returned from England

and America was the main task of Lu Xun and other revolutionary writers at that time; though, of course, there were other struggles too. This is the historical background to this volume.

Needless to say, the range covered by Lu Xun in his battle of ideas was very great. While attacking the reactionaries, he criticized many backward ideas and habits, concerned himself with nearly every aspect of Chinese life, and touched upon almost all the problems of the revolution. A few important essays have been left out because long comments and notes would have been needed to make them clear, and we trust our readers will excuse these omissions.

1918

MY VIEWS ON CHASTITY

“The world is going to the dogs. Men are growing more degenerate every day. The country is faced with ruin!” — such laments have been heard in China since time immemorial. But “degeneracy” varies from age to age. It used to mean one thing, now it means another. Except in memorials to the throne and the like, in which no one dares make wild statements, this is the tone of all written and spoken pronouncements. For not only is such carping good for people; it removes the speaker from the ranks of the degenerate. That gentlemen sigh when they meet is only natural. But now even murderers, incendiaries, libertines, swindlers and other scoundrels shake their heads in the intervals between their crimes and mutter, “Men are growing more degenerate every day!”

As far as morality goes, inciters to evil are not the only degenerates. So are those who simply condone it, delight in it, or deplore it. That is why some men this year have actually not contented themselves with empty talk, but after expressing their horror have looked around for a remedy. The first was Kang Youwei* Stamping and sawing the air, he declared “constitutional monarchy” the panacea. He was refuted by Chen Duxiu,** who was

* Kang Youwei (1858-1927), who led the 1898 reform movement, in 1918 published an article declaring that China was not yet ripe for democracy

** Chen Duxiu (1880-1942), then chief editor of the magazine *New Youth*, published an article there refuting Kang Youwei's ideas.

followed by the spiritualists who somehow or other hit on the weird idea of inviting the ghost of Mencius to devise a policy for them. However, Chen Bainian, Qian Xuanton, and Liu Bannong* swear they are talking nonsense.

Those articles refuting them in *New Youth* are enough to make one's blood run cold. This is the twentieth century, and dawn has already broken on mankind. If *New Youth* were to carry an article debating whether the earth were square or round, readers would almost certainly sit up. Yet their present arguments are pretty well on a par with contending that the earth is not square. That such a debate should continue *today* is enough to make anyone's blood run cold!

Though constitutional monarchy is no longer discussed, the spiritualists still seem to be going strong. But they have failed to satisfy another group, who continue to shake their heads and mutter, "Men are growing more degenerate every day." These, in fact, have thought up a different remedy, which they call "extolling chastity."

For many years now, ever since the failure of the reformists and the call for a return to the past, devices like this have been generally approved. All we are now doing is raising the old banners. Moreover, in step with this, writers and public speakers keep singing the praises of chastity. This is their only way to rise above those who are "growing more degenerate every day."

Chastity used to be a virtue for men as well as women, hence the references to "chaste gentlemen" in our literature. However, the chastity which is extolled today is for women only — men have no part in it. According to contemporary moralists, a chaste woman is one who does not remarry or run off with a lover after her husband's

*In 1918 *New Youth* carried articles by these three professors at Beijing University inveighing against the spiritualist school and advocating a return to the past.

death, while the earlier her husband dies and the poorer her family the more chaste it is possible for her to be. In addition, there are two other types of chaste women: one kills herself when her husband or fiancé dies; the other manages to commit suicide when confronted by a ravisher, or meets her death while resisting. The more cruel her death, the greater glory she wins. If she is surprised and ravished but kills herself afterwards, there is bound to be talk. She has one chance in ten thousand of finding a generous moralist who may excuse her in view of the circumstances and grant her the title "chaste." But no man of letters will want to write her biography and, if forced to, he is sure to end on a note of disapproval.

In short, when a woman's husband dies she should remain single or die. If she meets a ravisher she should also die. When such women are praised, it shows that society is morally sound and there is still hope for China. That is the gist of the matter.

Kang Youwei had to use the emperor's name; the spiritualists depend on superstitious nonsense, but upholding chastity is entirely up to the people. This shows we are coming on. However, there are still some questions I would like to raise, which I shall try to answer according to my own lights. Moreover, since I take it that this idea of saving the world through chastity is held by the majority of my countrymen, those who expound it being merely their spokesmen who voice something which affects the whole body corporate, I am putting my questions and answers before the majority of the people.

My first question is: In what way do unchaste women injure the country? It is only too clear today that "the country is faced with ruin." There is no end to the dastardly crimes committed and war, banditry, famine, flood and drought follow one after the other. But this is owing to the fact that we have no new morality or new science and all our thoughts and actions are out of date. That is why these benighted times resemble the old dark

ages Besides, all government, army, academic and business posts are filled by men, not by unchaste women And it can hardly be because the men in power have been bewitched by such women that they lose all sense of right and wrong and plunge into dissipation As for flood, drought and famine, they result from a lack of modern knowledge, from worshipping dragons and snakes, cutting down forests, and neglecting water conservancy — they have even less to do with women. War and banditry, it is true, often produce a crop of unchaste women, but the war and banditry come first, and the unchaste women follow It is not women's wantonness that causes such troubles.

My second question is. Why should women shoulder the whole responsibility for saving the world? According to the old school, women belong to the *yin** or negative element. Their place is in the home, as chattels of men. Surely, then, the onus for governing the state and saving the country should rest with the men, who belong to the *yang* or positive element How can we burden weak females with such a tremendous task? And according to the moderns, both sexes are equal with roughly the same obligations. Though women have their duties, they should not have more than their share. It is up to the men to play their part as well, not just by combating violence but by exercising their own masculine virtues. It is not enough merely to punish and lecture the women

My third question is: What purpose is served by upholding chastity? If we grade all the women in the world according to their chastity, we shall probably find that they fall into three classes: those who are chaste and should be praised; those who are unchaste; and those who have not yet married or whose husbands are still

* Ancient Chinese philosophers held that all phenomena resulted from the interaction of the positive principle *yang* and the negative principle *yin*

alive, who have not yet met a ravisher, and whose chastity therefore cannot yet be gauged. The first class is doing very nicely with all these encomiums, so we can pass over it. And the second class is beyond hope, for there has never been any room for repentance in China once a woman has erred — she can only die of shame. This is not worth dwelling on either. The third class, therefore, is the most important. Now that their hearts have been touched, they must have vowed to themselves, “If my husband dies, I shall never marry again. If I meet a ravisher, I shall kill myself as fast as ever I can.” But what effect, pray, do such decisions have upon public morality which, as pointed out earlier, is determined by men?

And here another question arises. These chaste women who have been praised are naturally paragons of virtue. But though all may aspire to be saints, not all can be models of chastity. Some of the women in the third class may have the noblest resolutions, but what if their husbands live to a ripe old age and the world remains at peace? They will just have to suffer in silence, doomed to be second-class citizens all their lives.

So far we have simply used old-world common sense, yet even so we have found much that is contradictory. If we live at all in the twentieth century, two more points will occur to us.

First of all: Is chastity a virtue? Virtues should be universal, required of all, within the reach of all, and beneficial to others as well as oneself. Only then are they worth having. But in addition to the fact that all men are excluded from what goes by the name of chastity today, not even all women are eligible for this honour. Hence it cannot be counted a virtue, or held up as an example. . . . When a rough man swoops down on one of the weaker sex (women are still weak as things stand today), if her father, brothers, and husband cannot save her and the neighbours fail her too, her best course is to

die She may, of course, die after being defiled, or she may not die at all. Later on, her father, brothers, husband, and neighbours will get together with the writers, scholars, and moralists; and, no whit abashed by their own cowardice and incompetence, nor concerned how to punish the criminal, will start wagging their tongues. Is she dead or not? Was she raped or not? How gratifying if she has died, how shocking if she has not! So they create all these glorious women martyrs on the one hand and these wantons universally condemned on the other. If we think this over soberly, we can see that, far from being praiseworthy, it is absolutely inhuman.

Our second query is: Have polygamous men the right to praise chastity in women? The old moralists would say, of course they have: the mere fact that they are men makes them different from other people and sole arbiters of society. Relying on the ancient concept of *yin* and *yang* or the negative and the positive, they like to show off to women. But people today have had a glimpse of the truth and know that this talk of *yin* and *yang* is absolute gibberish. Even if there are dual principles, there is no way of proving that *yang* is nobler than *yin*, the male superior to the female. Besides, society and the state are not built by men only. Hence we must accept the truth that the two sexes are equal. And if equal they should be bound by the same contract. Men cannot make rules for women which they do not keep themselves. Moreover, if marriage is a sale, swindle, or form of tribute, a husband has no right even to demand that his wife remain faithful to him during his lifetime! How can he, a polygamist, praise a woman for following her husband to the grave?

This ends my questions and answers. The moralists' case is so weak it is strange it should have survived to the present time. To understand this, we must see how this thing called chastity originated and spread, and why it has remained unchanged.

In ancient society women were usually the chattels of men, who could kill them, eat them, or do what they pleased with them. After a man's death, there was naturally no objection to burying his women with his favourite treasures or weapons. By degrees, however, this practice of burying women alive stopped and the conception of chastity came into being. But it was mainly because a widow was the wife of a dead man whose ghost was following her that other men dared not marry her — not because it was thought wrong for a woman to marry twice. This is still the case in primitive societies today. We have no means of ascertaining what happened in China in remote antiquity, but by the end of the Zhou Dynasty the retainers buried with their masters included men as well as women, and widows were free to marry again. It appears then that this custom died out very early. From the Han to the Tang Dynasty no one advocated chastity. It was only in the Song Dynasty that professional Confucians* started saying, "Starving to death is a small matter, but losing one's chastity is a great calamity." And they would exclaim in horror when they read of some woman in history who married twice. Whether they were sincere or not we shall never know. That was when men were beginning to grow "more degenerate every day," the country was "faced with ruin," and the people were in a bad way; so it is possible that these professional Confucians were using women's chastity to lash the men. But since this type of insinuation is rather contemptible and its aim was far from clear, though it may have resulted in a slight increase in the number of chaste women, men in general remained unmoved. And so China, with "the oldest civilization in the world and the highest moral standard," "by the grace of God and the will of Heaven" fell into the hands of

* The neo-Confucians of the Song Dynasty, self-styled champions of morality

Sechen Khan, Uldsheitu Khan, Kuluk Khan* and all the rest of them. After several more changes of rulers, the conception of chastity developed further. The more loyalty the emperor demanded of his subjects, the more chastity the men required of the women. By the Qing Dynasty Confucian scholars had grown even stricter. When they read in a Tang Dynasty history of a princess who married again, they would thunder in great indignation, "What is this! How dare the man cast such aspersions on royalty!" Had that Tang historian been alive at the time, he would certainly have been struck off the official list, to "rectify men's hearts and mend their morals."

So when the country is about to be conquered, there is much talk of chastity and women who take their own lives are highly regarded. For women belong to men, and when a man dies his wife should not remarry, much less should she be snatched from him during his life. But since he himself is one of a conquered people, with no power to protect his wife and no courage to resist, he finds a way out by urging her to kill herself. There are rich men, too, with whole bevvies of wives, daughters, concubines, and maids, who cannot look after them all during times of trouble. Confronted by rebels or government troops, they are absolutely helpless. All they can do is to save their own skin and urge their women to seek a glorious death, for then they will be of no interest to the rebels. Then when order is restored, these rich men can saunter back to utter a few encomiums over the dead. For a man to remarry is quite in order anyway, so they get some other women and that is that. This is why we find works like *The Death of Two Virtuous Widows* or *The Seven Concubines' Epitaph*. Even the

* All the emperors during the Yuan Dynasty had Mongolian titles. Sechen Khan is better known by his personal name Kublai. Uldsheitu Khan was the title of Timur, and Kuluk Khan the title of Khaissan.

writings of Qian Qianyi* are filled with accounts of chaste women and praise of their glorious death

Only a society where each cares solely for himself and women must remain chaste while men are polygamous could create such a perverted morality, which becomes more exacting and cruel with each passing day. There is nothing strange about this. But since man proposes and woman suffers, why is it women have never uttered a protest? Because submission is the cardinal wifely virtue. Of course a woman needs no education. even to open her mouth is counted a crime. Since her spirit is as distorted as her body,** she has no objection to this distorted morality. And even a woman with views of her own has no chance to express them. If she writes a few poems on moonlight and flowers, men may accuse her of looking for a lover. Then how dare she challenge this "eternal truth"? Some stories, indeed, tell of women who for various reasons would not remain chaste. But the story-tellers always point out that a widow who remarries is either caught by her first husband's ghost and carried off to hell or, condemned by the whole world, becomes a beggar who is turned away from every door till she dies a wretched death.

This being the case, women had no choice but to submit. But why did the men let it go at that? The fact is that after the Han Dynasty most mediums of public opinion were in the hands of professional Confucians, much more so from the Song and Yuan dynasties onwards. There is hardly a single book not written by these orthodox scholars. They are the only ones to express opinions. With the exception of Buddhists and Taoists who were permitted by imperial decree to voice their opinions, no other "heresies" could take a single step

* (1582-1664) Minister of Ceremony at the end of the Ming Dynasty, he was a traitor who welcomed in the Qing army.

** This refers to the practice of binding women's feet

into the open. Moreover, most men were very much influenced by the Confucians' self-vaunted "tractability." To do anything un-orthodox was taboo. So even those who realized the truth were not prepared to give up their lives for it. Everyone knew that a woman could lose her chastity only through a man. Still they went on blaming the woman alone, while the man who destroyed a widow's reputation by marrying her or the ruffian who forced her to die unchaste was passed over in silence. Men, after all, are more formidable than women, and to bring someone to justice is harder than to utter praise. A few men with some sense of fair play, it is true, suggested mildly that it was unnecessary for girls to follow their betrothed into the grave; but the world did not listen to them. Had they persisted, they would have been thought intolerable and treated like unchaste women; so they turned "tractable" and held their peace. This is why there has been no change right up till now.

(I should mention here, however, that among the present champions of chastity are quite a few people whom I know. I am sure there are good men among them, men with the best intentions, but their way of saving society is wrong. To go north they have headed west. And we cannot expect them, just because they are good, to be able to end up north by going due west. So I hope they will turn back.)

Then there is another question.

Is it difficult to be chaste? The answer is, very. It is because men know how difficult it is that they praise it. Public opinion has always taken it for granted that chastity depends upon the woman. Though a man may seduce a woman, he is not brought to book. If A (a man) makes advances to B (a woman) but she rejects him, then she is chaste. If she dies in the process, she is a glorious martyr; A's name is unsullied and society undefiled. If, on the other hand, B accepts A, she is unchaste; again A's name is unsullied, but she has lowered the tone of

society. This happens in other cases too. A country's downfall, for instance, is always blamed on women. Willy-nilly they have shouldered the sins of mankind for more than three thousand years. Since men are not brought to book and have no sense of shame, they go on seducing women just as they please, while writers treat such incidents as romantic. Thus a woman is beset by danger on every side. With the exception of her father, brothers, and husband, all men are potential seducers. That is why I say it is difficult to be chaste.

Is it painful to be chaste? The answer is, very. It is because men know how painful it is that they praise it. Everyone wants to live, yet to become a martyr means certain death—this needs no explanation. A chaste widow, however, lives on. We can take her grief for granted, but her physical existence is also a hard one. If women had independent means and people helped each other, a widow could manage on her own, but unfortunately the reverse is the case in China. So if she has money she is all right, if she is poor she can only starve to death. And not till she has starved to death will she be honoured and her name recorded in the local history. Invariably the records of different districts contain a few sections headed "Women Martyrs," a line or half a line for each. They may be called Zhao, Qian, Sun or Li, but who cares to read about them? Even the great moralists who have worshipped chastity all their lives may not be able to tell you offhand the names of the first ten martyrs of their honourable district; so alive or dead such women are cut off from the rest of the world. That is why I say it is painful to be chaste.

In that case, is it less painful not to be chaste? No, that is very painful too. Since the public looks down on such women, they are social outcasts. Many of the tenets carelessly handed down by the ancients are completely irrational, yet the weight of tradition and numbers can crush undesirable characters to death. God knows how many

murders these anonymous, unconscious assassins have committed since ancient times, including the murder of chaste women. They are honoured after their death, though, by mention in the local histories, while unchaste women are abused by everyone during their lifetime and suffer meaningless persecution. That is why I say their lot is also very painful

Are women themselves in favour of chastity? The answer is No, they are not. All human beings have their ideals and hopes. Whether high or low, their life must have a meaning. What benefits others as well as oneself is best, but at least we expect to benefit ourselves. To be chaste is difficult and painful, of profit neither to others nor to oneself; so to say that women are in favour of it is really unreasonable. Hence if you meet any young woman and in all sincerity beg her to become a martyr, she will fly into a passion, and you may even receive a blow from the respected fist of her father, brothers, or husband. Nevertheless this practice persists, supported as it is by tradition and numbers. Yet there is no one but fears this thing "chastity." Women fear to be crucified by it, while men fear for their nearest and dearest. That is why I say no one is in favour of it.

On the basis of the facts and reasons stated above, I affirm that to be chaste is exceedingly difficult and painful, favoured by no one, of profit neither to others nor oneself, of no service to the state or society, and of no value at all to posterity. It has lost any vigour it had and all reason for existing.

Finally I have one last question.

If chastity has lost any vigour it had and all reason for existing, are the sufferings of chaste women completely in vain?

My answer is: They still deserve compassion. These women are to be pitied. Trapped for no good reason by tradition and numbers, they are sacrificed to no purpose. We should hold a great memorial service to them.

After mourning for the dead, we must swear to be more intelligent, brave, aspiring, and progressive. We must tear off every mask. We must do away with all the stupidity and tyranny in the world which injure others as well as ourselves.

After mourning for the dead, we must swear to get rid of the meaningless suffering which blights our lives. We must do away with all the stupidity and tyranny which create and relish the sufferings of others.

We must also swear to see to it that all mankind know true happiness.

July 1918

RANDOM THOUGHTS (25)

In one of Yan Fu's books, the title and text of which I forget, I once found a statement the gist of which was as follows. "You see many children in the streets of Beijing, darting in and out among the carriage wheels and horses' hooves, and I am always afraid they will be knocked down and killed. When I think of the sort of men and women they will grow into, I feel very worried too." Actually it is the same elsewhere, only the number of carriages and horses varies. Here in Beijing the situation has not changed, and I often have similar misgivings. For one thing, I respect Yan Fu. The translator of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* is not just anyone here was a Chinese towards the end of the nineteenth century with a keen sense of perception

Tousled and grubby, the children of the poor roam the streets, while the pampered offspring of the rich and mighty loll about at home. And, grown up, they all drift aimlessly through life, just like their fathers before them, if not worse.

So by looking at boys and girls in their teens you can guess what China will be like twenty years hence. By observing young men in their twenties — most of whom have children of their own who call them "Daddy" — you can tell what their sons and grandsons will be like, and what China will be like in fifty or seventy years.

In China, as long as we have children, we do not care whether they are good or bad. As long as there are plenty of them, we do not care whether they are gifted or not. The parents who bring them into the world pay no atten-

tion to their education. We close our eyes and boast of our great population, yet our millions are simply milling around in the dust, not treated as human beings when they are young, nor considered as men later on.

Early marriage is looked upon as auspicious in China, and so is a large number of sons. Children are simply material for their parents' happiness, not shoots of future men. That is why there is this aimless drifting, with no one troubling about it, for by providing quantity and material for luck the children have served their purpose anyway. If by some chance they are sent to school, what they learn there is contradicted by social usage, family customs, and the temper of their elders and friends; hence they will still be unfit for the modern world. If they are lucky enough to grow up, they remain the same — begetters of children, not fathers of real human beings. And their children, again, are not shoots of future "men."

The Austrian misogynist Otto Weininger divided women into two categories: mothers and prostitutes. Similarly, men can be classed as fathers and profligates. The fathers again can be graded into two groups: the fathers of children and the fathers of "men." Since all the former can do is beget children, not bring them up, they still have something in common with profligates. The latter not only beget children but also try to educate them, in order that they may be genuine men in future.

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, when a normal college was first set up in a certain province, an old gentleman was horrified.

"Why should one have to learn to be a teacher?" he demanded indignantly. "At this rate, there will soon be schools teaching men to be fathers!"

This old gentleman thought that the only thing required of a father was to beget children, and since everyone knows instinctively how to do this, there is no need to learn it. But the fact is that China today needs

schools for fathers, and this old gentleman should be enrolled in the lowest class.

For in China we have many fathers of children, but in future we want only fathers of "men."

RANDOM THOUGHTS (35)

Ever since the end of the Qing Dynasty we have been hearing people declare that we should "preserve our national characteristics"

There were two main types of men saying this at the end of the Qing Dynasty the patriots and the great mandarins who made tours of other countries. While using the same phrase they meant different things. The patriot who declared that we should preserve our national characteristics meant that we should restore Han sovereignty. The great mandarin meant that students going abroad should not cut off their queues*

Now we are a republic. The two problems just mentioned have disappeared. So I do not know what sort of men the people who say this nowadays are, nor what they have in mind.

But neither do I understand the slogan itself.

What do we mean by "national characteristics"? The words appear to denote something peculiar to one country, not found in any other. In other words, something distinctive. But distinctive things are not necessarily good, so why must they be preserved?

Take the case of a man with a wen on his face or a carbuncle on his forehead, which certainly mark him off from other people and make him something special, and can therefore be considered his "characteristics." I

* The Qing Dynasty rulers compelled all Chinese men to wear queues. Patriots cut off their queues as a protest against Manchu domination.

should think it would be better to remove these "characteristics," and be like everyone else

Some say that China's characteristics are both distinctive and good. How is it then that we are in such a mess, with radicals shaking their heads while die-hards sigh?

Some say this is because we failed to preserve our national characteristics and opened up treaty ports, therefore our characteristics should still be preserved. How is it then that before we had treaty ports, when we were thoroughly "Chinese" and all should have been well, we had all the unrest of the Warring States Period and the barbarian invasions, over which even the ancients sighed?

Some say this is because we failed to learn from King Tang, King Wen, King Wu and the Duke of Zhou * How is it then that in their times we find the tyrants King Jie and King Zhou, and later the rebellion of the last men of Shang, with later still all the unrest of the Warring States Period and the barbarian invasions, over which even the ancients sighed?

A friend of mine has said most aptly, "If we want to preserve our national characteristics, we must first make sure that they can preserve us."

Certainly self-preservation comes first. All we ask is whether a thing has the power to preserve us, not whether it is characteristic or not.

* Tang defeated Jie, the last king of the Xia Dynasty, and founded the Shang Dynasty. King Wen was King of Zhou. His son, King Wu, defeated the last king of Shang, and founded the Zhou Dynasty. The Duke of Zhou was King Wu's younger brother. As regent, he crushed the remnants of Shang. These rulers were considered as sage kings, and their reigns as golden ages.

1919

RANDOM THOUGHTS (39)

Volume V, Number 4, of *New Youth* appears to be devoted to the reform of the drama. Knowing nothing about this subject, I cannot comment on it; but I was struck by this passage in the article "A Further Discussion of Dramatic Reform" "When Chinese speak of ideals, they do so in a derogatory way, for they look on ideals as delusions and idealists as fools." This has made me think back, and I feel bound to say a few words.

As far as I know, it is only during the last five years that the stock of ideals has fallen. Before the Republic it was not so bad, for many people then considered idealists as guides. Round about the beginning of the Republic, when men's theories seemed to be realized, the idealists — we need not discuss for the moment whether their ideals were true or false, superficial or profound — held their heads even higher. But at the same time the old office-holders were tussling for power and the adherents of the old regime, who could not stand being cold-shouldered any longer, were ready to come down from their hermit caves.* They detested all idealists and claimed that such a parade of laws and logic cramped their style and made it impossible to walk freely. After three days and three nights of deep reflection, they invented a lethal weapon, and succeeded in wiping out all the evils connected with idealism. The name of this

* In Chinese history, when there was a change of dynasty, some loyal subjects would retire to the hills or woods and refuse to work for the new rulers. They left their caves when they wanted to become officials again.

wonderful weapon is "experience." It has now been accorded another fine title, the incomparably lofty "facts."

This experience comes from the Qing Dynasty. It raises its voice to bawl incoherently, "A dog has doggish ways, the devil has devilish ways. China is different from all other countries, so China has Chinese ways. All these ways are different. Ideals, indeed! How detestable!" This was just the time when the government and the people were one in seeking to build up the country's prosperity and strength, and since most ideals were made abroad they were rightly frowned upon by patriots. So in no time at all their stock fell, they started being jeered at, and very soon even the shadow of an ideal was bitterly denounced by all like the Christians during the Boxer Rebellion.*

But human equality, we should realize, is also an old ideal that came from abroad. Since experience is now in the ascendant, naturally human equality like all the rest has become a delusion which should be trampled under the official boots indiscriminately, in accordance with our honourable ancestors' traditions. This trampling has been going on for four or five years now; but though the empiricists have moved four or five years closer to death, this biological law which they have not yet experienced, China which is different from all other countries is still not the home of ideals. Many learners trampled by the official boots are already shouting at the top of their lungs that they, too, have gained experience.

But this old experience, we should realize, was learned under the heel of the emperor, while the experience gained today or to be gained in future is learned under the heels of the emperor's slaves. The greater the number of slaves, the more experienced empiricists there are.

* In 1900, in north China, many peasants and craftsmen took up arms to oppose the imperialists. Shielded by the imperialists many of the Chinese Christians at the time rode roughshod over the people.

And when the second generation of empiricists comes into power, we shall be lucky if ideals are simply jeered at and idealists considered as fools.

In China today men make no distinction between ideals and delusions. By and by they will be unable to distinguish between "cannot" and "will not," and will confuse cleaning out a garden with splitting the earth. When an idealist says, "This garden smells rank: it needs cleaning up" — men saying such things will be counted as idealists too — others will answer that they have always kept a cesspool here, so how can it be cleaned up? It is out of the question. It simply cannot be done!

By that time, anything left over unchanged from the past will be a treasure. Even an ulcer on a Chinese body will be likened to the red peach blossom, and its pus to delicious cream. Whatever is a national characteristic will be simply marvellous. Since those ideals are foreign goods, why waste breath discussing them?

But the strangest thing is that towards the end of October 1918, a pack of empiricists, idealist-empiricists and pseudo-idealist-empiricists suddenly claimed that right had conquered might, and heaped praises on justice, making much of it. Not only did this overflow the bounds of empiricism, but added another troublesome ideal. How it will end is more than I can say, having no experience of such matters. I suppose those empiricist gentlemen have no experience of this either, and no opinion to voice.

So there is nothing for it but to raise the question here, and consult those idealists who have been jeered at by all.

RANDOM THOUGHTS (40)

What thoughts can I have staying at home all day, where the most I can see is the sickly sky through a square window? A few letters have come, which say, "Long absent from your distinguished presence, I have been thinking of you" And a few visitors have called, who say, "It is very fine today." These are simply conventional phrases. Since whoever writes or utters them means nothing by them, they arouse no response in the breast of readers or hearers.

But I find meaning in the following poem posted to me by a young man unknown to me.

LOVE

*I am a wretched Chinese. I don't know what love is
I have a father and mother, who reared and taught
me.*

*They are very good to me, and I am not bad to them
either.*

*I have brothers and sisters who played with me when
I was small,*

*And who have frank talks with me now that we
are older.*

*They are very good to me, and I am not bad to them
either.*

*But no one has ever "loved" me. I have never
"loved" anyone either.*

*When I was nineteen my parents found me a wife;
Some years have passed, and we get on quite well
together.*

*But this marriage was arranged and brought about
by others.*

*The joke of a day with them has become our lifelong
yoke;*

*Just as if two cattle were ordered by their master:
"Here! You two are to keep together now"*

Love, I am sorry I don't know what you are!

We need not discuss the merits or failings of this poem. But here, I declare, we have hot blood and the true accents of a man awaking from sleep.

What is love? I do not know either. Most Chinese men and women just live in couples or in groups — when one man has several wives — so I do not know who *does* know.

In the past, though, we did not hear these cries of despair. Even if men despaired, it was thought wrong to call out. Old and young alike would shake their heads and abuse them.

Yet the evil results of loveless marriages continue uninterrupted. Those who are husband and wife in name only will have nothing to do with each other; so the young men go to prostitutes, and the older men buy concubines. Each has ingenious devices to silence his conscience. Thus hitherto no problem has arisen. And women's "jealousy" has resulted from these devices.

But now the east is light. Mankind wants "men" from all peoples — "sons of men" too, of course. We have only sons of men, and daughters-in-law and their husbands, whom we cannot present to mankind.

But some light must shine through the fingers of the devil. He cannot shut it all out. The son of man is awake. He knows there should be love among mankind. He knows what sins have been committed by the old and

the young So he feels distressed, and opens his mouth to make this cry

Women are guilty of no crime, yet at present they are sacrificed to custom Now that we have a sense of right and wrong, our consciences will not let us commit the crimes of the young and the old, and we cannot blame everything on women. We shall therefore have to devote our whole lives to settling the debts of the last four-thousand years.

To be a victim all one's life is a very fearful thing, but at least our blood is clean, we can speak like awakened and honest men

We can shout at the top of our voices We can sing like the oriole or hoot like the owl But there is no call to imitate those men who have just crawled out from their bawdy-houses to say, "China's moral standards are the best in the world."

We shall cry of the bitterness of life without love, the bitterness of having nothing to love. We shall go on crying aloud till the old scores are settled.

How can we settle old scores? My answer is: "By freeing our children completely!"

RANDOM THOUGHTS (43)

Progressive artists — that is what I ask of art circles in China

Of course, an artist needs a fine technique, but it is even more important for him to have progressive ideas and nobility of character. His work may take the form of a painting or a sculpture, but is actually the expression of his thought and character. When we see it, we not only enjoy it but feel moved by it, and are influenced by it.

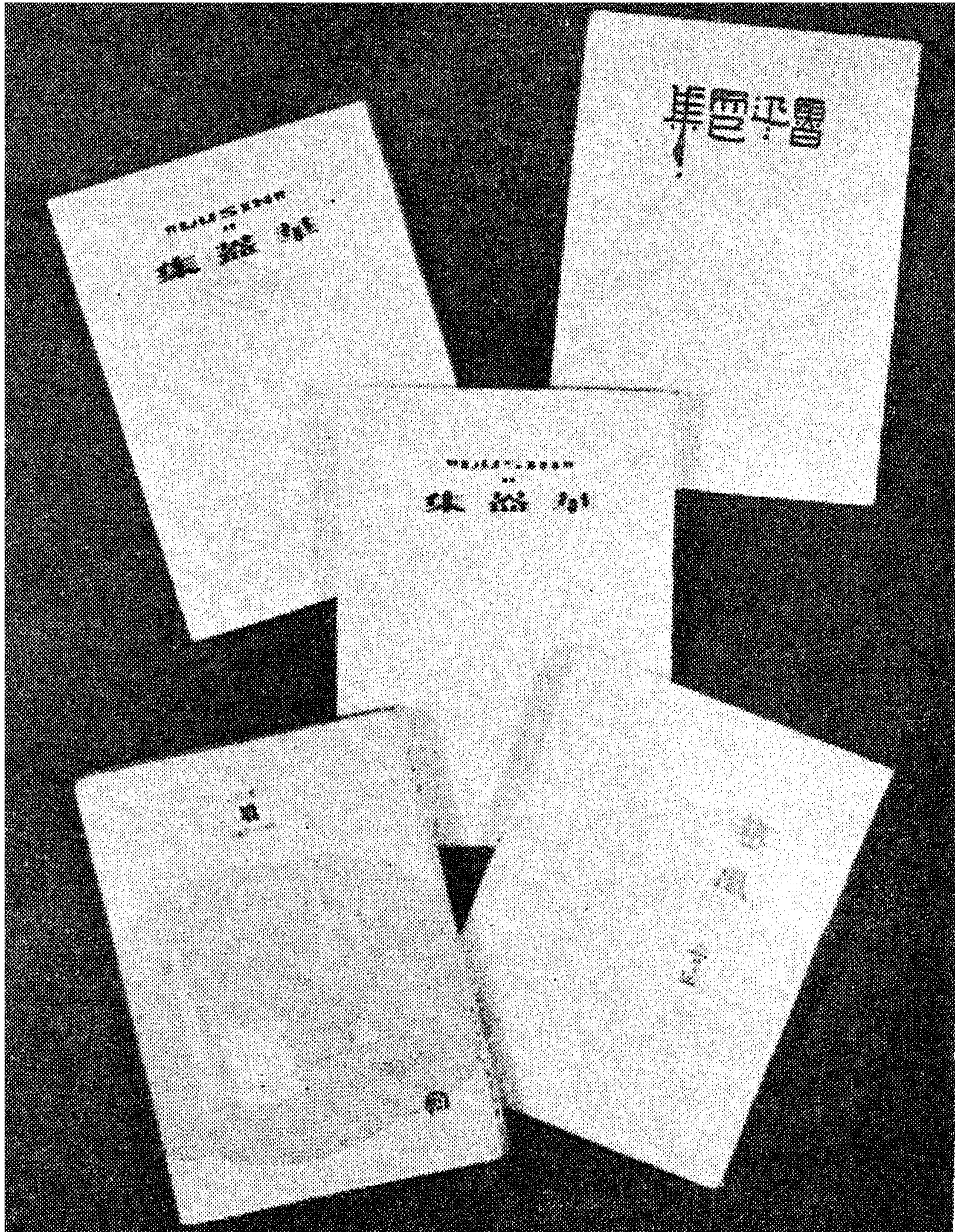
We need enlightened artists to lead us forward, not heads of "citizens' bodies"* We need works of art which are models in expressing the highest point reached by the Chinese people's intelligence, not ones which are merely average or below par in their content.

I recently saw some cartoons in the supplement *Puck* of a Shanghai newspaper. The artists used a Western technique, it is true, but what I could not understand was how their ideas could be so reactionary, and their character so low, like that of young hooligans who smear dirty words on a clean white-washed wall. What a pity it is that the moment foreign things reach China they change their colour as if they had fallen into a vat of black dye. Art is a case in point. Before our artists can draw well-proportioned figures from the nude, they start drawing pornography. Before they master chiaroscuro in still life, they can only draw trade signs. New trappings cover the same old ideas, that is all. So we need not

* Referring to ruffians employed by the warlord Yuan Shikai.

be surprised if cartoons are made into an instrument for libel

Speaking of cartoons, I cannot help remembering the American artist L. D. Bradley. He was a cartoonist famous for his drawings of the Great War. He died, unfortunately, the year before last. I have seen his *Harvest Moon*. It shows a moon which looks like a human skull shining over desolate fields, where lie row upon row of dead soldiers. Now that was the work of a truly progressive artist. I hope that the day will come when China, too, will have such a progressive cartoonist.



The five collections: *The Grave*, *Hot Air*, *Bad Luck*,
Bad Luck (II), *And That's That*

RANDOM THOUGHTS (47)

Someone made a small square of ivory, half an inch across, which did not seem anything special. But when one looked at it under a microscope, one found carved on it in cursive script Wang Xizhi's* essay on the Orchid Pavilion. It seems to me that microscopes were made for looking at the most minute natural objects; and since this ivory was engraved by a man, why not carve the essay on a slab about half a foot square, so that people can see it clearly without a microscope?

Zhang and Li are contemporaries. Zhang has learned some classical allusions for his writing, and Li has learned them too in order to read what Zhang has written. It seems to me that classical allusions were contemporary events for the ancients, and if we want to know what happened in the past we have to look them up. But two contemporaries ought to speak simply, so that one can understand the other straight away, and neither need trouble to learn classical allusions.

"What nonsense!" say the experts. "This is skill! This is scholarship!"

But to my mind it is fortunate that not too many Chinese have this skill and scholarship. If everyone were to try this trick, peasants would send you a single grain, but under the microscope it would be a bowl of rice. Water-carriers would bring a clod soaked in water, and anyone who wanted to drink would have to squeeze the water out of the mud. Life would really become unbearable.

* A scholar who lived from 317 to 420.

RANDOM THOUGHTS (49)

All higher animals, unless they meet with accidents, must pass from youth to their prime, then grow old and die

Since we have passed quite uneventfully from childhood to manhood, the rest of our lives should prove uneventful too.

Unfortunately there is one type of person who passes quite uneventfully from childhood to manhood, but becomes a little odd between manhood and old age, while between old age and death he behaves outrageously. He wants to squeeze the young folk out and use up all their oxygen.

Then all the young can do is wither before their prime and wait for old age, when their senses will have dimmed and their arteries hardened, before they start to be active. So our society is characterized by old heads on young shoulders, people who can let themselves go only when their backs are bent, as if only then have they reached man's estate.

Even so, they cannot forget that they are old. Hence they want to become immortals. All other creatures must age, but old Chinese gentlemen should take first place among those who refuse to grow old.

If they could actually achieve immortality, they would remain in charge for ever and require no successors — that would be a very good thing. But, alas! this is not to be. They die off one by one, leaving only the hoary world they have created pressing down on the bent shoulders of the young.

This is surely an aberration in the animal kingdom!

To me the continuation of a species — the perpetuation of life — plays an important role in the animal kingdom. Why this continuation? For the sake of evolution, naturally. But to have evolution the young must supersede the old. Thus the new should advance joyously towards maturity, while the old advance joyously towards death. When all tread this path, that is evolution.

The old should make way for the young, urging them on, encouraging them, and helping them to advance. When there are pits in the road, the dead should fill them to let the living march on.

The young should be grateful to the old for filling in these pits so that they can go forward, and the old should be grateful to the young for advancing past the pits they have filled in. So mankind will march ever forward.

When we realize this, we pass happily from childhood to manhood, from old age to death. And step by step new generations surpass their forbears.

This is the right road for the animal kingdom, the road that man's ancestors trod.

RANDOM THOUGHTS (57) — MURDERERS OF THE PRESENT

Cultured gentlemen say, "The vernacular is vulgar and low, beneath the contempt of the discerning."

All that illiterates in China can do is speak, so of course they are "vulgar and low" Men like myself, "because they are unlettered, are for the vernacular in order to hide their own ignorance" We are vulgar and low as well — that goes without saying The sad thing is that those cultured gentlemen cannot be like that waiter in the *Flowers in the Mirror** who remained cultured all the time, using the classical language to describe two pots of wine or a plate of sweetmeats. They can show their lofty, ancient character only in their classical essays, but still talk in the vulgar, low vernacular. All the sounds uttered by China's four hundred millions are "beneath contempt" This is truly lamentable.

Not content to be mortals, they want to be immortal. Living on earth, they want to go up to heaven. Modern men, breathing modern air, they want to ram moribund Confucian morality and a dead language down people's throats — what an insult to the present! These are "murderers of the present." And by murdering the present, they are murdering the future too.

But the future belongs to our descendants.

* A novel by Li Ruzhen (1763-1830).

RANDOM THOUGHTS (58) —
MEN ARE JUST WHAT THEY
ALWAYS WERE

Indignant, public-spirited men are saying, "The world is going to the dogs, men are not what they were, and our good old Chinese spirit is dying out. We can only gaze towards heaven, wringing our hands, gnashing our teeth, and sighing again and again."

When first I heard this, I, too, was very shocked. Later, glancing through old Sima Qian's *Historical Records*, in the "Chronicle of the House of Zhao" I found this statement made by Lord Cheng to oppose his sovereign's decision to wear Hunnish dress:

I have heard that China is the abode of the intelligent and wise, where all resources and riches are to be found, where sages teach, where benevolence and justice prevail, where the classical canons of poetry, history, ceremony and music are observed, where talents and skills are tested, towards which distant peoples turn, and which barbarians imitate. But you are abandoning our ways to wear an outlandish costume. You are changing the ancient customs against the people's wishes, offending scholars and alienating yourself from China. I therefore beg you to reconsider this matter.

These are precisely the arguments used today by those who oppose reform. Later, in the *History of the Northern*

Dynasties,[†] I found this account of the wife of Emperor Jing of the Northern Zhou Dynasty

Since the empress had a jealous nature, the ladies of the inner palace dared not approach the emperor. Yuchi Hui had a beautiful granddaughter who served at court. When the emperor saw her in Renshou Palace he took a fancy to her, and she became his favourite. Then the empress secretly had her killed while the emperor was at court. Emperor Jing flew into a rage and rode out of the park alone. He did not keep to the highways and byways, but rode over thirty li to a mountain valley before Gao Ying and Yang Su caught up with him, stopped his horse, and urged him to return. The emperor sighed. "I rank as the Son of Heaven," he exclaimed, "and yet I have no freedom!"

This is precisely the definition of freedom given today by those who advocate freedom or oppose it. There must be many other parallels, but owing to my lack of learning I cannot cite them. Judging by these examples, however, we can see that although so many years have passed, men's ideas are still the same. So really men are just what they always were.

If we Chinese would only make an effort to throw ourselves a little further back, we might have a chance of returning to the days before the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors.** The pity is that, with all these new tides of thought and new currents of opinion, there is never time for this.

Of all the ancient peoples in existence today, those who come closest to the Chinese ideal are the Vedda tribes in Ceylon. Since these tribesmen have no contact with the outside world and are not influenced by

* By Li Yanshou, a Tang Dynasty scholar. This deals with the northern kingdoms of Wei, Qi and Zhou, as well as the Sui Dynasty, during the Southern and Northern Dynasties period.

** Legendary rulers of China.

foreigners, but remain in a primitive state, they are in truth men of a bygone golden age

I understand, though, that their population is decreasing every year, and they are now nearly extinct. This is a thousand pities!

RANDOM THOUGHTS (59) —
“MARTIAL AND SAGACIOUS” *

I have said elsewhere that “no ideology has any effect on China.” Some more ideas have occurred to me today, which I shall now jot down.

It seems to me that China is neither a breeding place for new ideas nor a country to tolerate new ideas. If some foreign concepts happen to come in, they change their complexion at once — indeed we have often commented on this with pride. We have only to look at prefaces to translations or criticisms and comments on events abroad to see that our views are separated from those of other people by several iron walls. When they discuss family problems, we think they are advocating war. When they speak of social evils, we imagine they are joking. When they claim a thing is good, we consider it bad. Again, if we look at other people’s national characteristics and literature, or read the biographies of foreign writers, we can see even more clearly that the temperament and ideas expressed in foreign books are practically all alien to us. Thus we cannot understand them, sympathize with them, or be influenced by them; while even our views of right and wrong, our likes and dislikes, are diametrically opposed.

Those who advocate new ideas may start a fire, but there must be some spiritual fuel to feed the flame. They draw music from the lyre, but if others have no heart-

* A common appellation for Chinese emperors.

strings they can strike no common chord. They give forth sounds, but if others remain silent there will be no echo. Because the Chinese never make much response, new ideas have no effect on China.

Some readers may take offence at this and say, "Chinese have often laid down their lives selflessly. Indeed, since the founding of the Republic many martyrs have died for their cause. How can you ignore all that? Bah!" Of course, this is true. Let us start with an idea introduced long ago from abroad. During the Six Dynasties period many monks let themselves be burned to death, and in the Tang Dynasty a monk cut off his arm to give to some rogue, while in modern times, of course, there have been similar cases. But still this has no bearing on Chinese history. For no summary of history can be so accurate as a sum in arithmetic which states a figure to several decimal places. We can only set down a round figure, like country bumpkins when they make out a bill.

In the round figure we arrive at for Chinese history, there are really no ideologies or ideals. There are two things only — fire and the sword, and the whole can be called "It's coming!"

When fire comes from the north, we run south, when the sword appears in front, we retreat. This is the pattern of all the current accounts. If we find the phrase "It's coming!" undignified, and "fire and sword" rather offensive too, we can get round this by conferring the posthumous title "martial and sagacious" upon the conquerors. That looks respectable.

In the old days, the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty did very well, as both Liu Bang and Xiang Yu* observed.

"Aha!" said Liu Bang. "That's a proper man for you."

* Liu Bang was a minor official under the Qin Dynasty, who revolted and became the first Han emperor in 206 B.C. Xiang Yu, another leader of the revolt, was defeated by Liu Bang and took his own life.

“Why don't I take over from that fellow?” exclaimed Xiang Yu.

What was it Xiang Yu wanted to take over? It was what Liu Bang meant by “that.” There may be different degrees of “that,” but everybody wants to take it over. The one pushed out is “that fellow,” the one taking over is a “proper man.” And the hearts of all are set on becoming “martial and sagacious.”

What exactly is meant by “that”? This is a long story, but, put simply, it means the satisfaction of men's basest lusts — for power, offspring and loot — yet these are the highest ideals (?) of all “proper men,” great or small. And I fear modern men are still swayed by these ideals.

After these proper men become like “that,” before their desires are satisfied their health begins to fail, and they feel a dark shadow — death — creeping upon them. So they have to ask immortals for an elixir. This is another of China's highest ideals. And I fear modern men are still swayed by this ideal.

After making a search for immortals, they realize there are none to be found, and doubts flash into their mind. Then they build sepulchres to preserve their corpses, wanting to occupy one piece of land for ever. This is also one of China's highest ideals, when everything else has failed. And I fear modern men are still under its sway.

Whatever foreign ideals are like today, they at least smack of liberty and equality, mutual aid and co-existence. There is therefore no place for them in our thoughts, which are filled with self, with the wish to “take over,” to monopolize everything, and to quaff all the wine in time and space.

Hence, simply to prevent “It's coming” is enough. In other countries, as we can see, those who resist this are the men with ideals. For their cherished ideals they sacrifice all beside, splintering the enemy's weapons with their bones, and extinguishing flames with their blood.

When the gleam of the sword and the glow of the fire die away, they see the first glimmer of dawn, the dawn of a new era.

Now dawn is overhead, but unless we look up we shall for ever see only the glitters of material wealth.

RANDOM THOUGHTS (62) — DYING IN BITTERNESS

Since ancient times quite a few people have died in bitterness. "My worth is unrecognized," they say, or "Heaven knows no justice." But at the same time they go whoring and gambling if they have money, and drink dozens of bowls of wine if they have none — because of their indignation. And finally they die in bitterness.

We should ask such people while they are alive: "Do you gentlemen know how many li Beijing is from the Kunlun Mountain? How many feet is the Yellow River from the Stream on Which Nothing Floats? For what can gunpowder be used apart from firecrackers, or the compass apart from geomancy? Is cotton red or white? Does grain grow on trees or on the ground? What is the difference between illicit love and marriage based on true love? Do you ever feel ashamed when you wake up in the night? Have you any compunction when you get up in the morning? Can you carry a load of four catties? Can you walk three li?"

If they think things over and start to feel ashamed, then there is hope for them. If they grow more indignant and angry, their case is hopeless — and finally they will die in bitterness.

In China today there are only too many indignant and angry people. Of course, indignation may lead to reforms; but you have to reform yourself before reforming society and the world. Indignation alone is certainly not enough. As for anger, it is no use at all.

Anger causes men to die in bitterness, as so many of our forefathers did. But we must not repeat their mistakes.

Still more, we must not use such sayings as "There is no justice or humanity" to excuse ourselves for doing what we know is wrong, posing as men with a grievance who are going to die in bitterness, when in fact we mean to do nothing of the kind.

RANDOM THOUGHTS (66) — THE ROAD OF LIFE

The thought of the extinction of mankind makes one feel exceedingly lonely and sad; but this is not true of the death of a number of people.

The road of life is progressive, ever ascending the infinite hypotenuse of a spiritual triangle, and nothing can obstruct it.

Nature has endowed men with a good many incompatibilities, and a good many men become atrophied, degenerate or backslide themselves, yet life never retrogresses because of this. No matter what darkness may dam the stream of thought, what misfortunes may assail society, what crimes may violate morality, mankind's aspirations for perfection will always advance trampling over these iron spikes.

Life is not afraid of death, it laughs and leaps in the face of death, advancing over the bodies of the dead.

What is a road? It comes of trampling places where no road was before, of opening up wasteland where only brambles grew.

There were roads in the past; in future there should also always be roads.

Mankind can never be lonely, for life is progressive and optimistic.

Yesterday I said to my friend L—, "When a man dies, that is sad for him and for his family, but to his village or town it means nothing. When all the inhabitants of a village or town die, to the whole prefecture or province

it means nothing The same applies to a whole province,
country or race .”

L— rejoined disapprovingly, “You are talking like
Nature, not like a man. You ought to be more careful”

I think he was correct too.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US AS FATHERS TODAY

My real purpose in writing this essay is to consider how to reform the family. And since in China parents — especially fathers — wield great authority, I want to express some views on the hitherto sacrosanct question of fathers and sons. In a word, the revolution is catching up with the old man himself. But why such high and mighty airs and such a pretentious title? The reason for this is twofold.

First, there are two things in China which “the sages’ disciples” cannot bear to have touched. We need not go into the first, which does not concern us. The second is “human relationships,”* and some careless remarks on this score have already involved us in trouble, earning us such bad names as “corrupters of morals” or “beasts in human guise.” Paternal authority is considered absolute: of course whatever the old man says is right, while the son is wrong before he opens his mouth. Yet grandfathers, fathers, sons and grandsons are simply rungs in the ladder of human life, not something fixed and immutable. The son of today is the father of tomorrow and the grandfather of the future. I know that my contemporaries and readers are, if not yet fathers, expectant fathers, and all have a chance of becoming ancestors — it is simply a matter of time. In order to save trouble, therefore, we need not stand on ceremony, but may just as well take

* The five human relationships: between prince and subject, father and son, husband and wife, brothers, and friends.

up a strategic position and hold forth with all a patriarch's dignity about ourselves and our children. This will not only simplify matters for us when we become fathers in future, but since precedents exist in China for such presumptions, "the sages' disciples" should not be frightened off. In fact, this is killing two birds with one stone. That is why I speak of "What is required of us as fathers today."

Secondly, I have touched briefly on the problems of the family in the "Random Thoughts" (Numbers 25, 40 and 49) in *New Youth*, my main contention being that we of this generation should start to emancipate all coming after us. The emancipation of children is something so natural that it should need no discussion, but the elder generation in China has been too poisoned by the old customs and ideas ever to come to its senses. For instance, if a crow caws in the morning,* young people think nothing of it, but the superstitious old folk will be in a flutter for hours. It is most pathetic, but they are past curing. Thus the only way is for those who have seen the light to start by emancipating their own children. Burdened as a man may be with the weight of tradition, he can yet prop open the gate of darkness with his shoulder to let the children through to the bright, wide-open spaces, to lead happy lives henceforward as rational human beings.

Incidentally, I mentioned once that I was not an original thinker, only to be abused by a Shanghai paper. But before examining other things we should first examine our hearts, to avoid sailing under false colours; only so can we do the right thing by ourselves and others, or say anything worth saying. I am perfectly aware that I am not an original thinker, nor have I hit upon any new truth. Whatever I say or write is taken from things

* From very ancient times in China the crow was considered a bird of ill omen, and to hear a crow caw in the morning was thought to be particularly unlucky.

seen and heard in daily life which strike me as sound. As for the absolute truth, I have no means of knowing it. Nor can I predict what advances and changes there will be in men's outlook a few years from now, though I am sure it will have changed and advanced. That is why I speak of "What is required of us as fathers today."

What strikes me as sound at the moment is something extremely simple. That is, judging by the animal world, our first duty is to preserve life, our second to propagate it, our third to improve it (in other words, evolution). All living creatures behave in this way, and fathers should be no exception.

The value of life need not concern us here, nor the different scales of value. We know from common sense that nothing matters more to living creatures than life. For all creatures are what they are precisely because they have life—without this they would cease to be living creatures. And in order to preserve life animals have certain instincts, the most conspicuous being the desire for food, which makes them take nourishment, to keep themselves warm and maintain life. Still, since individual animals must all grow old and die, in order to propagate life they possess another instinct—sexual desire. This leads them to have sexual intercourse, produce offspring, and propagate life. So while the desire for food preserves each individual and the life of the moment, sexual desire preserves posterity and life everlasting. Eating and drinking are not sinful or unclean, and neither is sexual intercourse. Eating and drinking result in self-preservation, but this is no favour conferred upon ourselves; sexual intercourse results in children, but this is no favour conferred upon the children. One after another we advance down the long road of life, the only difference between us being that some come earlier, some later. But no one need feel under an obligation to anyone else.

Unfortunately, the old way of thinking in China is just the reverse of this. Marriage is simply "the third of the five relationships," yet it is called "the starting-point." Sexual intercourse is a normal thing, yet it is considered unclean. Birth is also a normal thing, yet it is considered a tremendous achievement. Most people have inhibitions about marriage. Relatives and friends crack all kinds of lewd jokes, and the bride and groom feel they have done something shameful, thus even when a child is born they still beat about the bush and dare not announce it. In front of the child, though, what airs they put on! In fact, we can say they behave exactly like newly-rich who have gained their wealth through theft. I do not mean — as those who attack me claim — that human beings should have promiscuous sexual intercourse like animals or, like shameless rogues, pride themselves on their degradation. I mean that henceforward those who have seen the light should purge themselves of those inhibitions peculiar to us in the East, become purer and more intelligent, understanding that husbands and wives are companions, co-workers, and creators of new life. The children born are entrusted with new life, but they cannot keep it for ever; they in turn will have to hand it on to *their* children, just as their parents did. All hand on the torch to those after them, only some come earlier in the race, some later.

Why must life be propagated? So that it can develop and evolve. Each individual is mortal, and no bounds at all are set to evolution; therefore life must continue, advancing along the path of evolution. For this, a certain inner urge is needed, like the urge of a unicellular creature which in time enables it to multiply, or the urge of invertebrate animals which in time enables the vertebrae to appear. This is why the later forms of life are always more significant and complete, hence more worthwhile and precious; and the earlier forms of life should be sacrificed to the later.

Unfortunately, the old way of thinking in China is just the reverse of this. The young should take first place, but instead it is taken by the old. The emphasis should be on the future, but instead it is on the past. The elder generation is sacrificed to the generation before it; yet, with no means to outlive itself, it expects the younger generation to sacrifice itself for the elder's sake, destroying all that could carry it forward. I do not mean — as those who attack me claim — that grandsons must spend their whole time beating their grandfathers, and daughters must for ever be cursing their mothers. I mean that henceforward those who have seen the light should purge themselves of the unsound ideas long handed down in the East, show a greater sense of responsibility towards their children and drastically cut down on all thought of privilege, to build up a new morality in which the young take first place. And the young will not remain in a privileged position for ever, they will have to do their duty by their own children. All hand on the torch to those after them, only some come earlier in the race, some later.

The statement that "the son need feel under no obligation to his father" is largely responsible for making "the sages' disciples" turn crimson with rage. Their mistake lies in their selfishness and belief that the old should take first place. They have a strong sense of privilege, but not much of responsibility. To them the relationship between father and son is summed up in the words: "I owe my life to my father." Hence the young should belong entirely to the old. Even more decadent is their demand for a return which arises out of this, and their assumption that the young should be sacrificed entirely to the old. In fact, the way of the natural world is completely at variance with this; but since ancient times we have flouted the will of Heaven, and that is why our people's strength has been sapped and society has come to a standstill. Though we cannot say

that this means we are going to perish, we are certainly closer to ruin than to progress

While there may be defects in the natural order, its method of linking old and young is not at fault. It makes no use of "favours," but provides animals with an instinct which we call "love." All living things, apart from those like fish which have so many offspring that they cannot get round to loving them all, show great affection for their young. Not only are they free from selfishness; they may even sacrifice themselves to enable their progeny to advance along the long road of development.

Mankind is no exception. In European and American families, the young and weak usually take first place, and this is most closely in keeping with natural laws. Even in China, all those who are pure of heart and uncorrupted by "the sages' disciples" quite naturally manifest this instinct too. It will never occur to a village woman, for example, when she is nursing her baby, that she is conferring a favour; and no peasant will look on his marriage as a form of usury. When children are born, their parents instinctively love them and want them to live. More than this, they want their children to surpass them, and this is evolution. This love, free from all thought of barter and profit, is the tie that binds men together, the bond between man and man. If we accept the old view, brushing love aside to speak only of "favours" and expecting some return, in addition to destroying the proper relations between father and son, this will reverse the true parental affection and sow the seeds of hatred. A man once wrote a verse entitled "To Encourage Filial Piety," which ran something like this:

*Your dear mother is working at home, boy,
As to school with your fellows you run;
She is making you sweet almond broth, boy —
Will you still be an unfilial son?*

This writer considered himself "an ardent champion of morality" But, in fact, the almond broth of the rich and the bean milk of the poor have the same value in love, and possess this value only if the parents expect no reward. Otherwise this degenerates into trading, and the almond broth is like the human milk given to pigs to fatten them. Morally speaking, it is worthless.

So what strikes me as sound at the moment is simply "love"

Men of all countries and callings will agree that self-love is justified. It is the main cause of self-preservation and the propagation of life. Because the future is determined in the present, the defects of parents may lead to the death of their sons and endanger life. Although in *Ghosts* Ibsen's main emphasis is on the relation between men and women, from this play we also see the horror of congenital disease. Oswald is an artist who wants to live, but owing to his father's dissolute life he has contracted a congenital disease and his health breaks down. Since he is devoted to his mother and cannot bear to give her the trouble of looking after him, he conceals some morphine, intending to ask the maid Regina to give this to him when his illness grows critical, so that he can poison himself. But Regina leaves, and he has to rely on his mother.

Oswald: Well, now you have got to give me that helping hand, Mother

Mrs. Alving (*with a loud scream*): I!

Oswald: Who has a better right than you?

Mrs. Alving: I? Your mother?

Oswald: Just for that reason.

Mrs. Alving: I, who gave you your life!

Oswald: I never asked you for life. And what kind of a life was it that you gave me? I don't want it! You shall take it back!

This passage should serve as a warning to those of us who are fathers, arousing our admiration even while it makes us shiver. Nor must we stifle our conscience and say it is only right for our sons to suffer. Many such cases, too, may be found in China. Anyone who works in a hospital constantly sees the pathetic sight of children suffering from congenital syphilis; yet usually it is the parents who swagger in with these children to hospital. Syphilis is not the only fearful congenital disease, though. Many other spiritual and bodily ailments can be handed down, until, as time goes on, the whole of society suffers. There is no need to hold forth here on mankind, solely from the child's point of view we can affirm that those with no self-love have no right to be fathers. Even if they insist on becoming fathers, they are like the bandits of old who set themselves up as kings — they have no claim whatsoever to the true succession. In future, when science is more advanced and society has improved, such descendants of theirs as have managed to survive will undoubtedly be dealt with by eugenists.

If the parents of today have not passed on any spiritual or physical defects to their children, and no accident has happened, these boys and girls will naturally be healthy, and the propagation of life will have been achieved. The parents' responsibility does not end here, however, for while life continues it must not stand still — the new life must be taught to develop. The higher animals not only nurture and protect their young, but usually teach them the skills they need to survive. Thus birds show their fledglings how to fly, beasts of prey show their cubs how to strike. Since human beings are several stages higher, their instinct also is to want their children to outdo them; and this, too, is love. We were speaking before of the present, but this love concerns the future. Anyone with an open mind wants his children to be stronger, healthier, cleverer and better than he is

— happier too. He wants them to outstrip him, to outstrip the past. But before this can be achieved there must be change: descendants should change the ways of their ancestors. “The filial son is he who during the three years’ mourning does not change his father’s ways”* — such a saying is plain nonsense and the root of much backwardness. If the unicellular creatures of ancient times had observed this rule, they would never have dared to divide and multiply, and there would be no men on earth.

Luckily, though such sayings have poisoned the minds of many, they could not completely destroy all men’s natural impulses. The instincts of those who have not read the works of the sages still sprout from time to time under the axe of Confucian morality; and this is why the Chinese, although going downhill, have not perished.

So from now on those who have seen the light ought to extend and deepen this natural love, and sacrifice themselves, with no thought of self, for those who come after them. The first prerequisite for this is understanding. The mistake made earlier in the West was to look upon children as grown-ups in the making. The mistake in China was to see them as men in miniature. It is only in recent years, and thanks to the researches of many scholars, that we have learned that the child’s world is completely different from that of a fully grown man; and if instead of understanding children you ride roughshod over them, you seriously impede their development. Thus the children should always come first. In Japan recently this has been generally realized; a great deal has been done for children and a thorough study made of them.

The second prerequisite is guidance. Since situations change, life must evolve. Men of a later age are bound to differ from their predecessors, and it would be unreasonable to force them all into one mould. Grown-ups

* A quotation from the *Analects* of Confucius.

should give guidance and advice, but not issue orders. Far from expecting the young to wait on them, they should devote all their energies to the young generation, bringing them up with sturdy bodies to stand hardship, with fine, lofty principles, and independent, inquiring minds to accept new ideas, so that they have the strength to swim in the new current and not be drowned by it.

The third prerequisite is emancipation. Children are a part of us, yet separate from us, belonging to humanity. Since they are a part of us, we must do our duty by educating them and enabling them to stand on their own feet. Since they are separate from us, they should be emancipated at the same time so that they belong entirely to themselves and become independent.

Thus the parents' duty to their children is to give them good health, the best education possible, and complete emancipation.

But some people are afraid that in future parents will be left with nothing, that it will be very sad for them. This fear of loneliness and boredom which also stems from the wrong ideas of the past will naturally disappear if we understand the laws of biology. But parents who mean to emancipate their children should also equip themselves with a certain ability. For then, even though you are tainted by the past, you will not lose the power to think and act independently, and will have wide interests and cultivated pleasures. Do you want to be happy? Even your future life will be happy too. Do you want to grow young again? Your children will be your second youth, but independent and better. This is the only way to discharge your duty as an elder and find full satisfaction in life. But if all your thoughts and actions are modelled on the past, and all you will do is nag and boast of your seniority, of course you cannot escape loneliness and boredom.

Some may fear that emancipation may set up a barrier between father and son. The European and Ameri-

can family, as everyone knows, is not nearly as autocratic as the Chinese. But although the Westerners have been compared with wild beasts, today even the Confucians who "champion morality" stand up for them, saying that there are "no unfilial sons or rebellious younger brothers" in the West. Evidently it is because they are emancipated that they love each other. It is precisely because the old there do not oppress the young that there are no unfilial sons or rebellious younger brothers opposing oppression. If you use force or bribes, then no matter what happens you cannot "remain in power for ever." But let us take the case of China again. In the Han and Tang dynasties and at the end of the Qing Dynasty, we had systems whereby filial sons could become officials. Thus in addition to parental exhortation there was state encouragement; yet even so there were very few limb-cutters*. This proves that from ancient times till now the old ideas and old ways have achieved very little, simply making the bad more hypocritical and causing more useless suffering to the good.

Love alone is true. Lu Cui once quoted Kong Rong** as saying:

What feeling has a father for his son? He begets him because of lust. And a son's relation to his mother is like that of a thing that has been put in a jar, which becomes quite separate once it is taken out.

(At the end of the Han Dynasty quite a few exceptional figures appeared in the Kong family, which had not then run to seed as it has today. It is possible that Kong Rong

* In feudal times, if parents fell seriously ill, it was considered an act of piety for their children to cut flesh from their limbs and boil it to present to the invalid.

** (A.D. 153-208), a Han Dynasty writer and poet descended from Confucius (Kong Qiu). Cao Cao, who wanted to kill him, told his follower Lu Cui to use his writings to prove him unfilial, then accused him of being "a disloyal subject and an impious son." He was therefore condemned to death.

really said this, but it is amusing that Lu Cui and Cao Cao^b should be the ones to attack him) Though this, too, was an attack against old ideas, it really is not correct. For when parents give birth to a child, they instinctively love it, with a deep, enduring love which does not soon end. Since we have not yet reached a time of universal brotherhood, there are different degrees of love, and a child's intense love for its parents cannot easily be destroyed. So we need not be afraid of any drifting apart. There may be freaks who remain impervious to love. But if love has no hold upon them, then neither will any talk of "gratitude, principle and morality."

Some again may fear that emancipation will mean unhappiness for the elder generation. We can approach this question in two ways. In the first place, in China, although we pride ourselves on our virtue, in actual fact we are only too deficient in mutual love and aid. Even moral concepts like "filial piety" and "chastity" are simply means to take advantage of the young and weak, while others look on and do nothing. In such a society, the old folk are not the only ones who find it hard to live — even the emancipated young can barely keep alive. In the second place, most Chinese, whether men or women, grow old before their time. Indeed some of them look quite decrepit while still in their teens; so by the time they are really advanced in years, they need someone to support them. That is why I say that parents who intend to emancipate their children should make certain preparations, but the main thing is to reform this society, so that we can live in it like rational beings. When there are enough people making preparations and carrying out reforms, in time our hopes are bound to be realized. Consider the experience of other countries: Herbert Spencer never married, but I have yet to hear

* Cao Cao (155-220) decreed that talented men should be recommended with no regard for their moral character.

that he felt frustrated or bored. James Watt lost his children early, yet "he died peacefully in his bed." And things should be better in future, especially for those of us who *have* children.

Others may fear that emancipation will mean unhappiness for the children. Here, again, there are two ways of looking at the question. What we said before still applies, the only difference being that in one case we are afraid that the old will have no means of supporting themselves, in the other that the young will not know how to deal with affairs. This being so, those who have seen the light are all the more conscious of the need to reform society. Many wrong traditions have been handed down in China. One is to shut a child up, on the assumption that if he is kept away from society he will not be contaminated. Another is to teach him bad ways, on the assumption that only so can he make his way in the world. Though the parents who use these methods mean well in so far as they wish to continue life, they are certainly wrong in their reasoning. Another way is to teach the child certain dodges to enable him to get on with people. This is like those pragmatists of a few years ago who, because counterfeit dollars had appeared on the market, wanted to teach all college students how to differentiate between good money and bad. Occasionally, of course, we must conform to custom; but not as a general rule. For as long as society is bad and vice abounds, we cannot conform to all its ways. If we do, we shall be leading irrational lives and retrogressing. The basic thing, then, is to reform society.

As a matter of fact, the old family relations and the father-and-son relation idealized in China have long since broken down. This is not only true today; it has been the case for some time. The fact that for centuries praise was lavished upon "five generations under one roof" shows that in practice it was very difficult to live together, just as the desperate preaching of filial piety

also shows that in actual life filial sons were rare. This came about purely because men upheld a false morality and ignored true human feeling. If we open the genealogies of great families we see that the founder of the house usually came to a new district alone, then settled down and prospered. By the time the kinsmen gathered round and genealogies were published, the family was on its way downhill. Moreover, in future, when there is an end of superstition, there will be no more sons weeping beside bamboos or lying on the ice, and when medicine comes into its own, there will be no more tasting of faeces* or slicing of flesh from limbs. Then marriage will be later for economic reasons, hence children will also come late. By the time children can fend for themselves, the parents will be old and will not live to be a burden to them. In fact, the parents will have done their duty. The tide of world affairs is impelling us this way, and by doing this we can survive, while failing in this we shall all die out. If more people would see the light and make a greater effort, the danger could be averted.

But if, as said earlier, the Chinese family has already broken down, contrary to the empty talk of "the sages' disciples," how is it that even now we are still making no progress? This is very easy to explain. In the first place, while what must crumble crumbles, the trouble-makers still make trouble, and the rule-makers still make rules. They are not on their guard in the least and have no desire to change, hence all goes on as before. In the second place, in the old families there were always quar-

* Allusions to three stories from the *Twenty-four Acts of Filial Piety*. Meng Zong, who could find no bamboo shoots in winter for his mother to eat, wept in a grove until bamboo shoots sprouted from the ground. When Wang Xiang's stepmother asked for fresh fish in the depth of winter, he lay on the ice till it melted, and caught a fish. Yu Qianlou was informed by a physician that he could tell the nature of his father's illness by tasting his faeces. This he did.

rels, but after learning the new terms they call these "revolution", yet they are still cursing and coming to blows over money for whoring or gambling — this has nothing in common with the reforms of those who have seen the light. These quarrelsome young people who talk about "revolution" are perfect examples of the old type. When they have children, they will certainly not emancipate them. They will either neglect them or hunt for a copy of *The Book of Filial Piety* and order them to study it, so that the children may "learn from the old sages" and sacrifice themselves. For this the old morality, old customs and old methods are responsible: the laws of biology are certainly not to blame.

Well, someone may say, if living things must evolve and propagate life, it seems that the old saying is right: "Of the three unfilial acts, to have no son is the worst"* Is it proper, then, to have many wives and concubines? This is very easy to answer too. Although it is unfortunate to have no son to carry on our life, to use improper means to continue life, injuring others in the process, is even worse. In society today monogamy is proper, polygamy will make men decadent. And since decadence leads to retrogression, it is just the reverse of the propagation of life. To have no son is the end of yourself only, while to bring about general retrogression destroys others too. A man should be willing to sacrifice himself for others. Besides, ever since living creatures appeared they have been interrelated, and probably each individual has some sort of blood relation with all the others, hence he cannot die out completely. Thus the laws of biology cannot be used to justify polygamy.

* A saying of Mencius (372-289 B.C.), one of the chief exponents of Confucianism. The three unfilial acts were blind acquiescence in one's parent's wrong doing, refusal to become an official when the family was poor and one's parents were old, refusal to marry and beget a son to carry on one's ancestor's line.

In short, parents who have seen the light should have a strong sense of responsibility and be willing to sacrifice themselves for others. This is not easy, especially in China. To deal kindly with the old and emancipate the young, those who have seen the light must settle old scores at the same time as they open up new paths. As we said at the start, "Burdened as a man may be with the weight of tradition, he can yet prop open the gate of darkness with his shoulder to let the children through to the bright, wide-open spaces, to lead happy lives henceforward as rational human beings" This is a great and important task, and a most difficult one.

Of course, there are old people in the world who not only will not emancipate their own children, but forbid their children to emancipate *their* children. They are forcing their descendants to sacrifice themselves for nothing. This is a real problem, but since I want peace I cannot deal with it here.

October 1919

1921

KNOWLEDGE IS A CRIME

I used to be a steady sort of fellow, living comfortably enough from hand to mouth by doing odd jobs for small taverns, until I made the mistake of learning to read and write, was influenced by the new cultural movement, and decided to seek knowledge.

I was living in the country at the time, and felt most indignant on behalf of the pigs and sheep. "Though all animals have a hard time of it," I thought, "if they were like oxen and horses they could at least do something else instead of being forced to sell their flesh." But the pigs and sheep looked so silly and acted so foolishly that there seemed nothing else they could do but carry on as they were. That showed how important knowledge was!

So I made straight for Beijing, where I found a teacher and started my quest for knowledge. The earth is round. There are more than seventy elements. $x+y=z$. All this was new to me, and though it was hard I felt these were things one should know.

But one day my convictions were shattered by something I read in a newspaper. In this paper a nihilist philosopher stated that knowledge was a crime, stolen property. . . . Such a great authority as a nihilist philosopher, and he said knowledge was a crime! Although I did not know much, at least what I knew was knowledge, and now this was against me. I went to consult my teacher.

"Pah!" he scoffed. "What nonsense! You say this because you are lazy. Get out!"

"My teacher wants to keep his fees," I thought "It would be safer not to know anything, though What a pity some things have stuck in my head and I can't get rid of them all at once I had better try to forget them."

It was too late, however I died that very night

In the middle of the night as I was lying in bed in the hostel, two devils suddenly walked in One was Life-Is-Transient, the other Death-Is-Predestined. I was not too much taken aback, because they looked just like the earthen images in the Tutelary God's Temple. But the two monsters behind them quite took my breath away, for they were not the usual ox-headed or horse-faced devils, but had faces like sheep and pigs Then I realized that because the ox and horse had been found guilty of being too intelligent, their place had been taken by these gentlemen. This proved that knowledge was a crime . . . Before I could collect my thoughts the pig-head nuzzled me, and I fell straight into hell, without waiting for paper carriages or horses to be burned

Most old folk who had visited the nether regions had told me that there were placards and scrolls hanging outside the gate, but hard though I looked I could not see them. All I saw was the king of hell sitting in his court. Strangely enough, he was rich Mr. Zhu from next door. I suppose money cannot be taken into hell, so as soon as he died he turned into an honest ghost. I could not understand, though, how he had become a great official again. He was wearing a very simple dragon-robe of Chinese cloth, but his royal face was much fatter than during his lifetime.

"Have you any knowledge?" asked Mr. Zhu, his face quite expressionless.

"No . . ." I remembered what the nihilist philosopher had said.

"If you say No, it means Yes. Take him away!"

I was just thinking how strange their logic was in hell, when the sheep-face butted me with one of its horns and I stumbled through the gate.

I fell into a walled town full of grey brick houses with green gates, on most of the gate-house roofs were two pseudo-lions made of cement, and on each door was a door-plate. In the world of men there are usually five or six plates outside each office, but here there was only one, an indication that there was no lack of space. The next moment a pig-headed devil carrying a steel prong shoved me with its snout through a door with a plate bearing the inscription Small, Slippery, Oiled-Bean Hell.

Inside, I found an enormous plain completely covered with white beans soaked in tung oil, where no end of people were falling down and scrambling to their feet again and again. I fell down twelve times running too, and raised many bumps on my head. There were some people, though, who just sat or lay by the gate and would not get up. They were soaked in oil, but had not a single bump on their heads. Unfortunately, when I went to question them they stared at me in silence. I could not tell whether they had not heard or did not understand, whether they were unwilling to speak or had nothing to say.

So I stumbled forward, to question those who were tumbling right and left.

"This is a punishment for having knowledge," one of them told me. "Because knowledge is a sin, stolen property. . . . As a matter of fact, we got off rather lightly. When you were in the world of men, why couldn't you be more muddle-headed? . . ." He spoke brokenly, between gasps.

"I can be muddle-headed now."

"It's too late now."

"I've heard that the Westerners have drugs to stupefy people. Suppose I have an injection of one of those?"

"That won't do. I am stumbling here just because I knew of some medicine I've lost the needles for injections too"

"Well . . . there are people who give shots of morphine, usually uneducated fellows I understand . . . I'll go to look for them."

While talking, we had fallen down several hundred times. But now disappointment made me careless, and I suddenly bumped my head against a patch of ground where the beans lay rather thinly. The ground was hard and I fell heavily, so I was completely dazed . . .

Ah, freedom! All of a sudden I found myself on the plain, with the town behind me and my hostel in sight in front. I walked along stupidly, thinking as I went: My wife and son must have gone to the capital, where they will be crying beside my corpse. I rushed towards my body, then sat up. They fled in terror. But after I had explained everything, they understood and shouted joyfully "Arya! You've come back to life! Merciful Heaven! . . ."

As I was thinking stupidly, I woke up . . .

Neither my wife nor son was by my side, there was only a lamp on the table, and I realized I had been sleeping in the hostel. The student next door had come back from the theatre, and was humming: "*My former sovereign, ah-ah-ah!*" — a sign that it was quite late.

This return to life was too quiet, I thought, not in the least my idea of a resurrection. Or had I never died?

If I had not died, then Mr. Zhu had never been king of hell.

To use knowledge to solve this problem might also be a crime. We had better solve it emotionally.

October 23, 1921

1922

WHAT I ASK OF THE CRITICS

Two or three years ago, the periodicals carried nothing in the way of literature but a little original writing (if so we may call it) and translations. Hence readers felt a need for critics. Now the critics have appeared, and are indeed increasing from day to day.

Seeing that our literature is so immature, it is really very good of the critics to try to discover its merits in order to fan the flame of art. They deplore the superficiality of modern works in the hope that our writers will produce something more profound, and lament the lack of blood and tears lest modern authors grow too flippant. Though they may seem hypercritical, in fact this shows their deep concern for literature, and we should be most grateful.

But there are others who rely on one or two old "Western" books of literary criticism, serve up the dregs of some old pedant's work, or appeal to certain of China's traditional "truths," and ride roughshod over the world of letters. Such men are surely abusing their authority as critics. Let me draw a crude and simple parallel. If a cook has prepared a dish and someone finds fault with it, of course he should not pass his chopper and pan to the critic and say, "Here! Try to do better." But he is entitled to hope that the man who tastes his food does not have a morbid appetite and is not drunk or burning with fever, which gives him a thickly furred tongue.

I ask even less of the critics. I dare not hope that before dissecting and passing judgement on other people's work they will first dissect and pass judgement on

themselves, to see whether they are in any way shallow, mean or mistaken. That would be asking too much. I only hope they will show a little common sense. They should know the difference, for instance, between studies in the nude and pornography, between kisses and copulation, between post-mortems and the mutilation of corpses, between going abroad to study and "banishment to the barbarians," between bamboo shoots and bamboo, between a cat and a mouse, between a tiger and a café. Of course, a critic is entirely free to base his arguments on some old authority in England or America, but I hope he will remember that there are other countries in the world. He can despise Tolstoy if he likes, but I hope he will first make a study of him, and read a few of his books.

Then there are critics who review translations by declaring them labour lost and urging the translator to try his hand at writing. Presumably a translator knows how honourable the profession of a writer is, but sticks to translating because this is all he can do or what he likes best. So if critics make this proposal and that, instead of keeping to the work in hand, they are overstepping their authority; for statements like this are suggestions or advice, not criticism. To return to our comparison with the cook: all the man who tastes the food need say is what he thinks of the flavour. If, instead, he reproaches the cook for not being a tailor or a builder, the cook, however stupid he may be, is sure to say, "The gentleman is balmy!"

November 9, 1922

1923

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER NORA LEAVES HOME?

A talk given at the Beijing Women's
Normal College, December 26, 1923

My subject today is: What happens after Nora leaves home?

Ibsen was a Norwegian writer in the second half of the nineteenth century. All his works, apart from a few dozen poems, are dramas. Most of the dramas he wrote during one period deal with social problems and are known as social-problem plays. One of these is the play *Nora*.*

Another title for *Nora* is *Ein Puppenheim*, translated in Chinese as *A Puppet's House*. However, "puppe" are not only marionettes but also children's dolls; in a wider sense the term also includes people whose actions are controlled by others. Nora originally lives contentedly in a so-called happy home, but then she wakes up to the fact that she is simply a puppet of her husband's and her children are her puppets. So she leaves home — as the door is heard closing, the curtain falls. Since presumably you all know this play, there is no need to go into details.

What could keep Nora from leaving? Some say that Ibsen himself has supplied the answer in *The Lady from the Sea*. The heroine of this play is married but her former lover, who lives just across the sea, seeks her out suddenly to ask her to elope with him. She tells her husband

* Chinese translation for *A Doll's House*.

that she wants to meet this man and finally her husband says, "I give you complete freedom. Choose for yourself (whether to go or not). On your own head be it." This changes everything and she decides not to go. It seems from this that if Nora were to be granted similar freedom she might perhaps stay at home.

But Nora still goes away. What becomes of her afterwards Ibsen does not say, and now he is dead. Even if he were still living, he would not be obliged to give an answer. For Ibsen was writing poetry, not raising a problem for society and supplying the answer to it. This is like the golden oriole which sings because it wants to, not to amuse or benefit anyone else. Ibsen was rather lacking in worldly wisdom. It is said that when a number of women gave a banquet in his honour and their representative rose to thank him for writing *Nora*, which gave people a new insight into the social consciousness and emancipation of women, he rejoined, "I didn't write with any such ideas in mind. I was only writing poetry."

What happens after Nora leaves home? Others have also voiced their views on this. An Englishman has written a play about a modern woman who leaves home but finds no road open to her and therefore goes to the bad, ending up in a brothel. There is also a Chinese — how shall I describe him? A Shanghai man of letters, I suppose — who claims to have read a different version of the play in which Nora returns home in the end. Unfortunately no one else ever saw this edition, unless it was one sent him by Ibsen himself. But by logical deduction, Nora actually has two alternatives only: to go to the bad or to return to her husband. It is like the case of a caged bird: of course there is no freedom in the cage, but if it leaves the cage there are hawks, cats, and other hazards outside; while if imprisonment has atrophied its wings, or if it has forgotten how to fly, there certainly is nowhere it can go. Another alternative is to starve to death, but

since that means departing this life it presents no problem and no solution either.

The most painful thing in life is to wake up from a dream and find no way out. Dreamers are fortunate people. If no way out can be seen, the important thing is not to awaken the sleepers. Look at the Tang Dynasty poet Li He whose whole life was dogged by misfortune. When he lay dying he said to his mother, "The Emperor of Heaven has built a palace of white jade, Mother, and summoned me there to write something to celebrate its completion." What was this if not a lie, a dream? But this made it possible for the young man who was dying to die happily, and for the old woman who lived on to set her heart at rest. At such times there is something great about lying and dreaming. To my mind, then, if we can find no way out, what we need are dreams.

However, it won't do to dream about the future. In one of his novels Artzybashev* challenges those idealists who, in order to build a future golden world, call on many people here and now to suffer. "You promise their descendants a golden world, but what are you giving them themselves?" he demands. Something is given, of course — hope for the future. But the cost is exorbitant. For the sake of this hope, people are made more sensitive to the intensity of their misery, are awakened in spirit to see their own putrid corpses. At such times there is greatness only in lying and dreaming. To my mind, then, if we can find no way out, what we need are dreams; but not dreams of the future, just dreams of the present.

However, since Nora has awakened it is hard for her to return to the dream world; hence all she can do is to leave. After leaving, though, she can hardly avoid going to the bad or returning. Otherwise the question arises: What has she taken away with her apart from her awakened heart? If she has nothing but a crimson wool-

* Russian novelist (1878-1927).

len scarf of the kind you young ladies are wearing, even if two or three feet wide it will prove completely useless. She needs more than that, needs something in her purse. To put it bluntly, what she needs is money.

Dreams are fine, otherwise money is essential.

The word money has an ugly sound. Fine gentlemen may scoff at it, but I believe that men's views often vary, not only from day to day but from before a meal to after it. All who admit that food costs money yet call money filthy lucre will probably be found, on investigation, to have some fish or pork not yet completely digested in their stomachs. You should hear their views again after they have fasted for a day.

Thus the crucial thing for Nora is money or — to give it a more high-sounding name — economic resources. Of course money cannot buy freedom, but freedom can be sold for money. Human beings have one great drawback, which is that they often get hungry. To remedy this drawback and to avoid being puppets, the most important thing in society today seems to be economic rights. First, there must be a fair sharing out between men and women in the family, secondly, men and women must have equal rights in society.

Unfortunately I have no idea how we are to get hold of these rights; all I know is that we have to fight for them. We may even have to fight harder for these than for political rights.

The demand for economic rights is undoubtedly something very commonplace, yet it may involve more difficulties than the demand for noble political rights or for the grand emancipation of women. In this world countless small actions involve more difficulties than big actions do. In a winter like this, for instance, if we have only a single padded jacket we must choose between saving a poor man from freezing to death or sitting like Buddha under a bo-tree to ponder ways of saving all mankind. The difference between saving all mankind



The south wing of No. 11, Badaowan, Beijing,
where Lu Xun lived from 1919 to 1923

and saving one individual is certainly vast. But given the choice I would not hesitate to sit down under the bo-tree, for that would obviate the need to take off my only padded jacket and freeze to death myself. This is why, at home, if you demand political rights you will not meet with much opposition, whereas if you speak about the equal distribution of wealth you will probably find yourself up against enemies, and this of course will lead to bitter fighting.

Fighting is not a good thing and we can't ask everybody to be a fighter. In that case the peaceful method is best, that is using parental authority to liberate one's children in future. Since in China parental authority is absolute, you can share out your property fairly among your children so that they enjoy equal economic rights in peace, free from conflict. They can then go to study, start a business, enjoy themselves, do something for society, or spend the lot just as they please, responsible to no one but themselves. Though this is also a rather distant dream, it is much closer than the dream of a golden age. But the first prerequisite is a good memory. A bad memory is an advantage to its owner but injurious to his descendants. The ability to forget the past enables people to free themselves gradually from the pain they once suffered; but it also often makes them repeat the mistakes of their predecessors. When a cruelly treated daughter-in-law becomes a mother-in-law, she may still treat her daughter-in-law cruelly; officials who detest students were often students who denounced officials, some parents who oppress their children now were probably rebels against their own families ten years ago. This perhaps has something to do with one's age and status; still bad memory is also a big factor here. The remedy for this is for everyone to buy a notebook and record his thoughts and actions from day to day, to serve as reference material in future when his age and status have changed. If you are annoyed with your child for want-

ing to go to the park, you can look through your notes and find an entry saying, "I want to go to the Central Park" This will at once mollify and calm you down. The same applies to other matters too.

There is a kind of hooliganism today, the essence of which is tenacity. It is said that after the Boxer Uprising some ruffians in Tianjin behaved quite lawlessly. For instance, if one were to carry luggage for you, he would demand two dollars. If you argued that it was a small piece of luggage, he would demand two dollars. If you argued that the distance was short, he would demand two dollars. If you said you didn't need him, he would still demand two dollars. Of course hooligans are not good models, yet that tenacity is most admirable. It is the same in demanding economic rights. If someone says this is old hat, tell him you want your economic rights. If he says this is too low, tell him you want your economic rights. If he says the economic system will soon be changing and there is no need to worry, tell him you want your economic rights.

Actually, today, if just one Nora left home she might not find herself in difficulties; because such a case, being so exceptional, would enlist a good deal of sympathy and certain people would help her out. To live on the sympathy of others already means having no freedom; but if a hundred Noras were to leave home, even that sympathy would diminish; while if a thousand or ten thousand were to leave, they would arouse disgust. So having economic power in your own hands is far more reliable.

Are you not a puppet then when you have economic freedom? No, you are still a puppet. But you will be less at the beck and call of others and able to control more puppets yourself. For in present-day society it is not just women who are often the puppets of men; men often control other men, and women other women, while men are often women's puppets too. This is not something

which can be remedied by a few women's possession of economic rights. However, people with empty stomachs cannot wait quietly for the arrival of a golden age, they must at least husband their last breath just as a fish in a dry rut flounders about to find a little water. So we need this relatively attainable economic power before we can devise other measures.

Of course, if the economic system changes then all this is empty talk.

In speaking as I have, however, I have assumed Nora to be an ordinary woman. If she is someone exceptional who prefers to dash off to sacrifice herself, that is a different matter. We have no right to urge people to sacrifice themselves, no right to stop them either. Besides, there are many people in the world who delight in self-sacrifice and suffering. In Europe there is a legend that when Jesus was on his way to be crucified he rested under the eaves of Ahasuerus' house, and because Ahasuerus turned Jesus away he became accursed, doomed to find no rest until the Day of Judgement. So since then Ahasuerus has been wandering, unable to rest, and he is still wandering now. Wandering is painful while resting is comfortable, so why doesn't he stop to rest? Because even if under a curse he must prefer wandering to resting; that is why he keeps up this frenzied wandering.

But this choice of sacrifice is a personal one which has nothing in common with the social commitment of revolutionaries. The masses, especially in China, are always spectators at a drama. If the victim on the stage acts heroically, they are watching a tragedy, if he shivers and shakes they are watching a comedy. Before the mutton shops in Beijing a few people often gather to gape, with evident enjoyment, at the skinning of the sheep. And this is all they get out of it if a man lays down his life. Moreover, after walking a few steps away from the scene they forget even this modicum of enjoyment.

There is nothing you can do with such people; the only way to save them is to give them no drama to watch. Thus there is no need for spectacular sacrifices; it is better to have persistent, tenacious struggle.

Unfortunately China is very hard to change. Just to move a table or overhaul a stove probably involves shedding blood, and even so, the change may not get made. Unless some great whip lashes her on the back, China will never budge. Such a whip is bound to come, I think. Whether good or bad, this whipping is bound to come. But where it will come from or how it will come I do not know exactly.

And here my talk ends.

1924

WAITING FOR A GENIUS

A lecture delivered to the alumni of Beijing Normal University's middle school on January 17, 1924

I am afraid my talk will be of no use or interest to you, for I really have no special knowledge; but after putting this off so long I have finally had to come here to say a few words.

It seems to me that among the many requests shouted at writers and artists today, one of the loudest is the demand for a genius. And this clearly proves two things: first, that there is no genius just now in China; secondly, that everybody is sick and tired of our modern art. Is there really no genius? There may be, but we have never seen one and neither has anyone else. So judging by the evidence of our eyes and ears we can say there is not — not only no genius, but no public capable of producing a genius

Genius is not some freak of nature which grows of itself in deep forests or wildernesses, but something brought forth and nurtured by a certain type of public. Hence, without such a public there will be no genius. When crossing the Alps, Napoleon once declared, "I am higher than the Alps!" But we must not forget how many troops he had at his back while making this grandiose statement. Without these troops he would simply have been captured or driven back by the enemy on the other side; and then, far from seeming heroic, his behaviour and boast would have appeared those of a madman. To my mind, then, before we expect a genius to appear, we

should first call for a public capable of producing a genius. In the same way, if we want fine trees and lovely flowers we must first have good soil. The soil, actually, is more important than the flowers and trees, for without it nothing can grow. Soil is essential to flowers and trees, just as good troops were to Napoleon.

Yet judging by present-day pronouncements and trends, the demand for genius goes hand in hand with attempts to destroy it—some would even sweep away the soil in which it might grow. Let me give a few examples.

First, take “restoring our national culture.” Although the new ideas have never made much headway in China, a pack of old men— young ones too— are already scared out of their wits and ranting about our national culture. “China has many good things,” they assure us. “To run after what is new instead of studying and preserving the old is as bad as renouncing our ancestral heritage.” Of course, it carries enormous weight to trot out our ancestors to make a point; but I cannot believe that before the old jacket is washed and folded no new one must be made. As things stand at present, each can do as he pleases: old gentlemen who want to restore our national culture are naturally at liberty to pore over dead books by their southern windows, while the young can have their living studies and modern art. As long as each follows his own bent, not much harm will be done. But to rally others to this banner would mean cutting China off for ever from the rest of the world. To demand this of everyone is even more fantastic! When we talk with curio-dealers, they naturally praise their antiques, but they never berate painters, peasants, workers and the rest for forgetting their ancestors. The fact is they are far more intelligent than many traditional scholars.

Then take “extolling original work.” Looked at superficially, this seems quite in keeping with the demand for genius; but such is not the case. It smacks strongly of

chauvinism in the realm of ideas, and thus will also cut China off from the current of world opinion. Although many people are already tired of hearing the names of Tolstoy, Turgeniev and Dostoyevsky, how many of their books have been translated into Chinese? Those who look no further than our own borders dislike such names as Peter and John and will only accept Zhang the Third or Li the Fourth, and so we get original writers. Actually, the best of them have simply borrowed some technical devices or expressions from foreign authors. However polished their style, the content usually falls short of translations, and they may even slip in some old ideas to suit the traditional Chinese temperament. But their readers fall into this trap, their views becoming more and more confined, until they almost shrink back between the old traces. When such a vicious circle exists between writers and readers for the abolition of all that is different and the glorification of the national culture, how can genius be produced? Even if one were to appear, he could not survive.

A public like this is dust, not soil, and no lovely flowers or fine trees will grow from it.

Then, again, take destructive criticism. There has long been a great demand for critics, and now many have appeared. Unhappily, quite a number of them are carpers rather than critics. As soon as a work is sent to them, they indignantly grind their ink and lose no time in penning a most superior verdict. "Why, this is too childish. What China needs is a genius!" Later even those who are not critics learn from them and raise the same clamour. In actuality, the first cry of even a genius at birth is the same as that of an ordinary child, it cannot possibly be a beautiful poem. And if you trample something underfoot because it is childish, it is likely to wither and die. I have seen several writers reduced to shuddering silence by abuse. There was doubtless no genius

among them, but even the run-of-the-mill I would like to keep.

Of course, destructive critics have great fun galloping over tender shoots. The ones to suffer are the tender shoots — ordinary shoots as well as shoots of genius. There is nothing disgraceful in childishness, for childishness and maturity in writing are like childhood and manhood among human beings. A writer need not be ashamed of making a childish start, because unless trampled underfoot he will grow to maturity. What is incurable is decadence and corruption. I would let those who are childish — some of them may be old people with childlike hearts — express themselves in a childish way, speaking simply to please themselves, and when the words are said or even published, there let the business end. No attention need be paid to any critics, whatever banners they carry.

I dare say nine-tenths of the present company too would like to see a genius appear. Yet as matters stand at present, it is not only hard to produce a genius but also hard to have the soil from which a genius could grow. It seems to me that while genius is largely inborn, anyone can become the soil to nurture genius. For us to provide the soil is more realistic than to demand the genius, for otherwise, even if we have hundreds of geniuses they will not be able to strike root for lack of soil, like bean-sprouts grown on a plate.

To be the soil we must become more broad-minded. In other words we must accept new ideas and free ourselves of the old fetters, so as to be able to accept and appreciate any future genius. We must not despise humble tasks either. Those who can write should naturally do so; others can translate, introduce, enjoy, read, or use literature to kill time. It may sound rather odd to speak of killing time with literature, but at least this is better than trampling it underfoot.

Of course the soil cannot be compared with genius, but even to be the soil is difficult unless we persevere and spare no pains. Still, where there's a will there's a way, and here we have a better chance of success than if we wait idly for a heaven-sent genius. In this lie the strength of the soil and its great expectations, as well as its reward. For when a beautiful blossom grows from the soil, all who see it naturally take pleasure in the sight, including the soil itself. You need not be a blossom yourself to feel a lifting of your spirit — provided, always, that soil has a spirit too.

THE COLLAPSE OF LEIFENG PAGODA

I hear Leifeng Pagoda by the West Lake in Hangzhou has collapsed. This is hearsay only, not something I have seen for myself. I did see the pagoda before it collapsed, though. A tottering structure standing out between the lake and the hills, with the setting sun gilding its surroundings, this was "Leifeng Pagoda at Sunset," one of the ten sights of the West Lake. Having seen "Leifeng Pagoda at Sunset" for myself, I cannot say I was much impressed.

But of all the vaunted beauty spots of the West Lake, the first I heard of was Leifeng Pagoda. My grandmother often told me that Lady White Snake was a prisoner underneath it. A man named Xu Xian rescued two snakes, one white and one green. Later the white snake changed into a woman to repay Xu's kindness, and married him, while the green snake changed into her maid and accompanied her. Then a Buddhist monk by the name of Fa Hai, a most religious man, saw from Xu's face that he had been bewitched by an evil spirit — apparently all men who marry monsters have a ghostly look on their faces, but only those with unusual gifts can detect it — so he hid Xu behind the shrine in Jinshan Monastery, and when Lady White Snake came to look for her husband the whole place was flooded. This was a much better story the way my grandmother told it. She probably based it on a ballad called *The Faithful Serpent*; but since I have never read that, I don't know

whether I have written the names Xu Xian and Fa Hai correctly or not. Anyway, Fa Hai trapped Lady White Snake in the end, and put her in a small alms-bowl. He buried this bowl in the ground, and built a pagoda over it to prevent her getting out — that was Leifeng Pagoda. This was not the end by any means: for instance, her son who came first in the court examination sacrificed at the pagoda, but I have forgotten all that happened.

My one wish at that time was for Leifeng Pagoda to collapse. When later, grown-up, I went to Hangzhou and saw this tottering pagoda, I felt uncomfortable. And although later I read somewhere that the people of Hangzhou also called it Baoshu Pagoda, but in fact it should be called Baochu Pagoda because it was actually built by Prince Qian Chu's son, so obviously there could be no Lady White Snake under it, I still felt uncomfortable and hoped it would collapse.

Now that it has collapsed at last, of course everyone in the country should be happy.

This is easy to prove. If you go to the hills and coast of Jiangsu and Zhejiang to discover what people are thinking, you will find all the peasants, their silkworm-breeding womenfolk, old gaffers, and village loafers — all but a few who are slightly wrong in the head — sympathize with Lady White Snake and blame Fa Hai for being too meddling.

A monk should stick to chanting his sutras. If the white snake chose to bewitch Xu Xian, and Xu chose to marry a monster, what business was that of anybody else? Yet he had to set down his sutra and stir up trouble. I expect he was jealous — in fact, I am sure of it.

I heard that later the Heavenly Emperor felt Fa Hai had gone too far, tormenting poor mortals like that, and decided to arrest him. Then the monk fled hither and

* In an appendix Lu Xun stated that this was a mistake. Baochu Pagoda was a different pagoda at the West Lake.

thither, and finally took refuge in a crab's shell, from which he has not dared emerge to the present day. I have objections to a great deal of the Heavenly Emperor's handiwork, but I am more than satisfied with this, because the fact is it was Fa Hai who was responsible for flooding Jinshan Mountain, and the emperor was quite right to take the action he did. I am only sorry I did not find out at the time where this report came from. It may not have been from *The Faithful Serpent* but from some popular legend.

In mid-autumn when the rice is ready to harvest, the Changjiang (Yangtze) Valley abounds with crabs. If you boil them till they turn crimson, take one at random and remove its shell, you will find the yellow and the fat inside. If it is a female, it will have seeds as red as a pomegranate. After eating these, you come to a filmy cone which you must carefully sever from its base with a pocket knife, extract and turn upside-down to show its inside. If it has not been broken, it will look like an *arhat* sitting there, complete with head and body. The children in our parts call this "the crab monk," and this is Fa Hai who took refuge there.

Formerly Lady White Snake was imprisoned under the pagoda, and Fa Hai hid himself in the crab's shell. Now only the old monk is left sitting there, unable to come out until the day when crabs are no more. Can it be that when he built the pagoda it never occurred to him that it was bound to collapse some day?

Serves him right.

October 28, 1924

MY MOUSTACHE

This summer I visited Changan,* then drifted home again after more than a month. Friends who knew this asked me.

“What did you think of it?”

Taken aback, I tried to recall Changan, and remembered seeing a good many poplars and huge pomegranate trees there, and drinking a good deal of Yellow River water on the way. But these hardly seemed worth mentioning. So I answered.

“Oh, nothing much.”

Then they left me, looking blank, while I stayed there looking blank, ashamed to have disappointed friends who “deigned to question me.”

Today I was reading after drinking tea when a drop stained my book, and I realized that my moustache needed cutting again. If you look up the *Kang Xi Dictionary*,** no doubt the different categories of beard, whiskers and moustache on the upper and lower lips, the cheeks and the jaws all have their special names and posthumous titles; but I had no time to go into this. The thing was that my moustache needed cutting again, and I should have to clip it once more, to stop it getting into my soup or tea. So I found the mirror and scissors, and started clipping, my aim being to make it level with my upper lip.

But as I clipped my moustache, I suddenly remembered

* Present-day Xi'an, the provincial capital of Shaanxi

** The dictionary compiled under the auspices of Emperor Kang Xi, who reigned from 1662-1722

Changan and my youth, and sad memories came crowding thick and fast. I can't recall the city very distinctly, but I think it was while visiting the Temple of Confucius that I came to a room hung with a number of prints. a picture of Li Erqu¹ and portraits of emperors of different dynasties. One of these was the first emperor of Song or some such ruler — I can't remember clearly — anyway he was wearing a long robe, and his moustache pointed upwards. Then a well-known scholar declared emphatically, "This was faked by the Japanese. Look at that moustache — Japanese style!"

It is a fact that Japanese moustaches point upwards like that, and quite likely they faked this portrait of the first emperor of Song or whoever he was. But the subtlety and imagination required to fake portraits of all the Chinese emperors, copying their own Japanese moustaches before a mirror, surely "passes understanding." During the reign of Emperor Qian Long of the Qing Dynasty, Huang Yi unearthed some stone carvings from the Han Dynasty Wuliang Temple,² and the moustaches of most of the men on these stick up. So do most of the moustaches on the sculptures of Buddhists from the Northern Wei to the Tang Dynasty which we can see today. It is only when we come to the portraits of the Yuan and Ming dynasties that moustaches begin to droop, affected no doubt by the law of gravity. The Japanese are certainly an indefatigable race to have made so many fakes for the Han to the Tang Dynasty and buried them in deep mountains and distant valleys, amid ruins and wildernesses, through all the length and breadth of China.

I believe the drooping moustache is a Mongolian style, brought in by the Mongols, but our brilliant scholars regard it as distinctively Chinese. Since students who

* (1629-1705), a well-known Neo-Confucian scholar.

** Wuliang Temple in Shandong was flooded after the Yellow River changed its course. In 1786, however, Huang Yi, an antiquarian, discovered it and dug up over twenty stone carvings.

study in Japan are anti-Japanese, they dream of the greatness of the Mongols and like to say, "But for Heaven's protection, we'd have wiped out that island kingdom long ago"^{*} In this sense, I suppose there is no objection to their considering the drooping moustache as essentially Chinese. But in that case how can they be descendants of the Yellow Emperor?^{**} And how can they call the Taiwanese slaves for beating the Chinese in Fujian?^{***}

I wanted to argue at the time, but thought better of it. Didn't that German-returned patriot, Mr. X — I've forgotten his name so I shall use X instead — explain that I slander China because I have a Japanese wife, and am therefore advertising our faults to them? All I did was to mention a few Chinese failings, yet that involved a change in my wife's nationality; so what will happen this time in a question concerning Japan? Still, even if the moustache of the first emperor of Song or whoever he was is falsely accused, that can hardly cause a flood or an earthquake, so it doesn't matter. Thereupon I nodded several times and said, "Yes, yes Quite." For I really seem much smoother now — much better.

After clipping the left tip of my moustache I thought: When the people of Shaanxi took the trouble to provide food and money and transport me by train, boat, mule-cart and cars to Changan to lecture there, it probably never entered their heads that I was the sort of man who would not express an opinion even on matters involving

* In 1280, Kublai Khan sent troops to attack Japan, but a typhoon sank their entire fleet

** According to ancient legend, he was the first ancestor of the Chinese people

*** In November 1919, to disrupt the patriotic boycott of Japanese goods, the Japanese consul in Fujian incited thugs in that district to riot. Among the rioters were some Taiwanese, for Taiwan was then occupied by Japan

no risk of death, but would only say: "Yes, yes. Quite." They were taken in by a fraud

Then, as I fixed my eye on the right corner of my mouth in the mirror, clipped off the right tip of my moustache and dropped it on the floor, I started thinking of my youth .

That was a long time ago, about sixteen or seventeen years now

Just home from Japan, and sporting the upturned moustache of the first emperor of Song or whoever he was, I was sitting in a small boat chatting with the boatman.

"You really speak Chinese very well, sir," he finally said

"I *am* Chinese. In fact I come from the same district as you What do. . . ."

He chuckled

"I see you like to have your joke, sir."

I remember feeling ten times more helpless on that occasion than when I read Mr. X's letter. Since I did not carry my genealogical table with me, it was quite impossible to prove that I was Chinese. And even had I had it, it would simply have contained my name without any portrait. Nor could I have proved that this was my name. And even had there been a portrait, if the Japanese can fake sculpture from the Han to the Tang Dynasty as well as portraits of the first emperor of Song or whoever he was, it must be only too easy for them to fake a printed genealogical table

The only way to deal with people who think the truth a joke, a joke the truth, or a joke a joke, is not to say anything.

So I stopped saying anything.

If that were to happen now, though, I would probably say, "Ah, yes. . . . Isn't it fine today? . . . What is the name of that village over there?" For I really seem much smoother now — much better.

This changing of my nationality by the boatman, as I see it now, was different from Mr X's honourable opinion. It was owing entirely to my moustache, which has caused me constant trouble ever since

Though a nation may perish, there will always be plenty of champions of the national characteristics. And as long as there are plenty of such champions, the nation need not be considered to have perished. Such people preserve the national characteristics, of which my moustache is one. I don't understand the logic of this, but it certainly was the case

"Why try to look like a Japanese — so short, and with a moustache like that . . . ?" This was the conclusion of a speech in a most lofty vein delivered by a patriot and champion of national characteristics

Unfortunately I was then still young and inexperienced, so I argued with him hotly. In the first place, I had always been short. I had not compressed myself deliberately with some foreign devil's machine to claim a false distinction. In the second place, it was true that my moustache was like those of many Japanese; but though I had made no study of the history of changing styles in the Japanese moustache, I had seen old portraits in which their moustaches stuck not up but out and down, rather like our own national characteristic. After the Meiji Reformation of 1868, their moustaches began to stick up, probably as a result of German influence. Didn't Kaiser Wilhelm's moustache point up to the corner of his eyes and run parallel to his nose? Later, of course, he burned one side while smoking, so he had to cut both ends short. But he didn't catch fire till *after* the Meiji Reformation in Japan. . . .

This argument took about two minutes, but still failed to appease the patriot; for a German is a foreign devil too, and in any case I was too short. And then there are so many patriots, all of whom think alike, that I had to explain myself time and again — all to no purpose, until

after one, two, ten or a dozen explanations, I felt sick and tired of the whole business. In any case, the pomade with which a moustache should be groomed was hard to get in China; so I let it take its own course.

After I let it take its own course, the two tips of my moustache began to gravitate downwards, at a right angle to the ground. Then the champions of national characteristics had nothing more to say: maybe China was already saved.

But at this point the reformers began to object, as was only natural. So I parted it once, twice . . . many times, until I felt sick and tired of the whole business.

Four or five years ago, or possibly seven or eight, I was sitting alone in my hostel lamenting my moustache's unhappy fate and pondering the reasons for its being slandered when I suddenly saw the light — the root of the trouble lay with the two tips! Then I took out the mirror and scissors, and cut it straight, so that now it points neither up nor down, but is absolutely straight.

"Ah, so that's how you wear your moustache now?" people used to ask at first.

"Yes, like this."

Then they would say no more. I don't know whether this was because in the absence of two tips they had nothing on which to base an argument, or because now that my moustache was like this I was no longer responsible for China's fate. At all events, I have had no trouble since then. The one nuisance is having to clip it from time to time.

October 30, 1924

1925

SUDDEN NOTIONS (I)

I do not know who wrote the *Medical Canon*.* Whoever he was, he must have seen human muscles, but he seems to have merely taken a casual look after the skin was removed, instead of making a careful examination. So he made a thorough mess of things, and claimed that all muscles started from the fingers and toes. In the Song Dynasty *Manual for Post-Mortem Examination*, it is even stated that the number of bones varies in men and women. So the old coroners talked a lot of nonsense too. Yet even today the *Medical Canon* is treasured by physicians, and the *Manual for Post-Mortem Examination* is taken as a guide in post-mortems. This is surely the first wonder of the world.

I do not know who was the first man in China to suffer from toothache. The ancients, we are told, were very hale and hearty. In the time of Yao and Shun** they probably did not have toothache, and we can assume that it started two thousand years ago. When I was young and one of my teeth ached, I tried all sorts of traditional remedies, of which only asarum was at all efficacious. Yet even that merely deadened the pain for a while, not really curing it. As for any "extracting powder" for pulling out teeth, this is just a myth and no such thing exists. It was only after Western dentists came that this problem was really solved; but when Chi-

* A famous old book attributed to the legendary Yellow Emperor. The real author is unknown

** Two ancient rulers of legendary fame

nese dentists took over, they just learned to make fillings and neglected to remove all that was decayed, so gradually the trouble came back again. We have had toothache for two thousand years, but have muddled along without thinking of a good remedy and when others discovered one, we would not learn it properly. This is surely the second wonder of the world.

Our modern sage Kang Youwei is all for "kowtowing." "What else are our knees for?" he asks. It is true that, when we walk, it is difficult to see clearly how the legs move, but we would expect a sage to notice the way the knees bend when we sit down. Since the neck is the narrowest part of the body, the ancients cut men's heads off at the neck. Since the buttocks are the most fleshy part, they beat men across the buttocks. This shows that the ancients were more observant than Sage Kang, so we need not wonder if later generations cling to tradition. Thus in outlying counties offenders are still beaten with the bamboo, and last year when there was martial law in Beijing, we saw a revival of decapitation. Though this is a way of preserving the national culture, it is also surely the third wonder of the world!

January 15, 1925

MORE THOUGHTS ON THE COLLAPSE OF LEIFENG PAGODA

From Mr Chongxuan's letter in the February number of the *Beijing News* supplement we know that, while on board a steamship, he overheard two passengers discussing Leifeng Pagoda in Hangzhou, and saying that it had collapsed because the country folk believed that if they took a brick from the pagoda home all would go well with them, and ill fortune would turn to good. So this one dug out a brick, that one dug out a brick, until finally the pagoda toppled down. And one of the passengers bewailed the fact that now one of the ten sights of the West Lake is missing.

This news rather pleased me again. I know, of course, that no gentleman laughs at the misfortunes of others. But since I am not a gentleman to begin with, it is no use my trying to pose as one.

Many of us in China — here I want to make it quite clear that I do not include all our four hundred million compatriots — have a sort of “ten-sight disease” or at least an “eight-sight disease,” which reached epidemic proportions in the Qing Dynasty, I should say. Look through any county annals, and you will find the district has ten sights, if not eight, such as “Moonlight on a Distant Village,” “Quiet Monastery and Clear Bell,” “Ancient Pool and Crystal Water.” And this “十” shaped germ* seems to have got into the blood and spread

* The Chinese character for ten is “十”

throughout the body, no less virulent than the “1” shaped germs* which herald a country’s decline. There are ten sorts of sweetmeats, ten different dishes, ten movements in music, ten courts for the king of hell, ten cures in medicine, ten guesses for the drinking game,** even announcements of guilty deeds or crimes usually list ten items, as if no one would stop at nine. Now one of the ten sights of the West Lake is missing. “All rulers have nine rules of government.”*** There have been nine rules since ancient times, but there have seldom been nine sights, so this should cause the sufferers from this disease a salutary pang, and at least make them feel times have changed, since one-tenth of their cherished malady has suddenly disappeared.

But I still feel sad at heart.

The fact is, this type of inevitable destruction serves no purpose. To delight in it is pointless self-deception. The cultured *élite*, the devout and the traditionalists with their glib tongues will try by hook or by crook to make up the ten sights again, and will not rest content till they have done so.

True, without destruction nothing new can be built; but there may not be anything new built after destruction. Men like Rousseau, Stirner, Nietzsche, Tolstoy or Ibsen are, in Brandes’ words, “destroyers of old tracks.” Actually they not only destroy but blaze a trail and lead a charge, sweeping aside all the old tracks, whether whole rails or fragments, that got in men’s way, but making no attempt to pick up any scrap-iron or ancient bricks to

* Someone who compiled statistics of the number of exclamation marks in the poetry of that time said this was a sign of despair, and showed the country was going to the dogs.

** The drinking game is played by two people. Each holds up a certain number of fingers and calls out what he thinks will be the sum of his fingers and his opponent’s. The loser drinks.

*** A quotation from the *Doctrine of the Mean*, one of the Confucian classics.

smuggle home in order to sell them later to second-hand dealers. There are very few men like this in China, and even when they appear they are likely to be spat at by everyone. Confucius was truly great, for though he lived at a time when witchcraft was rampant, he refused to follow the fashion and speak of ghosts and spirits. The pity is he was a little too clever. "Sacrifice to your ancestors as if they were present," he said. "Sacrifice to the gods as if the gods were present." He simply used the device he had employed in editing the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, adding the words "as if" in a slightly caustic way, so that readers cannot immediately make out his meaning, and fail to see his secret opposition. He would swear in Zi Lu's presence,* but would not declare war on the supernatural. For once war is declared that is the end of peace. One may be accused of libel — be it only libelling ghosts — and fair-minded men like Mr. T. Y., author of the article "Criterion" in the January number of the *Morning News* supplement, are bound to take you to task on behalf of the supernatural beings. "Are you out for fame? You don't win fame through libel. Are you out for profit? No profit comes of libel. Are you trying to seduce a woman? You can't have your ugly face printed on your essay. So why should you do such a thing?"

Now Confucius was an extremely shrewd old gentleman. Apart from this question of having his portrait printed, it seems he possessed considerable subtlety and knew it did not pay to wreck things openly. Thus he simply refrained from discussion, and would on no account attack anything. And so, quite rightly, he became the sage of China, for his way is great and all-embracing.

* Allusion to an incident recorded in the *Analects*. When Nan Zi, the wanton wife of Duke Ling of Wei, invited Confucius to visit her, Zi Lu was displeased. But Confucius swore by Heaven that he was doing right, for according to etiquette a scholar might pay his respects to the wife of his ruler.

But for this, there might be someone else — not named Confucius — worshipped in the temples today.

All the world is a stage — tragedy shows how what is worthwhile in life is shattered, comedy shows how what is worthless is torn to pieces, and satire is a simplified form of comedy. Yet passion and humour alike are foes of this ten-sight disease, for both of them are destructive although they destroy different things. As long as China suffers from this disease, we shall have no madmen like Rousseau, and not a single great dramatist or satiric poet either. All China will have will be characters in a comedy, or in something which is neither comedy nor tragedy, a life spent among the ten sights which are modelled each on the other, in which everyone suffers from the ten-sight disease.

But since life completely at a standstill is very rare in this world, soon the wreckers arrive. Instead of being our own conscious wreckers they may be savage bandits or “foreign” barbarians. The Xianyun* were among the first to overrun China, then came the Five Tribes,** then the Mongols. Though our compatriot Zhang Xianzhong*** cut people down like grass, at the first arrow the Manchu soldiers let fly he fled into a wood and died. It has been said that but for the fresh blood brought by these barbarian invasions there is no knowing how corrupt we should have become! Of course this is a most malicious joke, yet one glance at Chinese history is enough to make you break into a sweat. When a foreign invader appears,

* Precursors of the Huns, who overran north China during the Western Zhou Dynasty, about three thousand years ago.

** Between 304 and 439, nomadic tribes from western and northern China set up sixteen kingdoms in succession in north China. This period of confusion was known as the time of the Five Tribes.

*** Leader of a peasant revolt at the end of the Ming Dynasty. In 1644 he entered Sichuan, took Chengdu and set up a kingdom. He was maligned by former historians, and Lu Xun was influenced by those early accounts of his cruelty.

there is a brief commotion. Then he is asked to be the ruler, and the old traditions are patched up under his sword. When a Chinese rebel appears, there is a brief commotion. Then he is asked to be the ruler, or a different ruler is found, and the old traditions are patched up amid the ruins. And if we look at the county annals, we find that after each war a new crop of virtuous women martyrs appears. I expect after this recent fighting a great show will be made of praising women martyrs again. But what has become of all the men?

Such vandalism simply leaves ruins behind: it has nothing to do with construction.

But does that mean that there is no destruction in time of peace, when we patch up our old traditions untroubled by invaders and bandits? No, indeed, for then slaves are ceaselessly undermining society.

The theft of bricks from Leifeng Pagoda is merely a recent, minor example of this. Most of the Buddhist carvings at Longmen are mutilated. Libraries have to watch out lest illustrations get torn out of their books. And as for public property or things that belong to no one, even if they are hard to carry off they are seldom left intact. But the cause of this destruction is not the reformer's urge to sweep a place clean, nor the bandit's lust for loot or sheer destruction. It is for the sake of some trifling personal gain that these people secretly spoil a large, complete entity. Since such wreckers are legion, the damage of course is enormous; but when anything collapses, it is hard to know who exactly it was that destroyed it. Take the collapse of Leifeng Pagoda — all we know is that it was owing to the superstition of the country people. The pagoda which was common property has gone, but the country people are left with only a brick apiece, and these bricks will later be hoarded by other selfish people until they all turn to dust. If times are prosperous, and the ten-sight disease is rife, I suppose a new Leifeng Pagoda may be built. But its

fate is easy to guess if the country folk remain the same and the old ways remain unchanged.

Such slavish destruction simply leaves ruins behind; it has nothing to do with construction.

This is not just a question of the country folk and Leifeng Pagoda. Every day there are countless slaves secretly undermining the foundations of the Chinese Republic.

What is distressing is not the ruins, but the fact that the old traditions are being patched up over the ruins. We want wreckers who will bring about reforms, for their hearts are lit up by an ideal. We must learn to distinguish between them and the bandits or slaves, and must beware lest we slip into one of the last two categories. The difference is not difficult to detect: all we have to do is watch others and test ourselves. Anyone who in thought or deed shows signs of taking things for himself is a bandit, while anyone who shows signs of seizing small advantages is a slave, however splendid and handsome the banner he carries.

February 6, 1925

THOUGHTS BEFORE THE MIRROR

Rummaging in my trunk I happened to come across a few old bronze mirrors which I must have bought when I first came to Beijing in the early years of the Republic "As times change, so men alter" They had slipped my mind completely, like something seen in an earlier existence.

One of the mirrors is only about two inches across. Heavy and thick, it has grapes and frisking squirrels engraved all over its back, and its rim is encircled by small flying birds. Curio-dealers call these "sea-horse and grape mirrors" Actually, there is no sea-horse on my mirror, so it does not live up to its name. I remember seeing another mirror with horses, but since it was very expensive I did not buy it. All these date from the Han Dynasty; there are also later imitations made from moulds of these, but the details are much rougher and coarser. When Emperor Wu Di of the Han Dynasty opened up communications with Ferghana and Parthia to obtain the best horses and grapes, it was no doubt considered a most important event; hence these designs were used for various utensils. In the old days they often prefixed the word "sea" to the names of objects from abroad, as in "sea-pomegranate" or "sea-cherry." Thus "sea" was the equivalent of our modern "foreign," and translated into present-day Chinese a sea-horse means a foreign horse. The boss of the mirror is a toad, because a mirror resembles a full moon, and in the moon there is a toad. This has nothing to do with those Han Dynasty events.

Then it struck me how broad-minded the men of the Han Dynasty were to use these new animals and plants in their designs without the slightest scruple. The men of the Tang Dynasty were stout fellows too. For example, the stone animals in front of Han tombs are usually sheep, tigers or mythical beasts, while the sepulchre of Emperor Tai Zong¹ in Changan has a horse pierced with an arrow carved on it in relief, as well as an ostrich — something quite unheard of before. But who today would dare use a foreign flower or a foreign bird in an ordinary painting, let alone on a tombstone? Or who would dare use characters in ordinary handwriting on his personal seal? Many cultured gentlemen are even afraid to reckon the date from the first year of the Republic, but use the old method of computation instead. I don't know whether we never produce fearless artists, or whether we have but such men were so persecuted that they faded away and died.

Song Dynasty literature and art already smacked strongly of something very like our present national characteristics. Then the Khitans, the Golden Tartars and the Mongols came in one after the other — a fact well worth pondering. Admittedly there was trouble at the borders in Han and Tang times too, but the people were much more manful, and had enough confidence in themselves not to be afraid of being enslaved by foreigners, or perhaps the possibility never occurred to them. So when they used anything from abroad they took it captive, as it were, and did what they pleased with it without any misgivings. When the state grew weak and decadent, though, people became unduly sensitive: if they came across anything foreign they assumed it had come to capture *them*, and would resist in panic, or shrink back and run, trembling all over with terror, and racking their brains for some self-justification. Thus national

* (627-649).

characteristics became the treasure of those weakly kings and slaves.

Healthy men seldom stop to wonder where their food comes from, but accept anything that is eatable. Only sickly weaklings keep worrying because it may be indigestible or harmful, and observe a great many restrictions and taboos for which, moreover, after much weighing of pros and cons, they provide copious inconclusive reasons. It is all right to eat, but really safer not to, this food may do you good, but still you had better not risk it — and so on *ad nauseam*. But such people always grow weaker every day, for they pass all their time in fear and trembling, and have lost the will to live.

I do not know how the Southern Song Dynasty compares with the present age, but although they had openly acknowledged a foreign foe as their master, the chief feature within the country was involved ceremonial and quibbling over trifles, just as those who are down on their luck are more superstitious than anyone else and lose all tolerance and boldness. And this went on after that without much change. In the Palace Museum I once saw a seal on an old painting with Roman lettering on it. But this was the seal of that “sagacious and benign emperor,”* the conqueror of China; so it was all right for him. But no Chinese slave would dare do that. Even today, what artist would dare to use a seal with foreign writing?

During Shun Zhi's reign** in the Qing Dynasty the official calendar carried the words. “Based on the new Western method of reckoning.” But it was a Chinese, Yang Guangxian, who shed tears as he denounced the foreigner Schall von Bell.*** Not till the beginning of

* Kang Xi (1662-1722)

** (1644-61).

*** (1591-1666), a German Jesuit who came to China in 1622, worked on the calendar, and was made head of the observatory in 1644.

Kang Xi's reign did he win his point, but when he was appointed chief astronomer he declined on the grounds that he "could argue but could not compute" When his resignation was refused, he shed tears again as he wrote his plea "Better for China to have a faulty calendar rather than have these Westerners here." But he even reckoned the intercalary months wrongly. He probably believed that Westerners had a monopoly of calendar science, and Chinese could not and should not learn it from them. Condemned to death, but not executed, he died on his way home Schall von Bell came to China at the end of the Ming Dynasty, but his method was not adopted at the time.

Later Ruan Yuan* commented on this:

In the Ming Dynasty, the government saw that the calendar was inaccurate and set up a bureau to revise it, but though they realized that the new method was good, they never adopted it. When our sacred dynasty was established we used this new method to compile a calendar which was issued to the empire. It seems as if the efforts expended by the Mings for more than ten years to discuss this matter and translate this material were all for the use of our court. This is most interesting . . . In our state, one sagacious emperor succeeds another, and in the employment of men and the execution of affairs we seek solely what is right and show no prejudice. This suffices to show our sovereign's divine magnanimity. (*The Record of Astronomers*)

Most of the ancient mirrors we have today come from tombs, and were once buried with the dead. But I have one thin, large mirror made for daily use which was

* (1764-1849), a famous scholar who wrote eight volumes about calendar science from ancient times down to his own day, including accounts of such scientists as Matteo Ricci and Schall von Bell.

copied from a Han design, probably in the Tang Dynasty. This seems likely because, in the first place, the boss of the mirror is partly worn away, in the second place, the holes on the surface caused by faulty casting have all been mended with copper. This mirror, which must once have reflected the painted face and eyebrows of some Tang lady in her chamber, but is now imprisoned in my trunk, may well be lamenting the passing of the good old days

But bronze mirrors went on being used along with glass ones till as late as the reign of Dao Guang* or Xian Feng,** indeed, they may still be in use in small villages or remote parts of the country. Where I come from, they have been entirely ousted by glass mirrors, except for certain wedding and funeral ceremonies. And yet traces of them can still be found. You may come across an old man in the street shouldering something like a long bench, to which are fastened two stones, one the colour of a pig's liver, the other green. You can hear his cry. "Any mirrors to shine? Any scissors to grind?"

I have never seen a good Song mirror. Nine out of ten of them have no decorative figures, nothing but the name of the shop and such pedantic inscriptions as "One should dress neatly." Men really "grow more degenerate every day"! But if we want to progress and not regress, we must have new ideas of our own all the time, or at least new ideas from outside. With all these scruples, misgivings and petty rules, this horror of offending our ancestors, this dread of behaving like barbarians, this perpetual sense of treading upon thin ice, this constant fear and trembling, how can we ever do anything worthwhile? Hence "Times are not what they were" precisely because too many gentlemen have muttered, "Times are not what they were." That is still the case today. Unless

* (1821-50)

** (1851-61).

we become more broad-minded and boldly and fearlessly absorb all we can of the new culture, we shall soon reach a stage when men like Yang Guangxian will be pleading with Western masters to spare China's spiritual culture

I have never met anyone who was against glass mirrors, though All I know is that during the reign of Xian Feng Mr Wang Yuezhen attacked glass mirrors in his book *Huzhou Products*. After a comparative study, he reached the conclusion that bronze mirrors were superior. Most puzzling of all, he stated that glass mirrors give a more distorted reflection than those made of bronze. Can the glass mirrors of his day really have been as bad as that, or was the old gentleman viewing them from the standpoint of national characteristics? Never having seen an old glass mirror, I have never been able to clear up this point

February 9, 1925

SUDDEN NOTIONS (4)

I used to believe the statements that the twenty-four dynastic histories were simply "records of mutual slaughter" or "family histories of rulers." Later, when I read them for myself, I realized this was a fallacy.

All these histories portray the soul of China and indicate what the country's future will be, but the truth is buried so deep in flowery phrases and nonsense it is very hard to grasp it, just as, when the moon shines through thick foliage on to moss, only chequered shadows can be seen. If we read unofficial records and anecdotes, though, we can understand more easily, for here at least the writers did not have to put on the airs of official historians.

The Qin and Han dynasties are too far from us and too different to be worth discussing. Few records were written in the Yuan Dynasty. But most of the annals of the Tang, Song and Ming dynasties have come down to us. And if we compare the events recorded during the Five Dynasties period or the Southern Song Dynasty and the end of the Ming Dynasty with modern conditions, it is amazing how alike they are. It seems as if China alone is untouched by the passage of time. The Chinese Republic today is still the China of those earlier ages.

If we compare our era with the end of the Ming Dynasty, our China is not so corrupt, disrupted, cruel or despotic — we have not yet reached the limit.

But neither did the corruption and disruption of the last years of the Ming Dynasty reach the limit, for Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong rebelled. And neither did

their cruelty and despotism reach the limit, for the Manchu troops entered China

Can it be that "national character" is so difficult to change? If so, we can more or less guess what our fate will be. As is so often said, "It will be the same old story."

Some people are really clever. They never argue with the ancients, or query ancient rules. Whatever the ancients have done, we modern men can do. And to defend the ancients is to defend ourselves. Besides, as the "glorious descendants of a divine race," how dare we not follow in our forbears' footsteps?

Luckily no one can say for certain that the national character will never change. And though this uncertainty means that we face the threat of annihilation — something we have never experienced — we can also hope for a national revival, which is equally unprecedented. This may be of some comfort to reformers.

But even this slight comfort may be cancelled by the pens of those who boast of the ancient culture, drowned by the words of those who slander the modern culture, or wiped out by the deeds of those who pose as exponents of the modern culture. For "it will be the same old story."

Actually, all these men belong to one type. They are all clever people, who know that even if China collapses they will not suffer, for they can always adapt themselves to circumstances. If anybody doubts this, let him read the essays in praise of the Manchus' military prowess written in the Qing Dynasty by Chinese, and filled with such terms as "our great forces" and "our army." Who could imagine that this was the army that had conquered us? One would be led to suppose that the Chinese had marched to wipe out some corrupt barbarians.

But since such men always come out on top, presumably they will never die out. In China, they are the best

fitted to survive; and, so long as they survive, China will never cease having repetitions of her former fate.

“Vast territory, abundant resources, and a great population” — with such excellent material, are we able only to go round and round in circles?

February 16, 1925

ON SELF-SACRIFICE

(Chapter XIII of *The Devil's Incantations*)

"*Aiya*, excuse me! Excuse me! So we are comrades after all. At first I took you for a beggar, and was wondering, 'Why doesn't a fine fellow like that, neither old nor disabled, go to work or study?' That's how I came to 'think ill of a worthy man.' Please don't be offended. The fact is, we are too frank to hide anything. Ha ha! Still, comrade, you do seem a little too. . . .

"Oh! So you have sacrificed everything? Admirable! Admirable! I have the greatest admiration for those who sacrifice everything for their fellow-countrymen or for the nation. Just what I have always wanted to do myself! Don't be misled by my smart appearance. I have to dress like this to go round doing propaganda work. People are still too snobbish, and if I dressed like you in only a pair of ragged trousers, who would listen to me? So I have to dress smartly, even if it causes gossip. I have nothing to feel ashamed of 'Yu went naked to the land of the naked'* This has to be done to reform society, though little do others know what it costs me. But, friend, how is it you are looking so low?

"Oh! So you haven't eaten for nine days?! How sublime! I am overwhelmed with admiration. I am sure, though you may not last much longer, your name will live on in history. I congratulate you! With all the wicked talk there is nowadays about Westernization, men

* Yu was a famous legendary ruler. This saying is like "Do in Rome as the Romans do"

are fixing their eyes on material things, and we have all too few worthy characters like you, brother. Why, even university professors are asking for money for their teaching. All they care about is material gain: they have been poisoned by it. The fine example you are setting by your actions, brother, is bound to have a most salutary effect upon public morality. Just think, isn't there a general clamour still for universal education? If this is introduced, think of the number of teachers we shall need! And if they all insist on eating, like these professors, where is so much food to come from in these troubled times? Nobility of character such as yours is quite unparalleled in this wicked world, like 'the solitary rock in midstream'. Admirable! Admirable! Have you had any education? If you have, I shall invite you to be the dean of a college I am just going to start. Actually, if you have studied the Four Books* that is ample; with such qualities as yours you will set an excellent example to the students.

"You can't? You aren't strong enough? What a pity! What a pity! It shows that a man who sacrifices himself for society should also look after his health. What a pity you have neglected your health like this! You must not imagine my plumpness comes of easy living: the fact is it is all the result of hygiene, especially mental hygiene. 'A gentleman is concerned about truth, not about poverty'. But you have sacrificed everything, comrade; this is very laudable too. What a pity you still have a pair of trousers left. This may leave a black mark against your name in history.

"Oh, yes, I understand. I don't need you to tell me. Of course, you don't even want this pair of trousers. You like to do things thoroughly. That is only natural. But you haven't yet had an opportunity to give them up. I

* Four Confucian classics: the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Analects* and *Mencius*.

have always believed in sacrificing everything, and I like to help others to do good. Besides, we are comrades. It's my duty to think of some satisfactory way out for you, because the most important thing in a man's life is its ending. One false step, and you may ruin everything!

"This is most opportune. A slave girl in my house needs a pair of trousers. . . . Don't look at me like that, friend. I am most strongly opposed to traffic in human flesh, it is so inhuman. But this girl was left with me during a famine. If I hadn't taken her, her parents would have sold her to a brothel. Just think how sad that would have been! So I keep her solely out of kindness. Besides, I didn't really buy her; I simply gave her parents a few dollars, and they left their daughter with me, that's all. I meant to treat her as a daughter, no, as a sister, as one of my own flesh and blood! Unfortunately my wife is old-fashioned, and she wouldn't hear of it. You know how difficult it is when an old-fashioned woman starts being stubborn. So now I am trying to think of some other way out. . . .

"But that girl has been without trousers for many days now. She is a refugee's daughter; I'm sure you would like to help. We are both friends of the poor. Besides, once you have done this, it will be the crowning touch to a noble life. I guarantee you an imposing bronze statue which will tower to the clouds. Ah, all the poor will bow in respect before it. . . .

"That's right, I knew you would agree, I don't need you to tell me. Don't take them off here, though. I can't take them away. Dressed as I am, if I were to carry a pair of ragged trousers, people would raise their eyebrows, and it might injure our campaign for self-sacrifice. The men of today are still too stupid — just think, the teachers even want to eat — how can they appreciate the purity of our motives? They are bound to misunderstand. And if that happens, society will become

more selfish, and you will not only fail to do good but may do harm, my friend

“Can you manage to walk a few steps? No? That’s rather awkward — well, can you crawl? Good! Then crawl. Crawl there while you are still able to, and be sure you don’t fail at the last moment. But mind you crawl on your toes, not using your knees too much, otherwise the trousers will be torn on the stones and gravel, and become more ragged; then the poor refugee’s daughter will not gain very much, and all your efforts will be wasted. It would not be good to take them off now; in the first place, it would look bad; in the second, I’m afraid the police would intervene. So you’d better crawl *in* the trousers. We are not strangers, friend, so why should I deceive you? My house is not far from here. Go east, turn north, then go south; and at the north end of the road you will see a red-lacquered gate and two large sophora trees — that is the place. Take the trousers off as soon as you get there, and tell the gateman, ‘Your master told me to deliver these to your mistress.’ Say that as soon as you see the gateman, otherwise he may take you for a beggar and beat you. Ah, there have been so many beggars recently, they won’t work or study, but just go round begging. So my gateman gives them a good beating to teach them a lesson; for in this way they learn that beggars get beaten, and they had better go to work or study . . .

“Are you going now? Good, good! But on no account forget to crawl away as soon as you have finished your errand, and don’t stay on my premises. You haven’t eaten anything for nine days, and if something were to happen, it would cause me a lot of trouble, and I should lose a great deal of the precious time I devote to the public welfare. I am sure, since we are not strangers, you wouldn’t want to cause your own comrade a lot of trouble. I just mention this in passing.

“Go along, then! Good, you may go. Of course, I could have called a rickshaw to take you there, but I know you do not approve of men taking the place of cattle to pull people along. that is so inhuman! I am off now You must be moving Don't look so limp and listless Crawl, friend! Hurry up, comrade, crawl east! . . .”

FIGHTERS AND FLIES *

Schopenhauer has said that, in estimating men's greatness, the laws governing spiritual stature and physical size are the reverse of each other. For the further they are from us, the smaller men's bodies and the greater their spirit appear.

Because a man seems less of a hero at close quarters, where his blemishes and wounds stand out clearly, he appears like one of us, not a god, a supernatural being or a creature of a strange new species. He is simply a man. But this precisely is where his greatness lies.

When a fighter has fallen in battle, the first thing flies notice is his blemishes and wounds. They suck them, humming, very pleased to think that they are greater heroes than the fallen fighter. And since the fighter is dead and does not drive them away, the flies buzz even more loudly, and imagine they are making immortal music, since they are so much more whole and perfect than he is.

True, no one pays any attention to the blemishes and wounds of flies.

Yet the fighter for all his blemishes is a fighter, while the most whole and perfect flies are only flies.

Buzz off, flies! You may have wings and you may be able to hum, but you will never surpass a fighter, you insects!

March 21, 1925

* The fighters refer to Dr Sun Yat-sen and the martyrs of the 1911 Revolution, the flies to the hirelings of the reactionaries.

THREE SUMMER PESTS

Summer is coming We shall have three pests fleas, mosquitoes and flies

If someone were to ask which of the three I prefer, and I must name one of them instead of handing in a blank sheet as in the case of "Required Reading for the Young,"* then my answer would be fleas

Though fleas are unpleasant when they suck your blood, the way they bite you without a word is very straightforward and frank. Mosquitoes are different Of course, their method of piercing the skin may be considered fairly thoroughgoing; but before biting they insist on making a long harangue, which is irritating. If they are carrying on about the reasons which make it right for them to feed on human blood, that is even more irritating I am glad I do not know their language

When a sparrow or deer falls into men's hands, it always tries to escape Actually, in the hills and woods there are eagles and hawks, as well as tigers and wolves, so small creatures are not necessarily safer there than in human hands. Why is it, then, that they do not escape to us, but want to escape to the eagles, hawks, tigers and wolves? It may be because the latter treat them just as the fleas treat us When they are hungry, they bite without trying to justify themselves or indulging in any

* In January 1925, the *Beijing News* supplement asked Lu Xun to recommend ten books which all students should read Instead of doing so, Lu Xun wrote an essay attacking intellectuals like Hu Shi, who spread reactionary doctrines on the pretext of urging young people to study the classics

tricks And those eaten do not have to admit first that they deserve to be eaten, that they are happy to be eaten, and that in this faith they will live and die Since mankind is much addicted to this sort of thing, small creatures choose the lesser evil and run away from men as fast as they can, thus showing their great wisdom.

When flies finally alight after much preliminary buzzing and fuss, all they do is to lick off a little sweat or grease, if they find sores or boils, of course they may do better, and on anything good, beautiful and clean it is their rule to leave some filth. However, since they simply lick a little grease or sweat, or add a little filth, thick-skinned people who feel no sharp pain let them go The Chinese do not realize yet that flies can spread germs; hence the movement to wipe them out will probably not do too well, they will live to a ripe old age, and multiply even more.

But apparently after leaving filth on things that are good, beautiful and clean, they do not gloat over what they have done and turn to laugh at the filth of what they have defiled. At least they have that much decency.

Gentlemen past and present have abused men by calling them beasts, yet actually even insects are in many respects worthy models for human beings.

April 4, 1925

SUDDEN NOTIONS (5)

I was born a little too early, for by the time Kang Youwei and the others presented their memorial to the throne, I was already in my teens. After the reformation, the elders in my clan informed me that it was because Kang Youwei wanted to usurp the throne that he was called Youwei. *You* (possess) meant he wanted "to possess the empire," and *wei* (to be) meant he wanted "to be emperor." If this was not treason, what was? I thought. True, this is outrageous!

My elders' instructions had such a strong effect on me that I observed all the rules of a scholar's family. With bent head and bated breath, I dared do nothing hasty. I kept my eyes on the ground, for to look at heaven would have been presumptuous. My face showed no expression, for to laugh or chat would have been frivolous. Naturally I thought this right, yet sometimes I felt rebellious at heart. To feel rebellious at heart was not considered very wrong in those days, when apparently thought control was not so rigid as now.

Even this inner rebelliousness was owing to the grown-ups' bad influence, though, for they talked and laughed freely themselves, but forbade us children to do the same. When the common people saw how splendid the First Emperor of Qin looked, that trouble-maker Xiang Yu said, "Why don't I take over from him?" And that good-for-nothing Liu Bang said, "That's what a proper man should be like!" I belonged to the category of good-for-nothings. Because I envied their freedom to talk and

laugh, I wanted to be a grown-up as soon as I could — though there were other reasons too

To me, "That's what a proper man should be like" meant simply that one should not act more dead than alive. I did not have great ambitions.

Now I am glad to say I am grown-up. I do not think anybody can refute this, whatever strange "logic" he may use.

So I gave up looking more dead than alive, and started chatting and laughing with an easy mind, but to my surprise I was immediately knocked on the head by respectable people again, who professed themselves "disappointed" in me. I knew, of course, that whereas formerly the world had belonged to the old, it now belonged to the young; but it had never occurred to me that the new rulers would also forbid talking and laughing. So I should have to go on looking more dead than alive to the end of my days. How unpleasant!

Then I regretted that I was born too late. Why was I not born twenty years earlier, when grown-ups were allowed to laugh and chat? Surely I was born at an unlucky time, in an accursed age and in an accursed place.

John Stuart Mill said, "Tyranny makes men cynical." But here all is peace; there is not even cynicism. I suppose it is the tyranny of despots that makes men cynical, while the tyranny of fools makes them more dead than alive. We are all perishing slowly, yet we think ourselves effective defenders of the truth, who are only now beginning to live like decent human beings.

If there are still men in the world who really want to live on, they must first dare to speak, laugh, cry, rage at, revile, fight, and defeat this accursed age in this accursed place!

April 14, 1925

SUDDEN NOTIONS (6)

Foreign archaeologists* are arriving one after another.

For a long time, too, Chinese scholars have been shouting, "Preserve our ancient culture! Preserve our ancient culture!"

But a people unable to reform will not be able to preserve its old culture either

That is why foreign archaeologists are arriving one after another.

The Great Wall has long ceased to serve any purpose, and it seems as if the Stream on Which Nothing Floats** is only a myth. The people of this great old nation are taking refuge in fossilized traditions, without any wish to change, but though they have grown so decadent that they have no energy left, they are still slaughtering each other. So it is only too easy for new forces from outside to enter. This is truly a case of "It is not only so today, but has been so since ancient times." As for these foreigners, of course their history is not as ancient as ours.

But our ancient heritage is difficult to preserve, for our land is already in danger and insecure. When the

* Aurel Stein in 1901 stole valuable inscriptions from Khotan, while in 1907 and 1914 he removed many ancient relics from Dunhuang. In 1908, P. Pelliot also robbed Dunhuang. In 1924, the American L. Warner stole 26 frescoes from Dunhuang. In February 1925, with the connivance of the United States Government, he organized an expedition for the purpose of further looting, but opposition from the people of China thwarted his plans.

** A legendary stream which could not be crossed, for not even a feather could float on it.

land is given to others, however many "national treasures" we have, there will be no place to display them

Yet the preservers of the ancient culture are still cursing any reform, and doing their best to perpetuate the old: they make a few photostats of Song Dynasty editions, costing up to several hundred dollars each. Nirvana! Nirvana! Buddha came to China in the Han Dynasty — how ancient and refined! Buying old books, bronzes and stone inscriptions is the mark of a patriotic gentleman and antiquarian, while one who does a little research or prints a catalogue rises to be a scholar or noble character. Indeed, it is from the distinguished sleeves of these noble characters that some light breeze wafts the curios which foreigners buy. If not from these characters themselves, then from their descendants. Could the Lu family of Gui'an keep its Song editions, or the Chen family in Weixian its ten bronze bells?*

So now the foreign archaeologists are arriving one after another

It is all right for them to devote their surplus energy to studying the past, but it is a fearful thing when they come to help us preserve our past. Some foreigners are very eager that China should remain one great antique for them to enjoy for ever. Though this is disgusting, it is not to be wondered at, for after all they are foreigners. But in China there are people who, not content to form part of a great antique themselves for those foreigners to enjoy, are dragging our young folk and children with them. Have such men no heart at all?

China has given up studying the Confucian classics, but the missionary schools are engaging old Confucians to teach the Four Books. Kowtowing has been abolished in the Republic, but the Jewish schools are engaging old

* The son of the Lu family sold these Song editions to a Japanese library in 1907. The bronze bells were sold to a Japanese in 1917

die-hards as teachers and making the students kowtow to them on their birthdays. The Chinese newspapers published by foreigners have been the keenest opponents of all minor reforms since the May 4th Movement. And the Chinese sub-editors under the foreign editor-in-chief are for upholding Confucian morality and preserving the national characteristics!

But, one thing is clear: without reform it will be hard to exist, to say nothing of preserving the ancient culture. Our position today is the best proof of this, a more effective argument than the ten-thousand-word memoranda of those antiquarians.

Our chief aims at present are: first, to exist; secondly, to find food and clothing; and thirdly, to advance. Any obstacle to these aims must be trampled down, whether it is ancient or modern, human or supernatural, ancient canon, rare text, sacred oracle, precious idol, traditional recipe or secret nostrum.

I take it the preservers of ancient culture have read the classic in which it says, "Lin Hui abandoned jade worth a thousand gold pieces, but ran away carrying the child."^{*} This can hardly be considered the act of a beast. But what, pray, are those who abandon the child to carry off the jade?

April 18, 1925

* A story from *Zhuang Zi*.

IDLE THOUGHTS AT THE END OF SPRING

This is the end of spring in Beijing and — perhaps I am too impatient — already I feel that summer is in the air and have suddenly remembered the slender-waisted wasps of my home. It must have been in midsummer that bluebottles swarmed on the ropes of our awning, and iron-black wasps flew to and fro among the mulberry trees or by the cobwebs at the corners of the wall, from time to time carrying off a small green caterpillar or a spider. At first the caterpillar or spider would resist, but in the end it was always overcome and borne up into the air, as if by an aeroplane.

The old folk informed me that the slender-waisted wasp was the sphex mentioned in the old classics, who, since all sphexes are female, must adopt bollworms to carry on her line. This wasp imprisons the green caterpillar in her nest, while she herself raps and taps outside day and night, praying, "Be like me! Be like me!" Then after a certain number of days — I forget exactly how many, but probably seven times seven — the caterpillar turns into a slender-waisted wasp. That is why the *Book of Songs** says, "The bollworm's young is carried off by the sphex." This bollworm is the green caterpillar found on mulberry trees. As for the spiders, no mention is made of them.

* The earliest anthology of poetry in China. It consists of 305 poems dating from the eleventh to the sixth century B.C.

I remember some research workers propounding a different theory to the effect that the wasp can lay eggs herself, but she catches caterpillars and puts them in her nest as food for her larvae when they hatch out. None of the old folk I knew would accept this view, however. They maintained that the caterpillar was carried off to be a daughter to the sphex, and if we want to preserve a pretty story from nature, this version really is better. On long, idle summer days when you sit in the shade and watch the two insects, one tugging forward and one holding back, the wasp seems like a kindly mother giving her daughter a lesson for her own good, while the squirming caterpillar looks for all the world like a silly girl who doesn't know what is best for her.

But these barbarians certainly are a nuisance, the way they keep harping on science. Though science has given us many marvels, it has also spoiled many of our pleasant dreams. The careful observations made by the great French entomologist Fabre have confirmed the view that the caterpillar is food for the wasp's larvae. And this wasp, it seems, is no ordinary murderer but a peculiarly cold-blooded one, and a most learned and skilful vivisectionist into the bargain. Understanding the structure and function of the caterpillar's nervous system, she stings its motory nerve with her wonderful poisoned sting, and when it is paralysed — neither dead nor alive — she lays her eggs on it and shuts it up in her nest. Being neither dead nor alive, it cannot move, but being neither alive nor dead, it does not decompose either. Right up to the time when the larvae emerge, this food is as fresh as on the day it was caught.

Three years ago I met a rather high-strung Russian, Mr. E,* who suddenly started worrying that future scientists might invent some wonderful drug which, in-

* Eroshenko, a Russian writer of fairy-tales, who came to China in 1921 and taught Esperanto in Beijing University

jected into a man, would make him willing to work or fight like a machine for ever. I sighed and frowned too at the time, so that it would look as if I shared his fears and that this was a case of "Great minds think alike." The fact is, though, that our sagacious sovereigns, worthy ministers, sages and all their disciples long ago had a vision of a golden age like this. For did they not say, "Only the rulers can bestow rewards or inspire fear at will and enjoy sumptuous food"? Or "The gentleman uses his brain, the common people their hands"? Or again "Those ruled feed others, those who rule are fed by others"? The pity is that though this theory has been established, no good way has so far been found of putting it into practice. Living men will not submit to authority, yet dead men cannot furnish sumptuous food; living men will not be ruled, yet dead men cannot feed the rulers. Of course, mankind deserves congratulations on becoming the highest form of all creation; but the fact that men have no poisonous sting like the wasp has made things very difficult for sagacious sovereigns, worthy ministers, sages and all their disciples, as well as for our present-day men of substance, scholars and educationalists. We cannot predict the future; but in the past, although the rulers used every means at their disposal to paralyse the people, they were never very successful, and cannot compare in this respect with the sphex. Take emperors for instance. They cannot stop dynasties from changing, and have never actually "maintained a benevolent rule for ten thousand years." The mere existence of the histories of twenty-four dynasties, alas, is conclusive proof of this. Now apparently a new way is being tried: the world has brought forth some "special intellectuals"* in the form of students who have studied

* In March 1925, some Beijing students who had been educated abroad asked to join the bogus National Assembly convened by the Northern warlord Duan Qirui, on the grounds that they were a class of special intellectuals.

abroad, and their laboratory research has proved that if medical science is backward this is good for the improvement of the human species, that the lot of Chinese women is supremely just, that everything is for the best and conditions are quite good enough. Hence Mr. E's fears may not be groundless; but Russia should be all right, for they have none of the "distinctive features" peculiar to China,* and no "special intellectuals"

And yet I fear our generation may not meet with any greater success than the ancients, for the truth is our task is much harder than the wasp's. The wasp only wants to immobilize the caterpillar, and by stinging the motory nerve it can achieve this. Our task, on the other hand, requires us to enable people to move but stop them from feeling, by paralysing their nerve centres completely. However, once consciousness is gone there is nothing to control men's movements, and they cannot present sumptuous food or wait on the pleasure of "the very highest"† or the "special intellectuals". For the time being, I am afraid, we have no better, more comprehensive, safer methods than the teaching of the classics advocated by old pedants, the scholars' proposal that everyone should engage in research, the taboo on discussing politics imposed by writers and teahouse managers, and the hear-nothing, see-nothing, say-nothing, touch-nothing policy of the educationalists. Even the unique discoveries of our scholars who have studied abroad do not go much further than the precepts of our former sages.

In that case, "If ceremony is lost, we should seek it among the uncivilized"*** Since we want to learn from

* In 1915, when the warlord Yuan Shikai wanted to make himself emperor, his American adviser Frank Goodnow wrote an article declaring that in view of China's special features the country should be a monarchy.

** A term coined by reactionary scholars to flatter the Northern warlords.

*** A saying attributed to Confucius.

the barbarians, let us call them foreigners for the time being. Do they have any better methods? Unhappily, no. All they have are the same old rules forbidding meetings and freedom of speech, which are not so very different from our own. Indeed, this shows that all men accept the same Truth, whether Chinese or barbarian. Wild beasts roam alone, while cattle remain in herds, and a herd of wild bulls can form a rampart with their horns against a powerful enemy, but if you get one bull on its own, all it can do is low. Since men are like cattle — the Chinese I mean, as barbarians are classified differently — the way to rule them is naturally to stop them from banding together: this method is correct. And then they must not be allowed to talk. The tongue is the root of all evil, and some men even write sometimes as well. We are told that ghosts wailed at night when Cang Jie* invented characters; so it seems that even ghosts oppose writing, to say nothing of officials. It is because monkeys cannot speak that there are no disturbances among them — of course they have no officials either, but that is a different matter — and we really ought to learn humbly from them and return to Nature, for where there is no talk there will be no writing either: this method is also correct. But these proposals are merely theoretical, and it is still difficult to put them into practice. The most obvious example of this is the fact that, even in autocratic Russia, after Nicholas II was gathered to his fathers, the Romanovs were overthrown. In brief, the chief trouble is that though we have two excellent methods, something else is lacking: we cannot stop men thinking.

So our creator — if there is such a sovereign in heaven — is very much to be blamed. In the first place, he made no permanent distinction between rulers and ruled. In the second place, he did not arm the rulers with a

* The legendary inventor of the Chinese written language.

poisonous sting like the wasp. In the third place, he did not make the ruled in such a way that even after their heads — where thoughts lie hidden — are cut off, they can still move to serve the rulers. If any one of these things had been done, the rich and mighty could rest secure for ever, there would be no more difficulty in ruling, and the world would be at peace. But since this is not the case, even if all you want is to keep your high position and wealth for a while, you have to plan by day and ponder by night, and this is thoroughly tiresome.

If men without heads could still work and fight like machines, what a bright future would open up! There would be no need to differentiate between high and low by means of medals and caps. The presence or absence of a head would suffice to show whether a man was master or slave, official or subject, noble or commoner, superior or inferior. And there would be no more troublesome revolutions, republics, national assemblies or the like, while on telegrams alone an enormous amount could be saved. The ancients were clever people, for apparently they thought up something like this. The *Book of Hills and Seas* describes a monster called Xing Tian, who had no head with which to think, but was still alive and “used his teats as eyes and his navel as mouth.” A very good idea, that, for otherwise how could he see or eat? This is certainly worth learning. If all our citizens were like that, how secure and happy our rich and mighty would be! Still, this monster “danced with spear and shield”; so it seems that even in death he was rather obstreperous, unlike the ideal citizens we have in mind for the convenience of the rich and mighty. Mr. Tao Qian* once wrote:

*Xing Tian dances with shield and spear,
His proud spirit unsubdued.*

* Tao Yuanming, a famous poet who lived from 365 to 427.

If even an old hermit who appeared so unworldly said this, it shows that headless men can still be unruly, hence there is no peace for the rich and mighty just yet. Still, since we have a surplus of "special intellectuals," there may be some special, exceptional hope for us. Besides, when the spiritual culture is too sublime, the spiritual head may soar off in advance, and in that case there will be no problem whether men have a physical head or not.

April 22, 1925

SOME NOTIONS JOTTED DOWN BY LAMPLIGHT

I

There was a time, in the second or third year of the Republic, when the credit of the notes issued by some of the national banks in Beijing was growing better every day, was indeed going from strength to strength. I heard that even the country folk who have always been under the spell of silver realized how convenient and safe these notes were, and were glad to accept and use them. As for the more discerning, to say nothing of the "special intellectuals," they very early stopped weighting their pockets with cumbersome silver dollars, which give so much unnecessary trouble. In fact, apart from those who had a special love or feeling for silver, practically everyone was using banknotes, for the most part Chinese notes. But all of a sudden, alas! there came a serious setback.

In the year when Yuan Shikai wanted to become emperor,* Mr. Cai E slipped out of Beijing to start a revolt

* Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), a war minister of the Qing Dynasty, after the 1911 Revolution became the most powerful of the Northern warlords. In 1913 he seized the position of provisional president of the Chinese Republic, and persecuted the revolutionaries headed by Sun Yat-sen. In 1915 he declared himself emperor. Cai E raised a revolt in Yunnan in protest, and other provinces followed suit, so that Yuan Shikai was forced to abolish the monarchy.

in Yunnan One of the repercussions here was that the Bank of China and the Bank of Communications stopped giving cash for notes But although the notes were not honoured by the banks, the government could still force the merchants to use them, and the merchants had their own way of dealing with the situation — instead of refusing to take them, they said they had no change I do not know what happened if you went shopping with fifty- or hundred-dollar notes, but if all you wanted was a pencil or a packet of cigarettes you could not pay a whole dollar for it, could you? Not only would this go against the grain, but no one had so many notes. Then if you tried to change them for coppers, even at a reduced rate, all the shops said they had no coppers If you went to borrow cash from your friends and relatives, they did not have any either So then people lowered their standards, stopped talking about patriotism, and tried to get the notes issued by foreign banks But these were now equivalent to cash, and anyone who would let you have these would let you have real silver dollars.

I remember at that time having in my pocket notes for thirty or forty dollars from the Bank of China and the Bank of Communications, but I suddenly became a pauper with starvation staring me in the face and fell into a regular panic. I suppose after the Russian Revolution the feelings of those rich men who had all their money in paper roubles must have been the same or, at the most, more intense. When I inquired whether the notes could be converted into silver at a reduced rate, I heard there was no rate But luckily in the end you could change them on the quiet for a little over sixty per cent of their printed value. I was overjoyed, and lost no time in selling half I had. When later the value rose to seventy per cent, I was even more overjoyed and changed all my notes into silver, which weighed down my pocket as if with the whole weight of my life. And

yet, in normal times, I would not take one copper less from the money-changers

But as I put the packet of silver in my pocket, reassured by its very weight, in the midst of my joy a thought flashed into my mind. How easy it is for us to become slaves, and to revel in our slavery!

There are despots who "treat men as less than human," and not only as less than human but as even lower than cattle — as dirt — so that people envy cattle and lament that "a man in time of trouble is not as good as a dog in time of peace." If at this point the rulers treat people more like oxen or horses — for instance, the Yuan Dynasty law decreed that whoever killed a slave should give his master an ox as compensation — all citizens will be happy and contented and praise such a good, peaceful reign. Why? Because though they are not ranked as human, at least they are equal to cattle.

We need not make a reverent study of the imperial editions of the *Twenty-four Histories*, nor go to research institutes to consider the sublimity of our spiritual culture. All we need do is look up the children's *Concise History*, or, if even that is too much, refer to the *Chronological Tables* and we should see that this "ancient land with more than three thousand years of culture," about which so much fuss has been made in histories, amounts to no more than this. And yet in the recently compiled so-called history books for schools, this is not made too clear: they merely seem to say that we have always been treated very well.

The fact is, though, the Chinese people have never succeeded in being rated as men but at the best only as slaves, and this is still true today. Indeed, on many occasions we were worse off than slaves. The Chinese people are neutrals. In a war, they do not know which side they are on. However, it makes no difference. When rebels come they consider the people as under the government, and therefore kill and plunder them. When gov-

ernment troops come they ought to consider the people as their own, but they kill and plunder them too as if they were on the rebels' side. At such times the people long for some definite master to take them as his subjects — no, that is asking too much — as his cattle rather. They will gladly look for fodder themselves, if only someone will tell them which way to run.

If only there were someone to make decisions for them and draw up rules for slaves, that would be "infinite imperial favour." The pity is that there is often no one to do this. To take a few examples: during the time of the Five Tribes and Sixteen States,¹ the revolt of Huang Chao,^{**} the Five Dynasties,^{***} the end of the Song and the end of the Yuan dynasties, in addition to the customary forced labour and grain tax there were other unexpected troubles too. Zhang Xianzhong† was even more eccentric: he killed those who refused to do forced labour or pay taxes, as well as those who worked and paid, he killed those who opposed him as well as those who surrendered. Thus he tore to shreds all the rules for slaves. Then the people longed for a master who would show more consideration for their rules, not caring whether these were the old rules or new ones so long as there were rules which would enable them to get into their groove as slaves again.

"Oh sun, may you perish betimes, even though I perish with you!"†† This is simply angry talk, and not many men would really go so far. In fact, usually after a period of utter confusion when banditry is rife, some stronger, cleverer or more cunning leader or foreigner appears, to take over the land and establish better order.

* See footnote on p. 116 above.

** Leader of a peasant revolt at the end of the Tang Dynasty

*** 907-960, a period of confusion and constant fighting

† See footnote on p. 116 above.

†† Two lines from an ancient folk song in which the people expressed their indignation and hatred against their rulers.

He draws up rules for forced labour, the payment of the grain tax, kowtowing, or praising the government. And these rules, unlike those we have today, do not change all the time. Then "there is general rejoicing," and, to use a stock phrase, "the whole world is at peace."

But however fine the phrases of those splendour-loving scholars, or however grand the expressions they use in their chronicles, such as "the rise of the Hans," "the age of Han expansion," or "the age of Han resurgence," while appreciating that their motives are of the best, we cannot but feel their wording is too ambiguous. A much more straightforward mode of expression would be:

- 1 The periods when we longed in vain to be slaves,
- 2 The periods when we succeeded in becoming slaves for a time

These periods form a cycle of what earlier scholars call "times of good rule" and "times of confusion." From the viewpoint of later subjects, the rebels were simply paving the way for their "masters." This is why it was said, "They cleared the path for the sagacious sovereign."*

I am not quite sure what period we are in now. But if we consider our classicists' veneration of national characteristics, our writers' praise of Chinese civilization and our philosophers' eagerness to return to the ancient ways, we can see that they are all dissatisfied with the present. But which way are we going? Whenever the people are confronted by a war they cannot understand, the richer among them move into the foreign concessions while women and children take refuge in the churches, for such places are relatively safe. For the time being they are not reduced to longing in vain to be slaves. In short, whether classicists or refugees, wise men or fools,

*A quotation from the *Han Dynasty History* written by Ban Gu (A.D. 39-92).

worthy men or rascals, all seem to be longing for the peaceful days of three centuries ago when the Chinese had succeeded in becoming slaves for a time

But are we all like the men of old, to be content for ever with "the good old ways"? Are we all like those classicists who, dissatisfied with the present, long for the peaceful days of three centuries ago?

Of course, we are not satisfied with the present either, but that does not mean we have to look backwards, for there is still a way forward. And to create a third type of period, hitherto unknown in Chinese history, is the task of our young people today.

II

But more and more people, including some foreigners, are praising China's ancient civilization. I often think that if any foreigner coming here were to frown in disgust and show his hatred for China, I should thank him from the bottom of my heart; for such a man would not batten on our people's flesh!

Yusuke Tsurumi* in his essay "The Charm of Beijing" refers to a Westerner who came to Beijing intending to stay for one year, but was still here five years later and no longer wanted to leave. One day they had dinner together.

We sat down at the round mahogany table, served with a never-ending stream of delicacies from land and sea, and started discussing curios, paintings and politics. A Chinese-style lampshade over the electric light diffused mellow rays through the room so well furnished with antiques. Such topics as the proletariat seemed as unreal as a passing breeze.

* A Japanese critic.

Intoxicated by the Chinese atmosphere, I pondered over this charm which has so fascinated foreigners. The Mongols conquered China, but were conquered in turn by the beauty of the Chinese way of life. The Manchus conquered China too, but were also conquered by the Chinese way of life. Now it is the same with the Westerners: though they talk about "democracy" and all the rest of it, they too are being bewitched by the Chinese way of life, which has been built up over six thousand years. No one who stays in Beijing can forget its distinctive flavour. Neither the dust blown up thousands of feet by a high wind, nor the fighting the warlords play at every three months, can destroy the charm of the Chinese way of life.

I have no means as yet of refuting him. Our ancient sages gave us maxims for preserving the old, but also prepared great banquets for our conquerors in which they sacrificed our children and our treasures. We Chinese are a hard-working people and we have many children, so these things provided material for the feasts. Even now these qualities are praised by our patriots. When the Westerners first entered China they were called barbarians and naturally made a wry face at that; but now the time has come to present to them the sumptuous feasts which we gave before to the Tobas, the Nuchens, the Mongols and the Manchus. They go out in cars and travel with an escort; they have free passage when the roads are clear for officials, when they are robbed they receive compensation; and even if the bandit Sun Meiyao kidnaps them and makes them stand in front of his brigands, the government troops dare not open fire. So what must it be like when they partake of rich feasts in palatial mansions? As they enjoy these banquets, they naturally praise China's ancient civilization; yet some of our optimistic patriots seem to rejoice at this, in the belief that these Westerners are about to be

naturalized by us. The ancients used women to gain a short respite in war, and deceived themselves by giving this the beautiful name of "peace through marriage"* We moderns still slavishly present our children and treasures, and give this the beautiful name of "naturalization" So only those foreigners who are qualified to attend the feast but still curse present-day China are truly good and worthy men!

But we have already prepared ourselves well in advance by having noble and common, great and small, high and low. Men may be oppressed by others, but they can oppress others themselves. They may be eaten, but they can also eat others. With such a hierarchy of repression, the people cannot stir, and indeed they do not want to. For though good may come of it if they stir, trouble may also result. Let us have a look at the excellent system devised by the ancients.

There are ten suns in heaven, ten degrees among men; so those below serve those above, and the rulers wait on the gods. Thus princes are subject to the king, knights to the princes, gentlemen to the knights . . . and so on down to the lowest slave. (*Zuo Zhuan* . . . From the record of the seventh year of Duke Zhao.)

The lowest slaves have no subjects, which seems rather hard on them. But we need not worry on this score, for they have wives and children who rank even lower. And there is hope for the children too, for when they grow up and rise to be slaves they will have wives and children below them to serve them. Thus in this cycle everyone is all right, and whoever dares to object is condemned for trying to rise above his station.

* In ancient times, when a dynasty was threatened by foreign invaders, a Chinese princess was sometimes given in marriage to the barbarian chief to pacify them.

** *Chronicles of the Spring and Autumn Period* (770-475 B.C.), believed to have been compiled by Zuo Qiuming.

Though this happened so long ago, in the seventh year of Duke Zhao (535 B C), those who hanker after the past need not feel pessimistic. To all appearances there is still peace, for though there are often wars, droughts and floods, have you ever heard anyone raise his voice in protest? There is fighting and revolt, but do any gentlemen speak out against them? This tyranny towards our own people and submission to foreigners is surely the same as the old hierarchy. China's ancient spiritual civilization has not been destroyed by the "Republic" after all. The Manchus have simply left the feast that is the only difference from the past.

Thus even today we can still see all manner of feasts. mixed grill as well as shark's fins, Chinese as well as Western. But under thatched roofs plain rice is also served, beggars eat scraps by the roadside, and in the country men are starving to death. The rich and mighty regale themselves regardless of expense, while half-starved children are sold at eight coppers a pound. (See Number 21 of *Modern Critic*) Our vaunted Chinese civilization is only a feast of human flesh prepared for the rich and mighty. And China is only the kitchen where these feasts are prepared. Those who praise China because they do not know this are excusable, but the rest deserve to be condemned for ever!

Those foreigners who praise us, not knowing this, are excusable. And so are those whose high position and pampered life have made them dull-witted and blind. But there are two other types. One considers the Chinese an inferior race which deserves to be no better off than it is, and therefore deliberately commend all that is old in China. The other likes every country in the world to look different in order to make travelling more interesting. In China they expect to see queues, in Japan wooden shoes, in Korea bamboo hats. If everyone looked alike they would find it boring; hence they oppose the Westernization of Asia. Both these types are detesta-

ble As for Mr Bertrand Russell, who praised the Chinese when some sedan-chair-bearers smiled at him at the West Lake,* he may have been actuated by other motives But if chair-bearers could stop smiling at their fares, China would long since have stopped being the China she is

Foreigners are not the only ones to be intoxicated by this civilization every Chinese too is smiling in intoxication Because the hierarchy handed down since ancient times has estranged men from each other, they cannot feel each other's pain, and because each can hope to enslave and eat other men, he forgets that he may be enslaved and eaten himself. Thus since the dawn of civilization countless feasts — large and small — of human flesh have been spread, and those at these feasts eat others and are eaten themselves, but the anguished cries of the weak, to say nothing of the women and the children, are drowned in the senseless clamour of the murderers

Feasts of human flesh are still being spread even now, and many people want them to continue To sweep away these man-eaters, overturn these feasts and destroy this kitchen is the task of the young folk today!

April 29, 1925

* A famous scenic spot in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province.

STRAY THOUGHTS

Men — more advanced than animals — have tears, yet this very fact shows how imperfect they are, just as having an appendix makes men more advanced than birds, but shows at the same time how imperfect they are. Such things are not only useless appendages but will lead men to senseless destruction

People today make offerings of their tears, and think them the best gifts too, for they have nothing else. But those without tears make offerings of their blood, yet refuse the blood of others.

Men seldom wish their loved ones to shed tears, but, surely, when they are dying they must want their loved ones to weep for them. No, men without tears do not wish those they love to shed tears at any time, and even blood they refuse. They refuse all weeping and destruction for their sake.

To be killed while thousands look on is better than being killed "unknown to man and devil," for the man being executed can imagine that he will draw tears from some of the crowd. But men without tears do not care where they are killed.

When a man without tears is killed, no blood will be seen. His loved ones will not be tormented by his death, nor will his enemy find any delight in killing him. This is his return for kindness and his revenge.

* * *

To die by an enemy's sword is no tragedy, but to die by some unexpected secret weapon is sad. Yet saddest

of all is dying of poison administered by mistake by a loving mother or sweetheart, a stray shot from a comrade-in-arms, an infection from a germ which bears no malice, or a death penalty decided upon by others.

* * *

Let those who hanker after the past return to the past! Let those who want to leave the world leave the world! Let those who want to ascend to heaven do so! Let those whose souls want to leave their bodies expire quickly! The earth today should be inhabited by men with a firm hold on the present, a firm hold on the earth

Yet those who hate the earth as it is are still here. They are mortal enemies of the earth today, and as long as they remain the world cannot be saved.

In the past there were men who wanted to live on this earth of ours, but could not. Some were silent, some groaned, sighed, wept, or offered prayers, but still they could not live on this earth of ours; for they had forgotten how to be angry.

When a brave man is angry, he draws his sword on someone stronger, while an angry coward draws his sword on someone weaker. Among these incorrigible peoples there must be many heroes who will only glare at children. The weaklings!

Children who grow up exposed to angry glares will glare at other children and imagine they are passing their whole lives in anger. Since their anger amounts to no more than this, they are angry all their lives — and this anger will pass from generation to generation, until the end of time.

* * *

Whatever you love — food, the opposite sex, your country, the nation, mankind — you can only hope to win it if you cling to it like a poisonous snake, seize hold of it like an avenging spirit, and never slacken your efforts for one moment. When utterly exhausted, you

may take a short rest, but after resting you must try again — again and again . . . It is useless, however, to write letters in blood, draft regulations, make petitions, give lectures, shed tears, send telegrams, hold meetings, compose mourning couplets, deliver speeches, or have nervous breakdowns

What can a letter written in blood do for you? It is only a letter written in your blood, not even a pleasing sight. As for nervous breakdowns, the fact is you are unwell. This is nothing to boast of, my honoured and irritating friend!

We need not be surprised to hear groans, sighs, weeping, or pleading. But when a fierce silence falls, we should be on our guard. When we see something like a poisonous snake gliding among the corpses, or an avenging spirit rushing through the darkness, we should be even more on our guard, for this is a sign that "genuine fury" is coming. When that day arrives, those who hanker after the past, those who want to leave the world, those who want to ascend to heaven, and those whose souls want to leave their bodies will all depart from us.

May 5, 1925

SUDDEN NOTIONS (7)

I suppose the newspaper boys were too busy yesterday to deliver the paper, which was brought me today instead. Oddly enough, two small pieces had been cut from the front page, but luckily the supplement was intact. And in that there was an article entitled "Mild and Tame" by Mr. Wuzhe, which once more reminded me of the past, for I did, I remember, sugar the pill like that when I poisoned my students.* Now Mr. Wuzhe has also discovered two things on the road: wild beasts and sheep. To my mind, though, he has discerned a part of the truth only, for the creatures we see on the road are not so simple, and this amplification is needed: there are wild beasts disguised as sheep and sheep disguised as wild beasts.

For these sheep are at the same time wild beasts. When they meet beasts wilder than they are, they behave like sheep, when they meet sheep weaker than they are, they behave like wild beasts. This is how Mr. Wuzhe mistook them for two different species.

I still remember after the first May 4th demonstration how politely the military just beat unarmed teachers and students with the butts of their rifles, looking as intrepid as cavalry charging over a field of young shoots, while the students fled with cries of alarm like sheep before tigers or wolves. But when the students banded together

* Mr. Wuzhe wrote, "Lu Xun has described us in his class as 'mild and tame.' Of course we accept such sugar-coated pills, and savour their sweetness."

to attack their enemy, did they not also knock down some children they came across? And at school did they not spit at their enemies' children and force them to run home? Is this not just like the old tyrants' idea of exterminating whole clans?

I remember, too, how oppressed Chinese women are — sometimes worse off than sheep. Now, thanks to the teaching of those foreign devils, they seem to be becoming somewhat emancipated. But when a woman gets a position like that of a college president* where she can exercise authority, she hires thugs who “roll up their sleeves” to intimidate helpless students of her own sex. And she seizes the opportunity provided by another students' movement outside to rally jackals and foxes to help her dismiss the students who have displeased her. Moreover, some men brought up to believe themselves superior to women are now wagging their tails before this female symbol of their rice bowls, much more sheepish, in fact, than sheep. Of course, sheep are weak, but not as weak as that. I must say this in defence of my worthy and well-loved sheep.

But before the arrival of the golden age, I fear people will continue to have both characteristics at the same time, behaving with courage or cowardice according to the circumstances. The pity is that the Chinese behave like wild beasts in front of sheep, but like sheep in front of wild beasts; so even when we are acting like beasts, our country still appears cowardly. If this goes on, our doom is sealed.

In my opinion, to save China we need not develop any new qualities. If young people will reverse the traditional application of these two ancient attributes, that

* Refers to Yang Yinyu, reactionary president of the National Women's Normal College. In the spring of 1924 she was thrown out by her students; but, backed by the minister of education, she used despicable methods to suppress their opposition. Lu Xun, standing up for justice, was attacked by her and her supporters.

will be enough When your opponent is a wild beast, act like a wild beast yourself, when he is a sheep, act like a sheep!

For then, no matter how cunning the devil may be, he will have to go back to his own hell

May 10, 1925

TEACHERS

Youth has been a fashionable topic recently there is talk of nothing else. But surely not all young folk are the same? Some are awake, some asleep, some in a coma, some lying down, and some amusing themselves — to mention only a few. There are others too, of course, who want to move forward.

Youngsters who want to move forward usually look for a teacher. However, I dare say they will never find one. Still, if this is the case, they are lucky, for those who know themselves and their limitations will decline, while those who believe in themselves may not prove reliable guides. All who look upon themselves as guides are past the age at which a man "stands firm."* They are grey and old in spirit, tactful and steady — that is all, yet they set themselves up as guides. If they really knew the way, they would have advanced towards their goal, instead of remaining as teachers. The monks who expound Buddhist law and the Taoists who sell elixirs will some time become white bones like everyone else; yet men go to them to hear the great truth about immortality. Ridiculous!

Mind you, I do not condemn such people utterly. there is no harm in talking with them. Some can only talk, others can only write; and if you expect them to box, that is your mistake. If they could box, they would have

* Confucius said that at thirty he "stood firm." The phrase was later used to indicate that a man was thirty years old.

done so long ago; but then perhaps you would have expected them to turn somersaults

Some young people seem to have woken up to this. I remember when the *Beijing News* supplement asked for recommendations of required reading for the young, someone objected, and stated in conclusion that the reader himself was the only reliable judge. I will venture to go one step further, though it sounds rather disillusioning, and say that even the reader may not always be a good judge.

Most of us have short memories. This is not strange, for there is too much suffering in life, especially in China. People with good memories are liable to be crushed to death by the weight of suffering, only those with bad memories, the fittest to survive, can still live happily on. We do have some memory, though, and can think back to realize "Yesterday was wrong but today is right," "A man says one thing but means another," "My present self is fighting against my past self." We have never seen other people's food when we were starving and no one was about, never seen their money when we were desperately poor, never seen one of the loveliest women on earth when we were burning with desire. So we had better not boast too early; otherwise, if we have memories, we may blush at some future date.

Perhaps those who realize that they are not very reliable are comparatively reliable.

Why should young people look for guides who hang out gilded placards to advertise themselves? They would do better to look for friends, unite with them, and advance together towards some quarter where it seems possible to survive. You have strength and to spare, if you come to a dense forest, you can cut it down; if you come to a wilderness, you can plant trees; if you come to a desert, you can sink wells. Why should you ask

about the old tracks which are overgrown with brambles?
Why should you look for those confounded old teachers?

May 11, 1925

THE GREAT WALL

Our wonderful Great Wall!

This engineering feat has left its mark on the map, and is probably known to everyone with any education the whole world over.

Actually, all it has ever done is work many conscripts to death — it never kept out the Huns. Now it is merely an ancient relic, but its final ruin will not take place for a while, and it may even be preserved.

I am always conscious of being surrounded by a Great Wall. The stonework consists of old bricks reinforced at a later date by new bricks. These have combined to make a wall that hems us in.

When shall we stop reinforcing the Great Wall with new bricks?

A curse on this wonderful Great Wall!

May 11, 1925

SUDDEN NOTIONS (9)

I have heard it said that people who dwell on the past will never amount to much, for their hankering after days gone by saps their courage and initiative; but someone else has claimed that there is nothing so delightful as memories of long ago. I forget who made the former statement; the latter, I think, was put forward by Anatole France — not that it matters. There is truth, however, in both, and much time could be spent analysing and studying them, but I leave this to the scholars. I have no ambition to join in such lofty pursuits, for I fear before any conclusion was reached I should have “died a natural death at a ripe old age.” (Whether I shall die a natural death or live to a ripe old age is, of course, still uncertain; but there is no harm in looking on the bright side.) I can stay away from the feasts at which literature and art are discussed, and those at which the dismissal of students is decided;* but I doubt if anyone, whatever airs he assumes, can decline the invitation from the king of hell. Well, instead of hankering after the past I am speculating now about the future, which is equally unprofitable. Confound it all! But to continue —

Though I have only just learned that to refrain from writing is a way of showing one's social status,** I have

* Yang Yinyu invited members of her staff to a meal at a restaurant, where they decided to expel six members of the students' union who had opposed her.

** Professor Chen Yuan, who was connected with the Northern warlords, wrote to the editor of the *Beijing News* supplement that he would not enter into an argument in print for fear of lowering himself.

long known that men write, nine times out of ten, to defend themselves — that is so in my case, at least. Thus today I am writing simply to answer a letter I once received

May 14, 1925

Dear Mr. F D,

One or two years ago, as I recollect, I was honoured to receive a communication from you pointing out that my description of how machine-guns were used to catch a useless fellow like Ah Q in "The True Story of Ah Q" was too far-fetched. I did not answer you at the time because, in the first place, you gave no address, and, in the second, Ah Q had already been arrested, so I could not invite you to watch the fun in order to prove my point.

But I remembered your letter a few days ago when I was reading the newspaper. One item of news was to the effect that some students decided to go to the provisional government to demonstrate, but the authorities got wind of this and reinforced the guard at the east gate besides posting two machine-guns at the west gate; so the students could not enter Government House, and they scattered without achieving anything. If you are still in Beijing, why not go and have a look from a distance — the greater the distance the better? If there are really two machine-guns, my point will be amply proved.

Students have long had parades and demonstrations, but they are always very gentle. Far from carrying bombs or pistols, they do not even take steel maces or halberds, let alone long spears and big swords. At the most, they carry pamphlets in their pockets. This is why

there has never been any trouble in the past. Yet now machine-guns have been mounted — two of them!

But the incident involving Ah Q was much more serious, for he *did* go to town to steal, and it is a fact that there were cases of robbery at Weizhuang. Moreover, that was in the first year of the Republic, when officials handled affairs in a more arbitrary way. Remember, sir, that was thirteen years ago! In view of the date, I believe if I had introduced another battalion and eight field-guns into the story, it could hardly be called excessive.

I must beg you, sir, not to look at China as you would at any ordinary country. A friend of mine upon his return from India told me what an odd place it was: whenever he went to the bank of the Ganges, he felt he must take great care not to be caught and sacrificed to the gods. In China I often have similar fears. What is usually thought "romantic" is commonplace in China. Where else should machine-guns be placed if not outside the Tutelary God's Temple?

Lu Xun

AFTER "KNOCKING AGAINST THE WALL"

I often tell my young students that the ancients' statement that "books are born of poverty and grief" is not really true. How can those who are desperately poor and nearly dying of grief have either time or inclination to write? We have never seen men chanting poems in the gutter as they starve to death, and the sound uttered by convicts beneath the lash is simply a cry — they never express their suffering in euphuistic essays filled with purple patches. So when a man grinds his ink and wets his brush to describe his down-at-heel condition, he is probably wearing silk socks. When Tao Yuanming chanted "Hunger drives me away . . ." he was probably in his cups. Those in torment cannot express their agony: the ghosts in the most fearful Buddhist hell raise no cry!

Presumably our great country is not hell, yet "the mind creates its own kingdom," and before me I always see banks of louring clouds packed with old ghosts and new ghosts, wandering spirits, ox-headed monsters, beasts, transformations, loud wails and silent lamentations, which I find hard to bear. To deceive myself, I pretend to hear and see nothing, and make believe that I am not in hell.

A knock at the door brought me back to earth. Some college business again. Why did I become a teacher? Thinking like this, I went to open the door and, sure enough, the first thing I saw on the envelope was the

printed address in red National Women's Normal College, Beijing

I have always been afraid of this school, because each time I set foot inside I feel unaccountably depressed, though I often blame myself for this. Later I read in the president Yang Yinyu's open letter to the students: "You must realize that a school is like a family. Of course all the elders love the family, and the children should show consideration for their elders' wishes." Then I saw light. Teaching in the college was like working as a private tutor in the Yang family, and my sense of depression arose from this despised position. However, one of my failings, which I suspect to be at the root of many of my troubles, is that I sometimes like to use my head. So after seeing the light I considered some other problems: What is the relationship between the president and the students in this family? Are they mother and daughters, or mother-in-law and daughters-in-law?

Hard as I thought, I could not reach a conclusion. Happily this president makes many pronouncements, and I found the correct answer in her "Thoughts on Radical Students," where she says, "I wrangle with these young women." This proves beyond a doubt that she treats them as daughters-in-law.

So now I can boldly cite the classical quotation: "The mother-in-law wrangles with her daughters-in-law." Still, what has their quarrel to do with the family tutor? The fact is that because we are a college after all, letters are often sent here, either from the mother-in-law or the daughters-in-law. And since my nerves are weak, each time I hear a knock I regret being a teacher. This regret, indeed, is well-founded.

They have had no end of family quarrels this year. The daughters-in-law do not respect their mother-in-law, but she will not resign from her post. This is her house — why should she? There is nothing odd about this.

Far from resigning, she made use of May 7* to give a dinner in a certain restaurant after which she expelled six members of the students' union and issued her famous pronouncement "A school is like a family."

When I opened this letter and read it, I found it was from the daughters-in-law's union

"During the last ten days or so," I read, "the work of the college has come to a standstill, and there is much to be done. If we go on delaying like this, not only shall we be wasting the time of hundreds of young people, but endangering the future of this college."

Then they invited the teachers to hold a meeting to keep things going the time proposed was four that afternoon.

"I'll go and have a look," I said to myself

This is another of my failings, which I suspect is also at the root of many of my troubles. I know very well that in China one cannot just go casually to "have a look" at anything. Still I cannot cure myself of this bad habit that is why I call it a failing. I am growing wise in the ways of the world, however, so a moment's reflection convinced me that to go at four would be too early, for no one would be there on time. I would go at half past four.

At half past four I entered the depressing college gate, and walked to the staff room. There a surprise awaited me! In addition to one nodding attendant, two teachers were already sitting there. One I had seen before, the other I did not know. I think his name was Wang, but I did not quite catch it — anyway, it is immaterial.

I sat down with them.

* May 7 was a day of national disgrace, for on that day in 1915 the Japanese ordered Yuan Shikai to accept their Twenty-one Demands. Yang Yinyu made a speech on this date to consolidate her position, knowing that if the students opposed her she could punish them for not observing this day.

“What is your opinion of this incident, sir?” asked the teacher I did not know after greeting me, fixing me with his eye as he spoke

“It depends how you look at it Do you want to know my personal opinion? Personally, I am against the president’s way of handling this ”

Well! Before I could finish, he wagged his clever little head sideways to show he did not care to hear me out. At least, that was how I saw it, but, of course, wagging his head may have been one of his failings

“I mean expulsion is too severe a punishment. The problem could easily have been settled some other way. . . .” I went on

“H’m ” He nodded impatiently.

I fell silent, then lit a cigarette.

“We had better give things a chance to cool down a little. . . .” Here he was advancing “cooling down” proposals!

“H’m We shall see.” This time I was the one to nod impatiently, but still I had said more than he had.

After nodding, I noticed a printed sheet in front of me, and a shiver ran down my spine as I read it. It ran something like this:

. . . They have used the name of the students’ union to order members of the staff to meet and discuss how college affairs should be administered. Our college has always abided by the regulations of the Ministry. This proposal is counter to our system and traditions, hence we cannot consider it valid. . . . However, after this trouble . . . appropriate steps must be taken; and since there are other college matters which must be decided at a meeting of the whole staff, we are asking all department heads, full-time teachers and members of the Teachers’ Union to attend an emergency meeting to settle various important matters in Pacific Lake Restaurant at 7 p.m. on the twenty-first of this month.

We shall be most obliged if you will honour us with your presence.

Underneath was the seal of the National Women's Normal College which I had learned to dread. Only then did I realize that I should not have come, and I need not honour Pacific Lake Restaurant with my presence, for I was only a part-time teacher. But why had the president not prevented the students from calling this meeting, or vetoed it in advance, instead of getting me here to read this printed sheet? In my indignation I wanted to demand an answer; but when I looked round there were only these two teachers and one attendant, four brick walls with doors and windows, but not a single responsible person present. Though the National Women's Normal College could propose a meeting, it could not answer my question. Here were only the dark, silent walls surrounding us threateningly.

I felt upset, but was not sure for what reason.

Presently two students came to ask us to go to the meeting. Their mother-in-law had not put in an appearance. There were five of us, including myself, when we went to the meeting room, and later another seven or eight turned up. So the meeting started.

The "children" seemed unable to show much consideration for their elders, for they made quite a number of complaints. However, what right had we to interfere with family affairs? Besides, in Pacific Lake Restaurant they were going to settle various important matters. Still, I spoke briefly to explain why I had come, and demanded an explanation from the college authorities for their ostrich tactics. But when I looked round, there were only daughters-in-law and family tutors, brick walls with doors and windows, not a sign of anyone responsible.

I felt upset, but was not sure for what reason.

Now the teacher I did not know started talking to the students. I did not listen carefully, but I caught the

phrase. "You mustn't knock your heads against a wall" And I heard the students say, "Miss Yang is like a brick wall" Then I seemed to have seen the light. At once I understood why I was upset

I had knocked against a brick wall! I had knocked against the Yang family's wall.

I looked at the students, and they seemed like a group of child-brides . . .

As usual, this meeting achieved nothing, for after some who thought themselves brave had made some polite criticisms of their mother-in-law, we dispersed. When I reached home and sat down by my window it was nearly dusk, and yet the depressing gloom seemed to be receding. The thought of my theory about knocking against the wall could even make me smile.

In China there are walls everywhere but they are invisible, like "ghost walls,"* so that you knock into them all the time. And the victors are those who build the walls and can knock into them without feeling any pain — but by now, I supposed, the feast at Pacific Lake Restaurant must be drawing to an end. They must be starting on their ices, and "cooling down". . . .

I seemed to see the snowy table-cloth already stained with soya-bean sauce, and the men and women sitting round the table eating ices, decreeing the same dark fate for many daughters-in-law as most daughters-in-law have suffered since ancient times under widowed mothers-in-law.

I smoked two cigarettes, and my vision grew clearer. I saw educationalists murdering students between cups of wine under the bright candelabra in the restaurant, assassins killing honest people with a smile, corpses dancing on refuse heaps, filth strewn over Aeolian harps. I wanted to draw this, but not a line could I draw. Why

* It was thought that men were made to lose their way at night by being blocked by invisible walls put up by ghosts.

had I become a teacher, to disgrace even myself? But just then Zhifang called

We were talking at random when suddenly he, too, burst out.

"Everything is dark in China! No one can do anything. Only when things are going on as usual you don't realize it. Teachers and students make a great show of being busy, looking like a real school; but when something happens the teachers disappear and the students slowly get out of harm's way too, till in the end only a few fools are left to be scapegoats, and that is that. After a few days the school is the same again. Those who kept out of the way come out of hiding, and those who disappeared come back. Then 'The earth is round,' 'Flies can spread disease' — students and teachers put on the same old act again . . ."

Does China look so dark to young students who are not always knocking against walls like me? But all they can do is to groan feebly, and the moment they groan they are slaughtered!

At night, May 21, 1925

SUDDEN NOTIONS (10)

It is humiliating for anyone to find himself in the dock, no matter whether he clears himself or not. Much more so when one who has in fact been greatly wronged still has to defend himself.

When Chinese citizens were killed by British police in the International Settlement in Shanghai,* instead of hitting back we hastened to clear the names of those who were killed. We protested that we were not "Reds," for we had not been incited by some foreign power; neither were we "rioters," for we all marched empty-handed and unarmed. But I cannot understand why Chinese should be executed by British police even if China really were "Red," or riots had actually started here. I remember how the people of New Greece also used arms against the Turks on their soil, but no one ever called them rioters. Russia has been "Red" for many years now, yet no foreign power has punished the Russians by shooting them. Only we Chinese, after our citizens have been killed, have to hasten to defend ourselves, looking hurt as we beg the world for justice.

The reason for this is actually very clear: it is because we are not rioters or Reds.

So we feel wronged, and complain loudly that their false civilization has gone bankrupt. In fact, civilization has always been like this, and it is not only today that it

* This refers to the May 30th Incident in 1925, when Shanghai workers and students who were demonstrating against the shooting of strikers in a Japanese mill were fired upon by the British police. This led to a large-scale anti-imperialist movement.

has been unmasked. But because in the past other people were the victims, we did not know of their sufferings; or we had forgotten our own past misery. There has never been a civilization in the world which combines right with might, though this may have been the dream of a few pioneers and some oppressed peoples. When they come into power themselves, though, right and might are always separated again.

Still, there are genuinely civilized men in England. Today we have seen the friendly "Declaration to the Chinese People" sent by the International Workers' Aid-China Committee organized by non-party intellectuals of different countries. One of the English signatures is that of Bernard Shaw, whose name is known to all Chinese interested in world literature. Among the French names is that of Henri Barbusse, whose works have also been translated into Chinese. His mother is English, which may account for the fact that he writes with such realism, with no trace of the hedonism common to French writers. Now all these men are coming out to demand justice for the Chinese, so I feel there is still much we can learn from the English — I do not, of course, include those policemen and merchants, or those "ladies" who clapped and jeered from their balconies when the student demonstrators marched past.

I do not mean that we should "love our enemies." All I mean is that so far we have not looked upon anyone as our enemy. Recent articles, it is true, occasionally contain such phrases as "We must see our enemy clearly." But this is a case of literary exaggeration. If there really is an enemy, we should have risen long ago with our swords to demand "blood for our blood." But instead what are we demanding? After clearing ourselves, all we want is some slight compensation. Though there are some dozen clauses in our demands, all they amount to is "We shall sever relations," and "have no more to do with you." Even the closest friends might do the same.

But the fact of the matter is because might and right are not yet one, and all we have on our side is right, we are friends with everyone, even if they slaughter us wilfully

As long as we have right only and no might, we shall always be busy defending ourselves, and exerting ourselves for nothing. During the last few days, posters have been stuck on some walls advising people not to read the *Shuntian News**. I seldom read that paper, not from any "anti-foreign" feeling, but because its views of right and wrong are so very different from mine. Occasionally, though, it hits the nail on the head, and says things which we Chinese ourselves would not say. Two or three years ago, during some patriotic movement, I happened to read one of its editorials to the effect that, when a country is declining, men always hold two conflicting opinions. Some advocate "national spirit," others "national strength." When the former are in the majority, the country will grow weak, while when the latter are in the majority, the country will grow strong. I think this is quite right, and we should constantly bear this fact in mind.

In China, unfortunately, we have always had a majority in favour of "national spirit," and that is the case today. If we do not change, we shall go downhill until we have no strength left even to defend ourselves against false charges. So while we are forced to encourage the people empty-handed, we should do all we can at the same time to build up our country's strength. Indeed, we should continue all our lives to do so.

Hence young Chinese have a much heavier responsibility than young people in other countries. For our forbears devoted so much energy to being mysterious and unfathomable, balanced and smooth, they left all the real,

* A Chinese paper sponsored by Japanese imperialists in Beijing. Started in 1901, it ceased publication in 1928.

difficult jobs for those after them. So now that one man has to do the work of several, if not of ten or a hundred, we have a chance to prove our worth. And our opponents are the stubborn Britishers, who are a good whetstone on which to improve our mettle. Assuming that the average age of these youngsters who have woken up to the facts is twenty, and paying due consideration to the fact that the Chinese age prematurely, we can still resist, work for reforms, and struggle together for at least thirty years. If this is not enough, another generation or two can continue after us . . . So many years may seem rather frightening from the point of view of one individual, but if we are so easily frightened, then we are incurable, and all we can do is resign ourselves to death. For in the history of a nation this is a very brief period, and there is no short cut. Let us, then, not hesitate, but make trial of ourselves, and struggle for our existence with malice towards none.

There are three dangers, however, that might destroy this movement. The first is the fact that we pay too much attention all the time to superficial propaganda and despise other tasks. The second is impatience with our fellow-men, which makes us call them traitors or slaves of foreign masters whenever we have the least difference of opinion. The third is that there are many clever people who seize every opportunity to snatch any immediate advantage for themselves.

June 11, 1925

STOPGAP WRITING

I

I do not know what a memorial arch bearing the inscription "*Iustitia Vincit*" would look like in a park in Paris, but it certainly looks odd in the Central Park in Beijing—today, at least. When it was erected, civilians and students paraded past and cheered

We were ranked among the victors because we sent so many workers to Europe, and we often boasted of their fine contribution to the Great War. This is seldom mentioned now the victory has been forgotten. In fact we are the vanquished

* * *

Of course, one difference between the weak and the strong is that some have guns and some do not, but the men behind the guns make even more difference. A country of weaklings, even if they have guns, can only massacre unarmed people; if the enemy is also armed, the issue is uncertain. Only then are true strength and weakness revealed

Although we could make bows and arrows, we were defeated by the Golden Tartars, the Mongols and the Manchus. In a Song Dynasty book of anecdotes I remember some townsfolk's jokes about the difference between the Tartars and the Hans.

A: The Tartars have arrows. What have we?

B: Chain armour.

A The Tartars have their Fourth Prince Whom have we?

B General Yue Fei

A The Tartars have spiked clubs (with which they hit people over the head) What have we?

B We have noddles!

Noddles were all we had after the Song Dynasty. Now, however, we have discovered something called "the national spirit," which is more mysterious and unfathomable.

* * *

But when our national spirit is not founded on real strength, all we have left to boast of is our noddles, for which we are beholden to no one since they are our very own. In other words, we glory in self-abasement. I have recently had a great load on my mind, for fear lest China revert even more to the past. Melon-shaped caps, long gowns, shoes with double ridges, bowing with the hands together, red visiting cards and water-pipes may all become symbols of patriotism, for we can produce all these without any effort, just like our noddles. (Perhaps we should leave out the red visiting cards, though, to avoid being suspected as "Reds")

I would not call the Chinese too conservative, however. I am sure that not all foreign products — such as opium and playing cards — will be banned. Besides, our patriots tell us that mahjong is now becoming popular in the West, so we are having our revenge.

* * *

Our patriots also tell us that China loves peace. But why, if we love peace, do we fight among ourselves year after year? Perhaps it would be more accurate to say: China loves peace with foreign powers.

Surely the time has come for us to examine ourselves carefully and stop telling lies. Once we cease deceiving ourselves and others, there will be fresh hope for us.

To my mind, admitting our weaknesses is less shameful than boasting of our love for peace.

June 23, 1925

II

Those who styled themselves "literati" or "upper class" might well call themselves "common citizens" today. In fact, that is what many of them are doing. Men must change with the times. Whereas Qing Dynasty scholars took the government examinations in order to become licentiates, or bought this degree, we today have to attend modern schools. The title "common citizen" is becoming more fashionable every day, and increasing kudos attaches to it. This appellation commands much the same respect as "upper class" once did, and the bearer can retain his former status even though the times have changed. If you meet a common citizen like this you must flatter him, or at least nod, bow, smile and agree with all he says, in the way the lower orders used to behave to the great. Failing this you will be accused of "pride" or "aristocratic airs," for he is now a common citizen. And what else but pride could stop you from showing the highest respect to a common citizen?

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, most people hated revolutionaries as if they were vipers and scorpions; but once the Nanjing government was set up, smart gentlemen and merchants made up to anyone they met who looked like a revolutionary. "We were with you all along," they would assure them.

After Xu Xilin* assassinated Enming, many revolutionaries were arrested, among them Mr. Tao Chengzhang.

* (1872-1907). In July 1907, he started a revolt and killed Enming, the governor of Anhui. He was captured and executed.

The charge against him was: "He wrote the *History of Political Power in China* and studied hypnotism in Japan." (Why it should be criminal to study hypnotism I find hard to understand) Even his father at home had a very hard time, but later, when the revolution prospered, he was addressed as "respected old gentleman," and go-betweens came to arrange a match with his respected grandson. Soon after this, Mr Tao was unfortunately assassinated; still, even then five or six hundred of the gentry and merchants carried incense in the procession as his shrine was taken to the ancestral temple. Only after Yuan Shikai crushed the Second Revolution* did his family begin to be ignored.

Who says the Chinese are against changes? When anything new is introduced from abroad, though we oppose it at first, when we find it has come to stay we naturally change. But instead of adapting ourselves to whatever is new, we adapt whatever is new to suit ourselves.

Thus when Buddhism first came to China, it was very much attacked; but by the time Neo-Confucians were discussing Buddhism and monks were writing poetry, the three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) were ready to merge into one. I hear that today the Understanding Goodness Society has five gods: Confucius, Lao Zi, Buddha, Christ and Mohammed.

* * *

The time-honoured custom in China, when you want to attack someone, is to give him a label or "nickname." This is the method used by all pettifoggers since the Ming and Qing dynasties. If, for instance, you want to accuse Zhang or Li, they will seem too normal if you just use their names; but if you call them "Six-Armed Demon Zhang" and "Li the White-Brow Tiger," the magistrate

*The rising against Yuan Shikai organized by members of the Kuomintang headed by Sun Yat-sen in July 1913 in Jiangxi, Anhui and Guangdong.

need not examine the facts to be convinced they are scoundrels

Only half the moon faces the sun, and we can never see the other half. Those who praise China's civilization simply show the bright side too, hiding the dark side. For example, when reference is made to human relations, our books are filled with such beautiful terms as "compassion," "love" and "brotherhood." And we have many fine-sounding classical allusions like "five generations under one roof," "a righteous family," or "virtuous lineage." As for the uncomplimentary epithets, they are hidden in the hearts of living men or in less well-known books. Thus the elementary textbook for lawyers, *Legal Writing by Xiao He and Cao Can*, contains many common terms of abuse. Let me quote a few to illustrate what I mean.

Relations:

Wicked relations, owlsh relations,* wild-beast relations, crocodile relations, tigerish relations, unnatural relations.

Elders:

Crocodile uncles, tigerish uncles, wicked elder brothers, poisonous elder brothers, tigerish elder brothers.

Juniors:

Disobedient sons, bad nephews, wicked nephews, disobedient grandsons, tigerish grandsons, owlsh nephews, wicked nephews, disobedient concubines, shrewish daughters-in-law, owlsh brothers, bad sons-in-law, savage servants.

No mention is made here of parents, who could not be sued, for in all past dynasties "the empire was ruled by filial piety"

*The owl was said to eat its mother, and therefore stood for an unfilial son or someone with no sense of family loyalty.

Pettifoggers are not the only ones to use this method. In the first year of the Republic when Mr Zhang Taiyan* was in Beijing, he used to say what he liked, and praised or criticized others just as he pleased. Then those whom he criticized most gave him the nickname "Zhang the Lunatic." Since he was a lunatic, his opinions were naturally worthless ravings. Their newspaper went on publishing what he said, though, but with the unusual title. "Zhang the Lunatic Is Raving Again." Once, however, he criticized their opponents. What could they do? The next day the paper carried the headline: "Zhang the Lunatic Is Talking Sense at Last"

When I first read *Gui Gu Zi*,** I was not much impressed by the strategies outlined there. But in the section "On Raising Your Opponent, Then Pinning Him Down" we find these words: "We can pin him down and force him this way or that . . . We can retract or change our stand completely. Though we are down, we can come out on top again without being thrown off our balance." That sentence, "Though we are down, we can come out on top again," is rather frightening. Yet such devices are common in our society

* * *

Of course, *Gui Gu Zi* is definitely not the work of the teacher of Su Qin and Zhang Yi,** and must be by some later writer. However, this writer was definitely not a "petty-minded man" either, but rather a simple soul. Lai Gu of the Song Dynasty said:

To start and to settle disputes, to raise someone up, then pin him down — these are common occurrences.

* (1868-1936), a famous scholar and revolutionary at the end of the Qing Dynasty

** A book attributed to Gui Gu Zi of the Warring States Period (475-221 B C).

*** Two famous orators of the Warring States Period

Men do such things instinctively, without having to learn them from *Gui Gu Zi*

These are normal methods, nothing out of the ordinary, yet the writer recorded what little he knew of them as if they were some great secret. This shows what a simple, honest fellow he was, with little cunning — let alone deceit — in his heart. Would a millionaire frame and treasure a ten-dollar note?

No, *Gui Gu Zi* was not an unscrupulous schemer. If he had been, he would have spoken more guardedly, or put these words into someone else's mouth, or kept silent and remained in power for ever. This last, best trick is never disclosed by those who understand it, and never put down in writing, so I do not know it either. If I did, I would not go on editing this weekly *The Wilderness* under the lamplight and doing this "stopgap writing" for it.

But we do often witness or suffer from all sorts of hocus-pocus. Every summer in recent years A has suddenly attacked B, then made friends with B to fight C, then joined C to fight B, then launched an attack on C — these are the raising-up and pinning-down tactics just mentioned. It is the same trick when someone spends a few hundred dollars on a feast, and many of the guests suddenly transfer their allegiance. But, as *Lai Gu* said, men nowadays do this instinctively and do not have to learn it. A man who can do this only after reading *Gui Gu Zi* is like a student who thinks he can learn from a grammar how to talk in a foreign language — he is bound to fail.

July 1, 1925

III

It is now forty days after the May 30th Incident, and the situation in Beijing is just like that on May 29. No

doubt our clever critics will say as usual that this was "five minutes' fervour" There have been certain exceptions, though, as when they knocked at Mr Tang Erhe's* gate, "hammering on it for at least fifteen minutes" (See the *Morning News* of June 23) Some students also remind themselves from time to time of this "five minutes' fervour," as if it were something they had foreseen long ago.

But old Chinese gentlemen — including those old gentlemen of about twenty — always manage somehow to hold conflicting views For instance, they have both too low and too high an opinion of women and children They will not let women appear on public occasions, yet they worship accomplished women and infant prodigies, hoping by this means to marry into a rich and powerful family, so that they can rise more quickly in the world. They talk with even greater relish about Mulan who joined the army and Tying who rescued her father,** actually revealing themselves in the process as good-for-nothing pedants It is the same with students On the one hand they do not want students to discuss politics, on the other they expect them to defeat the barbarians. If the students cannot do this, these gentlemen jeer at their incompetence

In a country where there is universal education, nine-tenths of the people are educated; but in China students are still a special class. Even so, they are young after all, so of course they have no superhuman powers All they can do is make speeches, march on parades, do propaganda and the like, to light sparks which may kindle a fire in men's hearts and create a blaze which may revive

* At one time minister of education for the Northern warlord government When students went to his house to collect money, they hammered for some time on the gate.

** Mulan dressed up as a man and went to war in place of her father. When Tying's father was sentenced to slavery, she begged the emperor to let her serve in his stead.

the nation. If men refuse to be kindled, however, the sparks can only burn themselves out, just as paper images and carriages burn out on the street during funerals. Some onlookers gather round for a few moments, but it makes no permanent impression on them, and lasts only as long as the knocking on Mr Tang's gate. If nobody else will budge, how can these youngsters manufacture guns, warships and aeroplanes by themselves, or capture barbarian generals and conquer barbarian countries? So this "five minutes' fervour" is a national disease, not just a students' disease. It disgraces not only the students but the whole nation, for in other more vigorous countries such things do not happen. We need not blame foreigners, but our own cold, colourless people are certainly shameless and stupid — those in power as well as mere onlookers — when they all start jeering at the students after such an event.

I will not deal here with those clever people who have other motives, but I think even those honest students have one grave fault, hoped for or jeered at by the onlookers. From the start they believe they have super-human strength and can easily get what they want. When they let their fancies run away with them like this, they are bound to fall heavily in real life and hurt themselves badly. When they use their strength too violently, once they stop to rest they can hardly move again. So it would be better for people in general to realize that they have only human strength. That would be more realistic and sounder.

Now everything from studying to "making love to the opposite sex" seems to be condemned by certain high-minded individuals. But to my mind, unduly harsh criticism is another symptom of the "five minutes' fervour." For instance, if you advocate a certain slogan — such as not buying British or Japanese goods — doing this for seven days fasting, or for a month shedding tears all the time, is not so good as doing it for five years without

stopping reading, or for ten years without stopping going to the opera, or for fifty years without stopping looking for friends of the opposite sex, or for a hundred years without stopping talking of love I remember how Han Fei Zi* taught the art of horse-racing One secret was not to be ashamed even if you come in last You may be slow, but if you press steadily on — even though you drop behind or fail to come first — you are bound to reach your goal eventually.

July 8, 1925

* A thinker and statesman of the third century B C.

HIS MOTHER'S!

Anyone who lives in China must often have heard the expression "His mother's!" or one of its popular variants * I imagine this term has spread as far as Chinese feet have trodden, and is probably no less common than the polite "How are you?" If, as some claim, the peony is China's national flower, "His mother's!" is surely China's national oath.

I come from eastern Zhejiang, "a certain locality" mentioned by Mr Chen Yuan ¹* The national oath is rather simple there: it has been cut down to "Mother" and no one else is ever involved. It was only after I had travelled a little that I began to marvel at the scope and profundity of our national oath; for it goes back to a man's ancestors, sidewise to his sisters, down to his descendants, and may even be used against someone of the same sex. It certainly is "infinite as the Milky Way"*** Moreover, it is not only directed against men, but against animals as well. The year before last I saw a coal-cart with one of its wheels bogged down in a deep rut. The driver had jumped down in a rage and was savagely beating the mule in the traces.

"Your sister's!" he cursed. "Your sister's!"

* The full expression means that the one addressed is the offspring of an adulterous mother

** Chen Yuan in his attacks on Lu Xun even sneered at Lu Xun's birthplace, Shaoxing. He said that a man from "a certain locality" — meaning Lu Xun — was inciting the students to revolt.

*** A quotation from *Zhuang Zi*

I do not know what the practice is in other countries. I read a novel called *Hunger* by the Norwegian Hamsun, in which I found a good deal of rough language, but nothing of this sort. There are plenty of scoundrels in Gorky's books, but judging by what I have read they have no swear-word like this either. Only Artzybashev in *The Worker Nikolai Shevyrjov* made Aladjev, who believed in passive resistance, exclaim "Your mother's!" But since Aladjev had already determined to sacrifice himself for love, we dare not laugh at his paradoxical behaviour. To translate this phrase into Chinese is only too easy, but translation into other languages seems to be difficult. In German it becomes "I have used your mother," in Japanese "Your mother is my bitch." This is all very puzzling from my point of view.

Apparently, then, in Russia they have some such term of abuse too. But since it is not so refined and all-inclusive as in China, the honour should still be ours. It is not a very great honour in any case, so the Russians probably will not protest. And since it is not such a frightening term as "Bolshevism," China's rich, famous and moral gentlemen need not be too alarmed. Yet even in China, only "low-class people" like rickshaw men use this term. Respectable gentlemen like the literati never let it pass their lips, much less commit it to writing. I missed the Zhou Dynasty, and was born too late to be a scholar or official, hence I can write as I please. Yet I still abbreviate the national oath, cutting out the verb in front and the noun behind, and using the third person singular. I am afraid this is because I have never pulled a rickshaw, so I cannot help being "rather upper class." But if the use of this term is confined to one part of the population only, how can we consider it the national oath? That does not matter, for the peony so admired by the rich and mighty is not considered "the noblest flower of all" by the lower classes either.

I am not sure how "His mother's!" originated, or in what period of history. The swear-words in the classics are simply terms like "Hireling!" "Slave!" or "Carcass!" Slightly stronger are "Old dog" and "Young badger!" Stronger still are those referring to a man's ancestors; yet even these are no worse than "Your mother is a slave!" or "Spawn of a eunuch!" I have never seen anything like "Mother's!" though of course the literati may have tabooed it. But in the Buddhist writings compiled by Dao Xuan of the Tang Dynasty we find the following passage:

Xing Zicai of the Northern Wei Dynasty felt that women were unreliable.

"How do you know that your true surname is Wang?" he asked Wang Yuanjing.

Wang Yuanjing changed colour.

"My surname may not be Xing either," Xing continued. "How can anyone prove it for five generations?"

This passage is highly suggestive.

During the Jin Dynasty (265-420), family status counted for a great deal — far too much. It was easy for young nobles to become officials, and even the drunkards or gluttons among them were treated as beings cast in a finer mould. Although north China had been conquered by the Tobas, the literati were more fanatical than ever in their respect for class distinctions, dividing themselves into different ranks, and observing these most strictly. No commoner, however great his talent, could compare with these aristocrats, who simply rested on their ancestors' laurels, took pride in bygone achievements, and whose hollow conceit was thoroughly maddening. And since scholars took refuge behind their forbears like this, the oppressed common people naturally hated these forbears. We do not know whether Xing Zicai was speaking in anger or not, but to those taking cover behind family

position his words must have been a deadly blow. For their power and prestige depended completely upon their pedigree; therefore once this pedigree was destroyed it was all up with them. This is the fate of all who depend upon inherited glory.

The same idea, expressed through the lips of "low-class people" who lacked Xing Zicai's literary talent, became "His mother's!"

These were surely remarkable tactics — to assault the ancient stronghold of the great and noble by aiming at their ancestry! The man who invented "His mother's!" should really rank as a genius — though rather a low sort of genius

After the Tang Dynasty, people gradually stopped boasting about their family. By the time of the Golden Tartars and the Mongols, when barbarians were honoured as emperors, of course butchers and waiters could become gentlemen, and class distinctions stopped being clearly defined. Yet there continued to be men who would go to any lengths to climb up to the "upper class." We read in Liu Shizhong's ballad:

*The foolish rabble of the market-place
 No taunt or censure shames;
 They twist the titles of their different trades
 To make high-sounding names
 They choose some epithet alike in sound,
 But noble and refined;
 And here are some absurd examples now
 Of what I have in mind. —
 The miller takes the name Refinement's Flower,
 The butcher Goodness Meet. . . .
 Vendors of rice are known as Virtue's Rise,
 Bakers as Grace Replete!*

(From Yang Chaoying's anthology of
 Yuan Dynasty ballads.)

Such were the ridiculous airs of the newly-rich at that time

Before "low-class people" became rich, "His mother's!" was naturally always on their lips; but as soon as they had an opportunity of bettering themselves and learning a few written characters, they took to culture. They acquired literary titles and high social status, and compiled genealogies tracing their line back to some early ancestor — a famous scholar or a distinguished statesman. After this they belonged to the "upper class" and began speaking and acting in a most refined way, like their renowned predecessors. There are intelligent men even among the foolish mob, however, who soon saw through these tricks and coined the proverb. "On their lips are high moral sentiments, but at heart they are bandits and harlots." The people understand this perfectly.

And, in protest, they cry, "His mother's!"

Still, this failure to spurn and make a clean sweep of past glories, whether one's own or another's, and this insistence on posing as someone else's ancestor, are rather despicable. Some people, indeed, even threaten the life of the object of this curse; but since they are usually seizing an opportunity instead of creating one, this is also rather despicable.

The Chinese even now are divided into innumerable ranks, and family status and ancestors still count for a great deal. Unless some change is made, our national oath will persist for ever, either uttered or unexpressed. Above, below, and on every side, we shall be surrounded by "His mother's!" even in time of peace.

Occasionally, though, this term is used in a peculiar way, to express surprise or approval. Once in our parts I saw a peasant and his son eating their midday meal together. The son pointed at a bowl of vegetables.

"This isn't bad, mother's!" he said to his father. "You try it."

"I don't want it, mother's!" replied the old man "Eat it yourself"

It had become as refined as the term "My dear," so fashionable today.

July 19, 1925

ON LOOKING FACTS IN THE FACE

Mr. Xusheng in his column on current events has taken as his topic: "Courage is needed to face facts squarely" (*Advance*, Number 19.) True, we must dare look things in the face before we dare think, speak, act, or assume responsibility. If we dare not even look, what else are we good for? But unfortunately this courage is what we lack most in China.

What I have in mind at the moment, though, is this.

Chinese men of letters have seldom had the courage to look squarely at life, or at least at social phenomena. Our sages long ago taught men, "Avert your gaze from all that is unseemly!" And their sense of seemliness was very strict. Not only is looking squarely out of the question, even casting a glance or stealing a glimpse is forbidden. I cannot speak for modern young people's minds, but as far as their bodies go, most of them still stoop and keep their eyes on the ground to show that they are genuine chips of the old block and respectable citizens. As for the theory that this exercises a great influence abroad, since it has only appeared during the last month it remains to be proved.

To return to this question of looking at things squarely: first you dare not, then you cannot; and of course in the end you do not see — you are blind. When a car breaks down on the road, men crowd round to stare, and see something black and shining. But though they will not face up to the sufferings caused by their own conflicts or evils in society, they have to suffer them. Men of letters are at least more sensitive, and from their writings we

can see that some of them have really been discontented; but at the crucial moment when an abuse is about to be exposed, they hasten to declare that "all is well," and close their eyes. With their eyes closed, they can see that everything is perfect: the suffering before them is due simply to the fact that "Before Heaven puts great trust in a man, it will first torture his spirit, rack his frame, chasten his flesh, exhaust him utterly, and confound him at every turn"*

So there are no problems, abuses or injustice, and hence no solutions, reforms or opposition. For all will turn out for the best, and we have no cause to worry. We can sip our tea with an easy mind, and lie down to sleep in peace. If we go on saying things nobody wants to hear, we shall be guilty of "speaking out of turn," and are bound to be corrected by college professors. Pah!

I have never made the experiment, but it has occurred to me that if we were to expose an old gentleman who has long been hibernating in his den to the blazing noon-day sun in summer, or drag a rich man's daughter who has never left her chamber into the wilderness one pitch-black night, they would probably have to shut their eyes to go on dreaming. Then they would not see the darkness or the light, though all around them would have changed completely. This is the case with Chinese men of letters too. They close their eyes to all around to cheat themselves and others, using two methods concealment and deceit.

The writers of romances were aware of the faults in the Chinese way of marriage. So they made some talented scholar write a poem on a wall, some beautiful girl would write a poem in reply, they would be drawn to each other — now we call it falling in love — and would pledge themselves to be true for ever. But that was where the trouble started. As we all know, in poems,

* A quotation from *Mencius*.

plays or novels, a pledge to be true for ever may sound rather romantic (on condition, of course, that the man comes first in the palace examination); but in actual life it was forbidden, and the lovers would have to part. Writers at the end of the Ming Dynasty closed their eyes and got round this, however, by making the brilliant youth pass first in the imperial examination and the emperor order him to marry the girl. Under such pressure as this, the parents' and go-betweens' wishes were not worth a cent, and the whole problem was solved. If there was any question, it was whether or not he could pass the examination, but had nothing to do with the virtues and defects of the marriage system.

(Recently it has been suggested that our modern poets write and publish poems in order to show off and attract the opposite sex, and the periodicals which print their works have been under fire. But though the ancients had no journals, walls "existed from the earliest times," and were means of disseminating news. According to *The Canonization of the Gods*,* King Zhou wrote a poem on the wall of the temple of the goddess Nu Wa, so the origin of this practice is very ancient. Newspapers may refuse manuscripts written in the vernacular or taboo limericks, but you cannot tear down or censor all the walls. Even if you paint them all black, people can still scratch on them with crocks, or write on them in chalk; and not much can be done to stop them. Poets no longer print their poems on wooden blocks and hide them in the mountains for posterity, but publish them constantly. And though this may cause trouble, I do not see how it can be prevented.)

The little tragedy in *A Dream of Red Mansions*** is common in our society — for the author dared to write comparatively truthfully. The end is not bad either.

* A popular Ming Dynasty novel.

** A famous eighteenth century novel by Cao Xueqin.

Not only is the Jia family restored to its former glory, to prosper exceedingly, but even Baoyu becomes a monk in a crimson woollen cape. Monks are common enough, but how many of them have a fine cape like that? No doubt he was "already a saint and no mere mortal." As for the other characters, their fates are listed one by one in conclusion to wind up the story; so this is the end of a problem, not the beginning. Even if the reader is a little upset, there is nothing he can do. However, in the additions or emendations made by later writers, the characters are either resurrected from the dead or married off in the nether regions, for "there must be a happy ending." This was because these men felt such an urge to deceive themselves and others that a little deception was not enough: they had to close their eyes and talk gibberish. As Haeckel has said, the difference between men is sometimes greater than that between men and apes. When we compare the author of *A Dream of Red Mansions* with the men who added to his book, we can see the truth of this.

As early as the time of the Six Dynasties, men doubted the truth of the saying: "Fortune favours the good." Indeed they even wrote in epitaphs, "This good man received no reward. Heaven has deceived us." But later on fools tried to hide the truth again. We know from the *Records of the Yuan Dynasty* that Liu Xin threw his three-year-old child into the urn in which he was burning sacrificial papers, in the vain hope of securing Heaven's blessing. But when this story appears again in an opera, the hero's aim is to prolong his mother's life; and he succeeds in this, while the child does not die either. In the story about a woman who is willing to nurse a husband with an incurable disease in *Tales to Arouse the World*,* they commit suicide together; but in a later version a snake falls into the medicine pot, and after taking

* A collection of tales compiled by Feng Menglong in the seventeenth century.

this medicine the husband is completely cured. Thus any defects are glozed over by the writer, the ending is usually changed, and the reader is tricked into thinking all is right with the world — if anybody suffers, it must be his own fault.

In some cases of well-known incidents in history they cannot hide the truth. Take the deaths of Guan Yu and Yue Fei* for example, when other tricks have to be used. In the case of Yue Fei, they say he has died for some sin in a previous life; in the case of Guan Yu, they make him a god after death. One cannot escape from fate, and deification is highly gratifying. There is no need to blame the murderers then, nor to grieve for those wrongly killed. It is all decided in heaven and will work out all right; there is no need for anyone to worry.

Afraid to look facts in the face, the Chinese resort to concealment and deceit to contrive ingenious lines of retreat, and think this quite right and proper. This shows the cowardice, laziness and low cunning of our national character. Content to go downhill from day to day, we imagine we are advancing from glory to glory. In fact, each time a dynasty falls a few more loyal subjects are added to the list of martyrs; and later, instead of trying to recover our past heritage, we simply heap praises on the dead. Each time there is banditry, a new group of women martyrs is created, but once the trouble is over, instead of punishing the evil-doers or improving our defences, we simply sing the praises of those virtuous women. Apparently our country's defeat or banditry are simply occasions for us to display our virtue and increase our worth; hence they should be encouraged and need not cause worry or regret. Of course, there is nothing more we can do about it, for through these dead

* Guan Yu, a famous general of the Three Kingdoms Period, was defeated and killed by the army of Wu. Yue Fei, a patriotic general of the Southern Song Dynasty, was falsely accused and killed by a traitor.

we have gained the highest glory. At the commemoration of martyrs in Shanghai and Hankou,¹ live men fought and cursed each other under a most lofty sacrificial tablet — following in the steps of our ancestors.

Literature is the spark of fire from the national spirit, and the torch that lights our way forward. Literature and the national spirit also act upon each other in the same way as sesame oil and sesame seeds. The oil is pressed from the seeds, but the seeds steeped in this oil become more oily. If you want oil, well and good, otherwise, you should add other ingredients like water or soda. Because we Chinese have never dared to look life in the face, we have to resort to concealment and deceit, hence we have produced a literature of concealment and deceit; and with this literature we have sunk more deeply than ever into the quagmire of concealment and deceit, to such an extent that we do not know it ourselves. The world is changing from day to day; it is high time for our writers to take off their masks, look frankly, keenly and boldly at life, and write about real flesh and blood. It is high time for a brand-new arena for literature, high time for some bold fighters to charge headlong into battle!

The fashion seems to have changed: the praise of blood and iron has taken the place of the songs to flowers and the moon which one used to hear everywhere. But if there is deceit in our hearts and upon our lips, to speak of A and B is as false as when we spoke of Y and Z. It serves only to stop the mouths of those "critics" who despised the flowers and the moon, and gratify them with the thought that China is going to prosper once more. It is a pity that in the fine name of patriotism they are closing their eyes again — or perhaps they have always been closed.

* Those massacred during the May 30th Incident in Shanghai, 1925, and those killed in Hankou for supporting the Shanghai workers' movement

Without bold fighters who will charge clean through our traditional ideas and devices there can be no genuine modern literature in China

July 22, 1925

NOT IDLE CHAT (3)

In the "Idle Chat" of *Modern Critic*, Number 48, Mr. Chen Yuan, carried away by righteous indignation, protests on behalf of those writers who have suffered material loss by having their works pirated. Since my humble name is included in his list I feel quite overwhelmed. So after supper I am setting down my reactions. My "motive" in writing may well be far from "pure." I remember when I was a boy in my home town, and the lower orders showed little gratitude for the pretended favours the gentry bestowed on them, they would be abused for their "ingratitude." My father and grandfather were scholars who could be ranked among the literati; but in my generation, somehow or other, our family has picked up low-class habits. I dislike accepting condolences, let alone favours. The fact is, I always suspect them to be false. No doubt this suspicion is the root of "ingratitude," and it may be this which makes what I write "impure."

I have never experienced an "urge to create" which clamps me to my desk and impels me to write even when threatened on all sides by fire and sword. I know quite well that such an urge is pure, noble and utterly admirable: the trouble is I have never had it. One morning a few days ago when a friend glared at me, I flushed up and felt a pang like an urge to something; but later, refreshed by the cold, late autumn wind, the temperature of my face returned to normal — I did no writing. As for those writings of mine already printed, they were milked out of me. When I say milked, I refer to the

method of extraction I am not claiming that my works are like milk in the hope that they will be sealed in glass bottles and sent to some "palace of art" If we use a term which has suddenly come into fashion, and call the immature works of young people eager to rush into print "miscarriages," then mine are just "abortions," or not even abortions but "a cat in place of a prince"¹ So as soon as I finish writing, that is that I do not care a damn how publishers pirate my books or what the literati say But if men whom I trust are willing to read them and praise them, I cannot help feeling pleased I have collected some of my writings and published them in book form just to raise money, and that is the truth.

Does that mean I am not serious when I write? No, indeed And even if I have no strong sense of my own dignity, I made no deliberate effort to be amusing When you are being "milked," how can you smile and crack jokes? Only an immortal could do such a thing And I have taken no Taoist saint as my master.

But after writing I do not care much for my brain children, not "considering my broken broom a treasure"^{**} For, as I have explained, once they are written, to hell with them! Who wants to linger over things dead and done with? When editors with their great discernment select and publish my works, I never pay any attention either. In fact, even if I did, I could do nothing to stop them. Once, having undertaken to collect royalties for a translator, when I heard the book had sold out I wrote to the publishers to ask for the money. They replied that their former manager had retired, and I

* The story was told that when one of the concubines of Emperor Zhen Zong (998-1022) had a son, the empress stole the child and put a cat in its place

** Emperor Wen Di (220-224) of the Wei Dynasty wrote that scholars boasted of their own talents and despised those of others Thus a man thought his own old broom worth ten thousand pieces of gold.

must apply to him. This was a blow. Since the publishers were in Shanghai, I could hardly take the train there to dun them in person or sue them. And I have a few more objections of my own to these anthologies. One is that when the original has misprints — quite obvious misprints — they do not correct them. Another is that they will make these impressive statements about the “isms” or “ologies” of the work, which seldom bear much resemblance to my own views. Naturally, criticism is an “adventure of the soul,” and a critic’s soul is always more advanced than a writer’s. But in what they call a corpse I can clearly hear a heart beating. This is surely a case of “never the twain shall meet.” Apart from this, I have no great complaint.

This may sound like refined oriental generosity, but I fear it actually stems from the fact that I do not live by my pen. In China the standard rate for a congratulatory essay in the classical euphuistic style is still about one hundred taels of silver, whereas writing in the vernacular is worth nothing. As for translation, this is said to be advocated by men with evil minds who cannot write themselves and envy those who can; so when an advance is made in the field of letters, translations will not be worth a cent. As for what I have written myself, although I was turned down many times to begin with, my present price ranges from one to three dollars a thousand words; but since I have not many good customers, I often write this and that out of a sense of duty. Some people imagine that I have used my royalties not only to build a house and buy rice, but to keep myself in cigarettes and sweets. In fact, these fraudulent funds come from other sources. I am really not much good at making faces to frighten publishers before negotiating with them. It seems to me that the cheapest thing in China is a workman’s labour. After that comes what we call writing, while cunning alone makes big money. If anyone wants to live solely by his pen, my experience

is that placing an article takes from one month to a year or more; so by the time the money arrives the author will have starved to death; in fact, if it is summer, he will have rotted away and will have no stomach left for food

So I always use other means to keep myself, and only do what is called writing when I am "milked" Since my writings are "milked" out of me, they obviously have little to do with "inspiration," "a creative urge" and the like. Then another question arises If I did not have to earn my living by other means and could concentrate on writing, would I then have "inspiration" and all the rest of it, and produce relatively great works, or at least refrain from presenting skinned cats in the place of princes? I do not know about that. From morning till night the whole year round, teachers in country schools teach the village children. They do not "think about politics all the time" or "join in all sorts of futile activities," but neither do they seem to produce manuscripts like *Prolegomena to the Study of Education* or other scholarly expositions to be preserved for posterity. On the other hand, works like Marx's *Capital* or Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* were not written after sipping Mocha coffee and smoking Egyptian cigarettes. There may be editors and translators "with special talents" under Minister Zhang Shizhao, or writers for "big periodicals" which are subsidized by officials or receive advertisement fees from banks who, when thoroughly rested and replete after planning and finishing their tasks, may polish their language for months and produce some outstanding and elegant work, most ancient and profound. In my own case, provided my belly is filled and I have not too many callers, I stay placidly behind closed doors and do no writing at all. Or if I write, it will be some mild, ambiguous remarks — what is known as balanced and impartial talk — equivalent, in fact, to not writing at all.

So when small publishers in Shanghai turn into mosquitoes and suck my blood, though of course they cause me some material damage, I do not feel too resentful; for I know they are just mosquitoes and so does everyone else. What has damaged me most in life is not publishers, soldiers, bandits, nor well-known rogues, but "rumours." This year, for instance, there was talk of "inciting students," "plotting to become college president," and "having front teeth knocked out." Once even Mr Chen Yuan who sympathized with me for my loss of royalties was taken in, and published these rumours in his customary "Idle Chat" in *Modern Critic* (Number 25). This shows the force of rumour. Similarly, it is less damaging to a girl student to be robbed of her red scarf by bandits than to have slander circulated about her by low, skulking literati. I have not been able, however, to discover whether these rumours are made up by one person or by several, and what the names of the rumour-mongers are. In fact, for lack of time, I have stopped investigating; but for convenience in writing I shall call them "beasts."

Despite this division into men and beasts, the beasts have unfortunately mingled with the men; and since they all have human faces, one cannot tell the difference. So I have become suspicious, and dislike listening to advice, and since I have nothing to say, I do not do much writing. Sometimes a genuinely indignant outburst strikes me as odd and queer. This has put the finishing touch to my low-class "ingratitude," and, indeed, made it incurable.

The truth of the matter is, though we dislike the name "compiler" because it reminds us of the compilers of examination essays in the Ming Dynasty, we really need a few such men today. During recent years, the work of some unknown writers has been better than that of well-known authors, yet no one has paid any attention to them — they have been left to perish on their own.

Last year I did suggest to Mr D F * that someone should collect all the periodicals from different localities and go through them carefully, then select and publish a few collections of short stories to make them generally known. All stories already in separate editions should be excluded — “politely seen off the premises” But nothing came of my suggestion no decision was reached at the time, and later we all went our different ways. I cannot do this work myself, for I am biased. When it comes to discussing rights and wrongs, I always think my friends in the right, and consider all those who oppose me as rather poor in technique. There seems to be no “fairness” in my heart, nor have I seen it in other people either. Still, I go on hoping that somewhere it exists. This is why I dare not set myself up either as a judge or a literary critic.

Since there are no professional compilers, critics could do this work too, for a critic’s job is not only to uproot weeds but to water beautiful flowers — or beautiful flowers in embryo. The chrysanthemum, for example, is a beautiful flower which started as a wild plant with small yellow petals, commonly known as Stars-in-Heaven. But perhaps there is no good writing today, or perhaps once men become critics they adopt a most lofty tone; for I have only seen young writers knocked over the head, jeered at or passed over completely. Very seldom do critics give encouragement or guidance. As for certain “men of letters” who pose as critics, their sole function seems to be that of a bodyguard — they gesticulate and hold forth, just to protect their master. To do this, they even stab others in the back, not mentioning names or giving clear evidence but using insidious language, so that the man attacked does not know that he is their target. And they fill in the gaps in their writing by a whispering campaign to arouse everyone’s suspicions.

* Yu Dafu, a progressive writer.

This bestial vilification is not confined to writers — I have seen it used this year against girls as well. The ancients spoke of “devilish tricks,” but of course there are no devils. What they meant was creatures like these. Of course such scum are beneath contempt, while even those who merely act as bodyguards should not be critics either, for a man doing such work may think himself unbiased when actually he is biased, or think himself fair when actually he is unfair. No one with ulterior motives should be a critic.

Publishers, like other merchants, are simply out for profit. We all know that their “motive” in publishing or making appraisals is “impure.” Hence we never consider them in the same category as university professors. But since profit-making is their only motive, I feel rather safe with them. Of course, those lucky people who have never been stabbed in the back will resent even such minor defects as this.

This, too, may be considered a piece of writing, but this too was milked out of me, and is not the idle chat one indulges in when sipping tea by the stove. So last of all I go back to fill in the title, to show that this is a record of true events.

November 22, 1925

GUAFUISM *

Many young people today admire Mr Fan Yuanlian** — for different reasons, of course, which I cannot guess. I personally admire him because he was the one to invent the “short course for teachers” at the end of the Guang Xu period (1875-1908) in the Qing Dynasty. Pedants may raise their eyebrows at the idea of any short cut to knowledge, but that was the time of “a dearth of teachers” in China, so this came as a timely form of famine relief. Six months later, quite a number of teachers who had studied in Japan came back bringing with them different theories of education, such as “militant nationalism” or “political centralism.” As for women’s education, the most fashionable slogan shouted on every side was: “Train wise mothers and good wives!”

I am not absolutely against this, for no one wants foolish mothers and bad wives. But there are some radicals nowadays who feel that women’s place is not only in the home, and so they attack China’s folly in even now going by old Japanese books in educating women. Men are easily deceived by oft-repeated sayings. For example, recently X was accused of selling his country and Y of working only for his family; and at once many people took up this hue and cry. Actually, if X were really a traitor, he should be getting more out of it, if Y really thought only of his family, that would at least

* Literally “widowism”

** An educationist. At the beginning of the Republic he served as president of Beijing Normal College. When he resigned in 1925, many students wanted him to remain at his post.

show he had some human feeling; but I suppose he was simply giving the country away without any thought of his family. The same is true of this business of training wise mothers and good wives. Though radicals attack it, the fact is there has never been any such thing. All there is is *guafuism*.

Guafu can only be explained in purely Chinese terms. There is no equivalent in the European, American, Indian or Arabic languages. Since it cannot be translated, we can only transliterate it as *guafuism*.

I do not know what it was like before, but by the time I was born Confucianism had already become quite "mixed." Some Confucians had Buddhist masses said to please their mothers, some believed in idols, and some admired Lord Wenchang's* chart of virtues and vices. In that chart, as I recall it, "gossip about women" was a very serious offence. I cannot speak for the period before I left home, when there were no girls' schools in China, but since I started making my own way in the world, and girls' schools were founded, I have often heard scholars discuss these girls' conduct, which as a rule they consider most immoral. Sometimes their charges are utterly fantastic, yet if you point out any inconsistencies, both the speaker and his hearers will be greatly offended, and will hate you "as if you had murdered their fathers or brothers." Of course, such behaviour may be in accordance with Confucianism, for the sage's way is profound and all-embracing. Or this may be a small matter which does not count.

I have made several guesses at the sources of this slander: old die-hards, sadistic day-dreamers, gentlemen rumour-mongers, journalists without common sense or

*The god in charge of the civil service examinations. The chart attributed to him divided men's conduct into ten categories. A candidate who accumulated marks for good conduct was considered more likely to pass the examinations than one who did not.

with some ulterior motive, principals or teachers driven away by their students, educationists who want to become school principals, dogs who join in when other dogs bark. . . . But recently I have found another category: "widowed" or "pseudo-widowed" principals and moral tutors

By "widowed" I mean those who have lost their husbands, by "pseudo-widowed" those who are separated from their husbands or forced to be spinsters.

Only recently have Chinese women begun to leave home to work outside; but since no change has been made in the clan system, and running a house is still no simple business, once a woman marries it is hard for her to do any other work at the same time. Most of the jobs open to women in China are in the teaching world, especially in girls' schools; hence most of these posts fall to the single women I have just mentioned. These positions were formerly held by Confucian moralists, but when they were turned out as ignorant pedants their places were taken by these widows and spinsters, who had all the advantages of a modern education, a period of study abroad, and the fact that they were of the same sex as their students. Moreover, because they had no relations with men and were free from the ties of children, it was generally felt that they could devote their whole minds to their sacred task, and implicit trust was placed in them. Since then, however, girl students have suffered much more under them than under those Confucian moralists.

Even wise mothers and good wives — even those of the Oriental type — cannot help having some love for their husbands and children. Though love is instinctive, it cannot develop without a certain stimulus and use. A clear analogy is the case of hands and feet, if we compare someone who sits still all the time with a blacksmith or porter. Women know true love only after they have a husband or lover and children; otherwise their love

remains latent, or withers and becomes abnormal. So to give single women the task of training wise mothers and good wives is like asking a blind man to travel on a blind horse — of course they cannot follow modern trends. Naturally, there are exceptional spinsters, like the famous mathematician Sonja Kovalevsky* or the modern thinker Ellen Key;** but such women have sublimated their desires and are uncommonly intelligent. Still, when the French Academy awarded Sonja Kovalevsky a prize in recognition of her scholarship, she wrote to a friend, "I have received letters of congratulation from all sides. But, such is the irony of fate, I have never felt more wretched!"

The character of men or women forced to lead a celibate life is inevitably affected, and most of them grow petty-minded, suspicious and morbid. Thus the medieval European priests, the Japanese ladies of honour before the Meiji Reformation, and the Chinese eunuchs of previous dynasties were much more cold and cruel than ordinary people. This is true of other celibates too. Since their lives are unnatural, their minds become warped until they find everything futile and everyone hateful. Innocent, happy faces arouse their fury. And being repressed they are hypersensitive and suspicious about other people's sex life, which arouses their jealousy. Of course, this is inevitable. Circumstances force them to adopt a pose of purity, but at heart they cannot escape the instinctive urge, and cannot help feeling that something is lacking in their lives.

Students are young people though. Provided they are not brought up as stepchildren or child-brides, they know little about society and believe there is a bright side to

* (1850-91), a Russian mathematician who received the Bordin Prize of the French Academy in 1888, and became a member of the St Petersburg Academy of Science shortly before her death.

** (1849-91), a leading Swedish feminist and educationist

everything in thought and deed they are just the reverse of most widows. If those pseudo-widows would think back to their own young days, they could easily understand this. But there are many stupid women in the world. How can they think of everything? They look at all round them with prejudiced eyes. They consider every letter a billet-doux, every laugh a sign that a girl is in love, every man who calls a lover, every visit to the park a secret rendezvous. This is their normal attitude, to say nothing of when they are plotting against their students. And on top of this, China abounds in rumours, which "true gentlemen" like to discuss to increase their own importance. Even the rumours they make up themselves are treasured, much more so those actually spread by the school authorities, which are naturally valued more highly and repeated more widely.

It seems to me there is, in an old country, a great gulf in thought as well as in deed between the old and experienced and the young. If you judge them by the same yardstick, you often reach false conclusions. For instance, in China there are many abuses, each with its special name, and books are full of veiled allusions to these. When I was editing a weekly, I frequently came across such expressions in the manuscripts sent me. I make a point of avoiding such terms myself; but when I made careful inquiries, I discovered that the reason our young contributors did not scruple to use them was because they did not understand them. The trouble is there are too many euphemisms in China, and I know them so well that I am on my guard against them. When I look at such young people, I feel there is hope for China; but when I look at those so-called scholars, I cannot help feeling depressed. Their writings may be very elegant, but how many of them are inwardly untainted? Take the writings in the classical style which appeared this year — those descriptions in Zhang Shizhao's *mémoranda* were the last word in obscenity, yet the students he

slanders cannot understand them. Even if they think they do, I doubt if they can see through the writer as well as a man like myself who has studied the classics

To return, however, to our subject. Since men's thoughts and dispositions vary enormously according to circumstances, young people cannot lead a normal life in schools run by widows or old maids. Girls should be innocent and cheerful, unlike those morbid old maids who think them depraved. Girls should be enterprising and daring, unlike those dried up spinsters who think them unruly, and are always accusing them of committing crimes. Only those students who suit them — to put it politely, those who are most "obedient" — who model themselves on their teachers, have a lack-lustre look in their eyes, pull a long face, and tiptoe with bated breath through the gloomy school which is their "home" — only these are allowed to graduate. They receive a certificate which proves that after their years of discipline here they have lost their youthfulness and become widows in spirit before marriage. They then go out to spread this in society.

But although this is China, there are some glimmers of freedom. Although these are Chinese women, they show signs of independence. The danger is that after struggling hard to become independent themselves, they in their turn bully those who have not yet won independence; just as a child-bride becomes cruel and tyrannical as soon as she is a mother-in-law. I do not mean that all single women teachers must find themselves husbands. I simply want them to be less narrow-minded and to take a broader view. At the same time, I hope all those who have an interest in education will realize what a serious problem this is in girls' schools and will do something about it. For I know no educationist will deny that education moulds character. I imagine the number of old maids in China will increase; so unless a good remedy is found, the influence of this *guafuism* will also increase,

and many girls subjected to such cold and cruel treatment will lose their liveliness and youth, never to recover it. When all educated Chinese women, whether married or single, widows or otherwise, have hearts like stagnant water and faces like frost, of course it looks most impressive, but it really does give the impression that we do not want to live like human beings. The welfare of their maids or daughters is of secondary importance.

I have made no study of education, but something has happened this year* to awaken me fully to this danger. I am therefore taking this opportunity of writing for the *Women's Weekly* to set down my thoughts on this subject.

November 23, 1925

* Referring to the repressive measures taken against the students who opposed Yang Yinyu

THIS AND THAT

I. ON STUDYING THE CONFUCIAN CLASSICS AND STUDYING HISTORY

The moment one of the rich and mighty recommends the study of the classics, he is echoed by a pack of smaller men. This is not merely study, they say. It may even "save the country." Confucius was possibly right when he said, "It is pleasant to study and go over old texts again from time to time." However, we were defeated in the year Jia Wu* I say "Jia Wu" because that was before we had modern schools and before the study of the Confucian classics was abolished.

In my opinion, those not yet well-versed in the classics need not bury themselves in books with the old binding. If they have been chanting the classics for some time and reading old books has become a habit with them, they might start studying history instead — that of the Song and Ming dynasties in particular — especially unauthorized records or miscellanies.

Both Chinese and foreign scholars today, as soon as they hear that a book is an Imperial Library edition, seem inclined to sink to their knees, overcome with awe. As a matter of fact, these books differ from the originals: misprints have crept in, and sometimes the contents have even been changed or abridged. Just look at the two versions of *A Traveller's Notebook Written in Thatched*

* 1894

Pavilions from *A Treasure Trove of Rare Books*, one based on the Song edition, the other on the Imperial Library edition. If you compare them, you will see what I mean. The same is true of the official histories sanctioned by the emperor, for the biographers of emperors and famous men like to keep up appearances and dare not utter a word of censure. I have heard that by reading between the lines you can find implied praise or blame, but who has time to solve puzzles like that? Even today there are men whose "biographies should be written by the National Historical Bureau." Well, let us not worry our heads over this.

Of course, the unauthorized histories and miscellanies may contain certain distortions of fact or biased statements, but they give us a clearer picture of the past, for at least they are free from the airs of the official histories. For Song Dynasty history one can read the *Records of Relations with the North During Three Reigns*, but this is a rare book, and therefore too expensive. The new *Collected Song Dynasty Anecdotes*, however, is cheaper. For Ming history, *Rustic Gleanings* is good, but this is also becoming rare, and a copy costs several dozen dollars. Cheaper books are the *North and South Records of the End of the Ming Dynasty*, *Unauthorized Chronicles of the End of the Ming Dynasty*, and the *History of Sorrow* published recently.

Histories are the account books of the past, and have nothing to do with fighters who are charging forward. But as I said just now, if you cannot rid yourself of the habit of reading old books, you may as well glance through these to learn how similar conditions now are to then, how our present folly in thought and deed already existed in those days, and what havoc it caused.

If you go to the Central Park, you will probably meet grandmothers taking their granddaughters out. You can tell by the old ladies what the babies will look like in

future. Similarly, if you want to know what your honourable wife will look like in later life, you have only to watch your mother-in-law. Of course, there will be some difference, but not a great one. And this is why looking through old account books is useful.

Still, I do not mean that because things have always been like this there is nothing we can do, or that we should look with awe upon the past and believe our future is predestined. Le Bon has said that the dead have more power than the living, but while there is truth in this, mankind is nevertheless progressing. According to our Minister of Education, Zhang Shizhao, in certain parts of America the theory of evolution has already been banned.* I find this really terrifying, but in spite of this ban progress will still be made.

In short, by reading history we can see how urgent it is for China to be reformed. Even our national characteristics will have to be reformed if the need arises, or else all that is recorded in these unauthorized histories will happen to us. Once we reform, we need not be afraid that granddaughters will always resemble their grandmothers. The grandmothers have small, bound feet, which make it hard to walk, but the girls, with their unbound feet, will be able to run. Your respected mother-in-law may have had smallpox which has marred her face, but your honourable wife after vaccination will have a smooth white complexion. So there will be a big difference.

December 8, 1925

* In November 1925, Zhang Shizhao wrote in his journal *Jiayin* that a schoolmaster named John Thomas Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee, U.S.A., had been arrested and fined one hundred dollars for teaching the theory of evolution.

II RAISING UP AND DIGGING DOWN

When the Chinese come across someone who makes them feel uneasy, they resort to one of two tactics, either pushing him down or raising him up

To push someone down they use the old conventions or morality, or official authority. Thus a lone fighter often perishes precisely because he is fighting for the masses, and then only can these others feel at ease. If they fail to push him down, they raise him up, fête him and feast him till he is so satisfied that he will do them no harm, and they can rest in peace

Of course, there are clever men who raise others for their own selfish ends, as when they flatter a public figure, some actress or minister of education. But if ordinary men — those who have not “studied the classics” — feel any desire to raise someone up, it is probably only in order to avoid trouble. Take the deities, for instance. They are usually worshipped because they are dangerous. This is quite clear in the case of the god of fire and the god of plague, while even the god of wealth is some horrible creature like a snake or hedgehog. The Goddess Guanyin is rather amiable, but she was imported from India: she is not indigenous. In a word, nine out of ten things that are raised up are no good

Since nine out of ten are no good, the result of raising them up is naturally the reverse of what those who raised them hoped. It makes them not only uneasy, but very uneasy, for human desires are hard to satisfy. However, even today men have not woken up to this. They are still raising others up to gain a moment's respite.

I remember reading in a book of jokes — it may have been *A Forest of Fun** — about a magistrate who was born in the Rat Year, whose subordinates therefore subscribed to give him a gold rat on his birthday. After

* By Feng Menglong (?-1645).

accepting this gift, he seized an opportunity to inform them, "Next year happens to be an important birthday for my wife. She is one year younger than I am, born in the Ox Year." Now if they had not given him a gold rat, he would never have asked for a gold ox, but once they had set the precedent it was hard to stop. They could scarcely afford a gold ox and, even if they could, his concubine's birthday would probably have been in the Elephant Year. You may think this unlikely, since the elephant is not one of the twelve zodiac animals, but this is simply my suggestion. A magistrate would naturally have his own superior tactics, too deep for us to fathom.

During the 1911 Revolution, a military governor arrived in S — where I was living. Though only a graduate of the greenwood,* who had never "studied the classics," at least he was rather public-spirited and willing to pay attention to public opinion. But then everyone, from the gentry to the common folk, started raising him up with their traditional tactics. Some paid ceremonial calls, others flattered him; one day he received a gift of silk and brocade, the next a sumptuous banquet; until he lost his bearings completely, and became like any old bureaucrat, starting to squeeze the people on every pretext.

It is a most curious fact that the river-beds in several northern provinces are now higher than the roofs of nearby buildings. At first, of course, earth was added to the dykes to prevent the river from flooding; but the higher the dyke, the greater the damage will be when there is a flood. That is why we all suffer from these endless schemes to "Save the Dykes," "Protect the Dykes," and "Ensure That No Dyke Gives Way." If, when the river first overflowed its banks, they had deepened the river-bed instead of raising the dyke, we should surely not be in such a fix today.

* A euphemism for "bandit"

If someone wants a gold ox, we should not give him so much as a dead rat, let alone a gold one. Then such people may stop celebrating their birthdays, and just to dispense with birthday congratulations will be a very good thing.

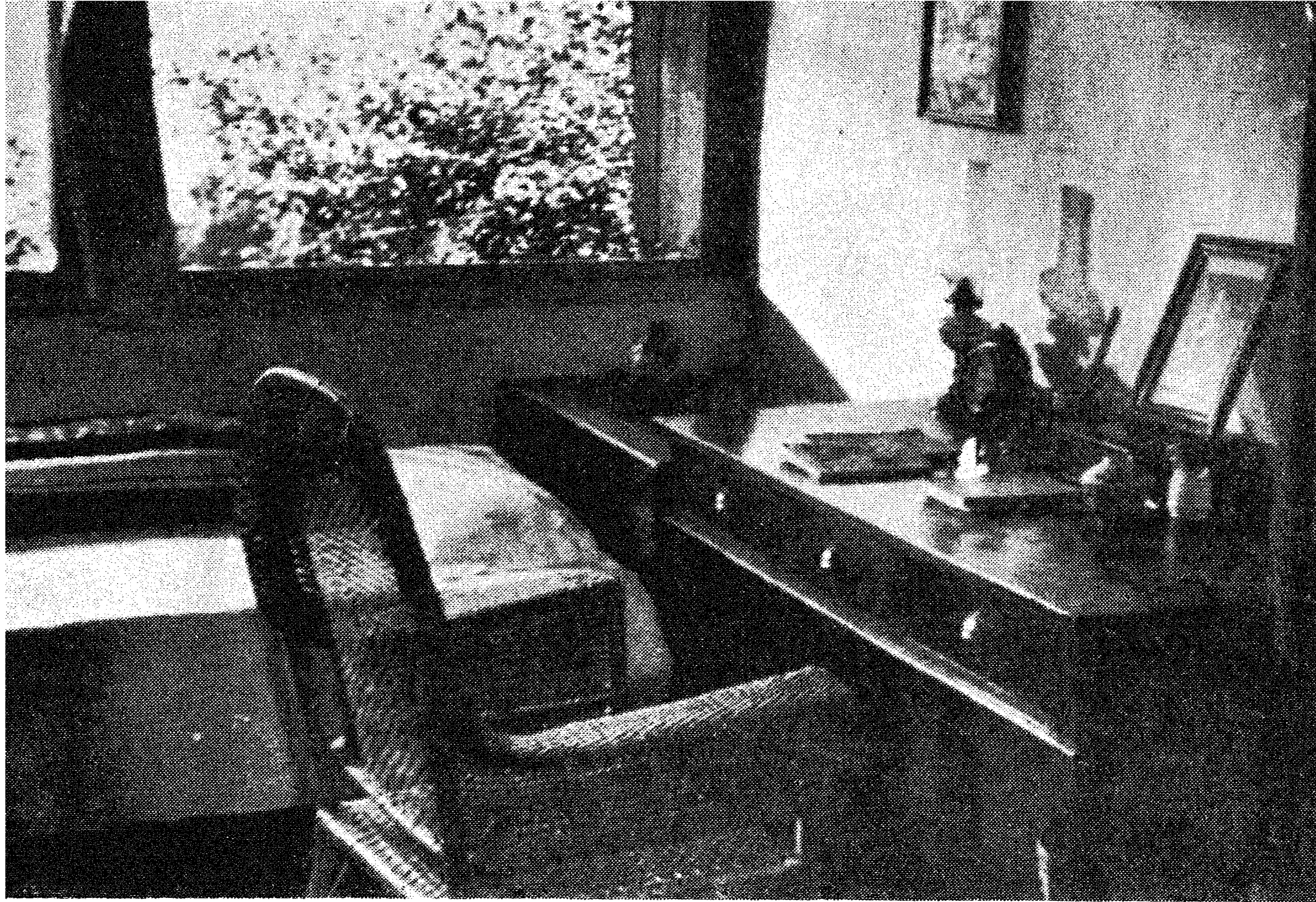
The root of all the troubles we Chinese bring upon ourselves is these raising tactics, whereas the "way to happiness" is to dig down. The effort required is pretty much the same, but to chronic sufferers from inertia raising up still seems easier

December 10, 1925

III. THE FIRST AND THE LAST

Han Fei Zi once said that the secret of horse racing was "not to try to come first, and not to mind coming last" Even to outsiders like myself this makes good sense, for if you gallop hard from the start your horse will soon be exhausted. The pity is, however, that though the first part of this tip refers to horse racing only, we Chinese have taken it as our golden rule.

Not only do we refuse to be "the first to fight," or "the first to start trouble" — we also refuse to be "the first in good fortune." This is why it is so difficult to carry out any reforms: no one dares to be a pioneer or ride in the vanguard. But human nature is not really as free from desire as the Taoists would like — men actually want a good deal. Not daring to take things outright, they resort to plots and tricks, and so become more cowardly every day. For, unwilling to be the first, they also refuse to be the last. Thus no matter how many Chinese have gathered together, once they sense danger "they fly off like birds." If a few get hurt because they will not get out of the way, the public agrees that they are fools. The same is said of those who never give up.



His study in No. 21, Xisantiao Hutong, near the Fucheng Gate,
Beijing where Lu Xun lived from 1923 to 1926

Occasionally I go to watch school sports. These contests are not like wars between rival states, each hostile to the other; yet even so the students sometimes abuse or fight each other during a match. But that is another matter. In a race, once the fastest three or four runners reach the goal, the rest slow down. A few even lose heart completely, and instead of finishing the course stop halfway and push into the crowd of onlookers, or pretend to stumble and let the first-aid unit carry them off. If one who has fallen behind goes on running, everyone laughs at him. I suppose this is because he is not clever enough to "mind coming last."

So China has had very few heroes who refuse to admit defeat, very few who resist to the last, very few who dare fight on alone, very few who dare mourn the death of a rebel. When victory seems at hand, all rally round; when defeat threatens, all fly away. The Westerners with their superior arms, and the Huns, Mongols and Manchus, whose arms were not necessarily as good as ours, met with no resistance from us. Our phrase "crumbling like clods or broken tiles" shows the high degree of self-knowledge we possess.

A nation which has many men who do not "mind coming last" will not in an emergency crumble like clods. Whenever I watch sports I always think: Of course, I respect the winners, but those runners who fall behind yet still press on to their goal, together with those spectators who do not laugh at them, will some day be the backbone of China.

IV. MISCARRIAGE AND EXTINCTION

Recently a vicious epithet — "miscarriage" — has been used of the work of young writers, and many people now are echoing it. I am confident that the man who first said this did not do so of malice afore-thought, but quite

casually Those who echo him are excusable too, for this is the way of the world.

But what I cannot understand is why we Chinese are so contented with existing conditions, and so opposed to change, so tolerant of what has been done already, and so hypercritical of anything new.

Gentlemen of superior intellect and great vision have instructed us: If you cannot give birth to a sage, a hero or a genius, better not give birth at all. If you cannot write an immortal work, better not write at all. If reform will not change the world overnight into paradise, or at least into a place where I (!) shall be better off, then on no account make any changes.

Are such men conservative? No, we are told, they are not. In point of fact they are revolutionaries. They are the only ones with a programme of reform which is fair and proper, safe and thorough, peaceful and absolutely foolproof. Research on this is being carried out at this very moment in research institutes — the only trouble is they are not yet ready.

When will they be ready? The answer is: We don't know.

To adult eyes, a toddler's first step is certainly childish, dangerous, awkward or positively ridiculous. But however foolish a woman may be, she looks forward eagerly to her baby's first step, and would certainly never strangle him because he walks so childishly and may get in a public figure's way. She would certainly never keep him in bed to make him study, lying down, until he understands how to run. For she knows that, in that case, he may live to be a hundred without learning to walk.

Since time immemorial so-called scholars have always tried openly or under cover to hem in those coming after them. In recent times, of course, they have been more polite; but anyone who tries to break out will probably be intercepted by scholars and men of letters who will

invite him to be seated. Then they will argue with him, investigate conditions, study, reflect and cultivate their minds — until finally he dies there of old age. Otherwise, he will be dubbed a trouble-maker. I, too, like the young people of today, once asked the way from dead and not yet dead teachers. And all of them said, "Don't go east, west, north or south." Not one of them told me what direction I should take. So at last I discovered what was in their minds. It was simply, "Don't go anywhere at all."

To sit down and wait till everything is safe before we advance is all very well, if it is feasible; but I am afraid we may grow old and die before what we are waiting for materializes. If one neither gives birth nor has a miscarriage, but simply waits for a fine child to turn up, that is also all very well, but I am afraid one will end up with nothing.

If we think extermination preferable to bearing children who are not outstanding, there is nothing more to be said. But if we always want to hear men's footsteps, then I think miscarriage is more hopeful than not giving birth, for it proves beyond doubt that we *can* give birth.

December 20, 1925

ON DEFERRING "FAIR PLAY"

I. BROACHING THE SUBJECT

In Number 57 of *The Tatler* Mr. Lin Yutang refers to "fair play," and remarks that since this spirit is extremely rare in China we should do our best to encourage it. He adds that "Don't beat a dog in the water" supplements the meaning of "fair play." Not knowing English, I do not understand the full connotation of this term; but if "Don't beat a dog in the water" represents the true spirit of fair play, then I must beg to differ. In order not to offend the eye — not to "add false antlers to my head,"* I mean — I did not state this explicitly in my title. What I mean, anyway, is this: a dog in the water may — or rather should — be beaten.

II. ON THREE KINDS OF DOG IN THE WATER WHICH SHOULD BE BEATEN

Modern critics often compare "beating a dead tiger" with "beating a dog in the water," considering both as somewhat cowardly. I find those who pose as brave by beating dead tigers rather amusing. They may be cowards, but in an engaging way. Beating a dog in the water is not such a simple issue, however. You must first see what sort of dog it is and how it fell in. There are three chief reasons for a dog's falling into the water:

* Professor Chen Yuan accused Lu Xun of doing this in order to pose as a fighter.

- 1 It may fall in by mistake.
- 2 It may be pushed in by someone.
3. It may be pushed in by you.

In the first two cases, of course, it is pointless if not cowardly to join in beating the dog. But if you are in a fight with a dog and have pushed it into the water, then to give it a good beating again in the water with a bamboo pole is not too much, for this is different from the two other cases

They say that a brave prize-fighter never hits his opponent when he is down, and that this sets a fine example for us all. but I agree to this only on condition that the opponent is a brave pugilist too; for then once he is beaten he will be ashamed to come back, or will come back openly to take his revenge, either of which is all right. But this does not apply to dogs, who cannot be considered in the same class; for however wildly they may bark they really have no sense of "propriety." Besides, a dog can swim, and will certainly swim ashore. If you are not careful it will shake itself, spattering water all over you, then run away with its tail between its legs. But next time it will do exactly the same. Simple souls may think that falling into the water is a kind of baptism, after which a dog will surely repent of its sins and never bite men again. They could hardly be more mistaken.

So I think all dogs that bite men should be beaten, whether they are on the land or in the water.

III PUGS, IN PARTICULAR, MUST BE PUSHED INTO THE WATER AND SOUNDLY BEATEN

Pugs or pekes are called Western dogs in south China, but I understand this is a special Chinese breed. At international dog shows they often win gold medals, and a number of the photographs of dogs in the *Encyclopa-*

dia Britannica are pictures of our Chinese pugs. This is also a national honour. Now dogs and cats are mortal enemies, but this pug, although a dog, looks very much like a cat, so moderate, impartial, conciliatory and fair, its smug air seeming to say, "Everyone else goes to extremes, but I practise the Doctrine of the Mean." That is why it is such a favourite with influential persons, eunuchs, and the wives and daughters of rich men, and its line remains unbroken. It is kept by top people because it looks so cute, and its function is to patter after Chinese or foreign ladies with a tiny chain attached to its neck when they go shopping.

These dogs should be pushed into the water, then soundly beaten. If they fall into the water themselves, there is no harm in beating them either. Of course, if you are over-scrupulous, you need not beat them, but neither need you feel sorry for them. If you can forgive these dogs, there is no call for you to beat any other dogs; for though the others also fawn on the rich and bully the poor, they at least look something like wolves and are rather wild — not such fence-sitters as these pugs.

But this is just a digression, which may not have much bearing on the main subject.

IV. ON THE HARM DONE TO POSTERITY BY NOT BEATING DOGS IN THE WATER

So whether or not a dog in the water should be beaten depends first of all on its attitude after it crawls ashore.

It is hard for a dog to change its nature. Ten thousand years from now it may be somewhat different, but I am talking about today. If we think it looks pathetic in the water, so do many other pests. And though cholera germs breed so fast, they look very tame; yet doctors show them no mercy.

Present-day officials and Chinese or foreign-style gentlemen call everything that does not suit them "Red" or "Bolshevik" Before 1912 it was slightly different. First they referred to people they did not like as followers of Kang Youwei, then revolutionaries, and even informed against them. They were trying, for one thing, to keep their high position, but they may also have wanted "to stain their cap-button red with human blood."* But at last the revolution came, and those gentlemen with their high and mighty airs suddenly panicked like homeless curs and wound up their little queues on their heads. And the revolutionaries brimmed over with a new spirit, which these gentlemen used to detest. They were so "civilized" as to say, "The revolution is for all. We will not beat a dog in the water. Let it crawl ashore." This was just what the others did. They lay low till the second half of 1913 and the time of the Second Revolution,** then suddenly came forward to help Yuan Shikai kill many revolutionaries, so that things became daily worse in China again. Thus now, besides the old die-hards, there are many young ones. This is thanks to those martyrs who were too kind to these snakes in the grass and allowed them to multiply. The young people who understand this will have to strive much harder and sacrifice many more lives to oppose the forces of darkness.

Qiu Jin*** died at the hands of informers. Just after the revolution she was called a heroine, but this term is rarely heard now. When the revolution started, a general — what we would call a "warlord" today — came to her district and he was her comrade. His name was

* In the Qing Dynasty, mandarins of the first rank had a coral bead on their caps. Some officials killed revolutionaries in order to gain promotion.

** See footnote on p 185 above.

*** (1875-1907), a woman revolutionary who was one of the leaders of the anti-Qing movement. In 1907 she was arrested and killed in Shaoxing.

Wang Jinfan. He arrested the man responsible for her death and collected evidence to avenge her. But in the end he let the informer go because — so they say — the Republic had been founded and bygones should be bygones. When the Second Revolution was defeated, however, Wang was shot by Yuan Shikai's stooge; and the man who brought about Qiu Jin's death and whom Wang had set free had a great deal to do with this.

Since then this informer has died peacefully in bed. But because there are still many of his sort lordling it in that district, Qiu Jin's native place has remained unchanged from year to year, and made no progress at all. From this point of view, Miss Yang Yinyu and Professor Chen Yuan are really supremely fortunate to come from China's "model district"*

V. THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN FROM POWER ARE NOT THE SAME AS DOGS IN THE WATER

"To be wronged but not to seek revenge" is forgiving. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is just. In China, however, most things are topsy-turvy: instead of beating dogs in the water, we let ourselves be bitten by them. This is no more, though, than what simple souls deserve.

"Kindness is another name for folly," says the proverb. This may be going too far. Yet if you think carefully, this is not intended to lead men astray, but is the conclusion reached after many bitter experiences. Thus there may be two reasons for the reluctance to hit a dog when it has fallen into the water. It is either because we are not strong enough, or because we have made a false analogy. We need not go into the first possibility. As regards the second, we can find two serious flaws.

* Wuxi, described as "a model district" by Chen Yuan.

First, we make the mistake of considering dogs in the water as the same as men who have come down in the world. Secondly, we make the mistake of considering all those who have fallen from power as alike, without drawing a distinction between the good and the bad. The result is that evil-doers go unpunished. At present, for instance, since the political situation is unstable, men rise and fall all the time. Relying on some short-lived authority, a bad man may commit any crime he pleases, until one day he falls and has to beg for mercy. Then simple souls who have known him or suffered at his hands consider him a dog in the water, and instead of beating him feel sorry for him. They imagine justice has already been done and they may as well be chivalrous, unaware that the dog is not really in the water but has long since prepared its hide-out and laid in food in the foreign concessions. Sometimes it may look hurt, but this is put on. It pretends to limp to enlist sympathy, so that it can go into hiding comfortably. It will come out later and make a fresh start by biting simple souls, then go on to commit all manner of crimes. And the reason for this is partly that those simple souls would not beat a dog in the water. So, strictly speaking, they are digging their own graves, and they have no right to blame fate or other people.

VI. WE CANNOT YET AFFORD TO BE TOO FAIR

Humanitarians may ask: In that case, don't we want fair play at all? I can answer this at once: Of course we do, but not yet. This is using their own argument. Though humanitarians may not be willing to use it, I can make out a case for it. Do not Chinese and foreign-style gentlemen often say that China's special features make foreign ideas of liberty and equality unsuitable for us? I take this to include fair play. Otherwise, if a

man is unfair to you but you are fair to him, you will suffer for it in the end not only will you fail to get fair treatment, but it will be too late to be unfair yourself. So before being fair, you have to know your opponent. If he does not deserve fair treatment, you had better not be polite. Only when he is fair can you talk to him of fair play.

This sounds rather like a proposal for a dual morality, but I cannot help it, for without this China will never have a better future. The dual morality here takes many forms different standards for masters and for slaves, for men and for women. It would be going to extremes and premature simply to treat dogs in the water and men in the water as the same. This is the argument of those gentlemen who say that while freedom and equality are good, in China it is still too early for them. So if anyone wants indiscriminate fair play, I suggest we wait till those dogs in the water are more human. Of course, this does not mean that fair play cannot be practised at all at present; the important thing, as I have just said, is first to know your opponent. And a certain discrimination is required. In other words, your fairness must depend on who your opponent is. Never mind how he has fallen into the water, if he is a man we should help him; if a dog, we should ignore him; if a bad dog, we should beat him. In brief, we should befriend our own kind and attack our enemies.

We need not trouble ourselves just now with the aphorisms of those gentlemen who have justice on their lips but self-interest in their hearts. Even the justice so loudly demanded by honest folk cannot help good people in China today, but may actually protect the bad instead. For when bad men are in power and ill-treat the good, however loudly someone calls for justice they will certainly not listen to him. His cry is simply a cry, and the good continue to suffer. But if the good happen for once to come out on top while the bad fall into the water,

those honest upholders of justice shout, "Don't take vengeance! Be magnanimous! Don't oppose evil with evil!" And this time their outcry takes effect instead of going unheeded; for the good agree with them, and the bad are spared. After being spared, though, they simply congratulate themselves on their luck instead of repenting. Besides, they have prepared hide-outs in advance and are good at worming their way into favour, so in no time they become as powerful and as vicious as before. When this happens, the upholders of justice may raise another outcry, but this time it will not be heard.

Nevertheless it is true that when reformers are "being too harsh in hating evil" and over-zealous, like the scholars at the end of the Han Dynasty or those of the Ming Dynasty, they defeat their own ends. Indeed, this is the criticism usually levelled against them. But though the other side "hate good folk as if they were enemies," nobody reproaches them for it. If there is no fight to the finish between darkness and light, and simple souls go on making the mistake of confusing forgiveness with giving free rein to evil, and continue pardoning wicked men, then the present state of chaos will last for ever.

VII ON DEALING WITH THEM AS THEY DEAL WITH OTHERS

Some Chinese believe in traditional Chinese medicine, others in Western medicine, and both types of doctors can now be found in our larger towns so that patients may take their choice. I thoroughly approve of this. If this were applied more generally, I am sure there would be fewer complaints, and perhaps we could even secure peace and prosperity. For instance, the usual form of greeting now is to bow, but if anyone disapproves of this, he can kowtow instead. The new penal code has

no punishment by bastinado; but if anyone approves of corporal punishment, when he breaks the law he can have his bottom specially spanked. Bowls, chopsticks and cooked food are the custom today; but if anyone hankers after ancient times, he can eat raw meat. We can also build several thousand thatched huts and move all those fine gentlemen who so admire the age of Yao and Shun* out of their big houses to live there, while those who oppose material civilization should certainly not be compelled to travel in cars. When this is done there will be no more complaints, for everyone will be satisfied and we shall enjoy peace and quiet.

But the pity is that nobody will do this. Instead, they judge others by themselves, and hence there is all this trouble in the world. Fair play is particularly liable to cause trouble, and may even be made use of by the forces of evil. For example, when Liu Baizhao** beat up and carried off students of the Women's Normal College, there was not so much as a squeak from *Modern Critic*. But when the buildings were recovered and Professor Chen Yuan encouraged the students of the Women's University to stay on in the dormitories, the journal said, "Suppose they don't want to go? Surely you aren't going to carry off their things by force?" If they remained silent the first time when Liu Baizhao beat up students and carried things away, how was it that this time they felt it would not do? It was because they felt there was fair play in the Women's Normal College. But this fair play had become a bad thing, since it was utilized to protect the followers of Zhang Shizhao.

* Two legendary Chinese rulers of the earliest times, described in old books as living in thatched huts.

** In 1925 the Minister of Education, Zhang Shizhao, disbanded the Women's Normal College and set up a new Women's University in the same premises under Liu Baizhao. Liu used strong-arm methods to take over

VIII CONCLUSION

I may be accused of stirring up trouble by this argument between the old and the new or some other schools of thought, and of aggravating their enmity and sharpening the conflict between them. But I can state with certainty that those who oppose reform have never relaxed their efforts to injure reformers, and have always done their worst. It is only the reformers who are asleep and always suffer for it. That is why China has never had reforms. From now on we should modify our attitude and our tactics.

December 29, 1925

1926

THREE SPIRITS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

From the *Beijing News* supplement I learn that a periodical called *National Spirit* has published an article blaming Zhang Shizhao, but declaring that those "academic bandits" who opposed him should also be crushed. I do not know whether I have remembered the gist of this rightly or not, but it does not matter much; for this has simply reminded me of a topic quite unconnected with that article. My idea is this: since the old Chinese belief is that a man has three spiritual and six animal essences — some say seven animal essences — this should be true of the "national spirit" too. Of the three spiritual essences, one seems to be the "official spirit," another the "bandit spirit." What the third is I cannot say for certain it may be the "people's spirit." As my experience is so limited, I dare not speak for the whole of Chinese society, and shall therefore confine my remarks to the "teaching profession."

There is really a mania for officialdom in China. In the Han Dynasty, when men were appointed officials for their filial piety and probity, Guo Ju buried his son and Ding Lan carved a wooden image of his mother.* In

* Guo Ju feared that looking after his son would mean neglecting his mother, so he dug a deep hole, intending to bury the child. While digging, however, he discovered a pot of gold, which enabled him to keep both his mother and son. Ding Lan made a wooden image of his mother after her death, and treated it as a living person. When the emperor knew this, he made him an official.

the Song Dynasty, when philosophers were given official posts, many scholars wore tall hats and shabby boots* In the Qing Dynasty, when stereotyped examination essays led to officialdom, such terms as “moreover” and “notwithstanding” became all the fashion. In short, the Chinese soul was bent on official rank — men assumed official airs, behaved like officials, and spoke the official language. Then the emperor became a figurehead, to offend an official was to offend the emperor, and those who did so received the fine title “bandit.” Last year the official language began to be used in educational circles, when all who opposed Zhang Shizhao were dubbed “bandits,” “academic bandits” or “rascally teachers.” Still, since no one knew who started this, it remained merely one form of “rumour.”

But this unprecedented appearance of “academic bandits” is enough to show what a mess the teaching profession was in last year. Let us make an analogy with state affairs. In times of peace and prosperity there were no bandits, but they cropped up everywhere, judging by the old histories, when the empress’s relatives, eunuchs, treacherous ministers or other low types seized power. Then, in spite of a spate of official talk, the dynasty would always fall — “Alas! Alack!” And before this final “Alas! Alack!” most humble folk would join the outlaws. So I believe Mr. Yuanzeng when he says, “They look like bandits and robbers, but are actually a peasant revolutionary army.” (*National News* supplement, No 43.) Does this mean, then, that society has improved? No, though I, too, have received the title “bandit,” I have no wish to gloss over my predecessors’ faults. The peasants were not out to seize political power, as Mr. Yuanzeng also says, “They simply let a few enthusiasts overthrow

* The Neo-Confucians liked to dress differently from ordinary people, and most of them imitated the philosopher Cheng Yi who wore a tall hat and shabby boots.

the emperor and set themselves up in his place" By then, however, a bandit was the emperor, and all the scholars and literati, apart from a few who hankered after the past, rallied round to flatter him and call those who opposed him bandits.

So it seems the Chinese national spirit has always combined these two essences. the official spirit and the bandit spirit I am not trying to squeeze our spirits into the national mould so that we can rank together with professors and famous scholars, but this does seem to be the case All kinds of people like to see *Double Official Honours** as well as *Four Bandits' Village*,** they enjoy watching Liu Bei*** found his kingdom in Sichuan as well as Song Jiang† succeeding in his robbery At least, when well-treated by the government, they admire officials, when exploited, they sympathize with bandits But this is only natural Without even this minimum sense of revolt, they would be doomed for ever to be slaves

But since national characters vary, our national spirit is different from that of other countries I remember when I was studying in Japan and some classmates asked me what was the best way to make money in China, I told them, "To revolt" They were very shocked There, where the dynasty has lasted for "ten thousand generations," they are as shocked to hear that the emperor can be kicked over as we should be to hear that parents can

* A play about Xue Guang who was rumoured to have died while away from home His concubine remained true to him, however, and when both he and his son came home as high officials, she was accorded double official honours

** A play about Luo Hongxun Falsely accused, he was being escorted to the capital when some bandits kidnapped him Good men rescued him, and destroyed Four Bandits' Village

*** Ruler of western Sichuan during the Three Kingdoms Period.

† Leader of a peasant revolt at the end of the Northern Song Dynasty

be knocked down and killed. Now, if what the papers say is true, Mr. Li Jinglin,* who is respected and admired by certain ladies and gentlemen, understands this very well. For today's *Beijing News* reports that he told a diplomat, "I expect to see you again in Tianjin by the first month of the lunar calendar. If I fail to take Tianjin by then, I shall attack again in the third or fourth month. If I fail again, I shall join forces for the time being with the bandits and rest my men while waiting for another chance." But he does not want to be emperor, no doubt because this is a republic now.

Since the teaching profession is a relatively new class, it should be possible to purify the old spirit a little there. But judging by the official language I hear from the "academic officials" and the new name "academic bandits" we still seem to be taking the old path. So of course this must be overcome as well. It will be overcome by the "people's spirit," the third of the spiritual essences. This was not very well developed in the past, hence after making a commotion the people would not seize political power, but "let a few enthusiasts overthrow the emperor and set themselves up in his place."

Only the people's spirit deserves to be valued. Only when this spirit develops can there be real progress in China. But now that even educationists are retrogressing along the old path it is not easy for it to raise its head. In this confusion, there are what the officials consider as bandits, and what the people consider as bandits; what the officials consider as citizens, and what the people consider as citizens. There are those whom the officials count as bandits, who are really good citizens; there are those whom the officials count as citizens, who are really yamen runners and thugs. So what seems to be the people's spirit may be the official spirit after all. All who appraise spirits must be on their guard against this.

* A warlord of the Fengtian clique

After this further digression, let us return to our subject. Since Zhang Shizhao hung out his sign "Regenerate the Schools" last year and took the important post of Minister of Education, the teaching world has been exuding an atmosphere of officialdom. Those for him are "enlightened," those against him "bandits." We have not yet heard the last of the official jargon. Still, thanks to this we can see the character of the teaching profession clearly. Zhang Shizhao is not the true representative of the official spirit, for above him there is the president "losing his appetite,"* and Zhang himself is at most an official animal essence. Now he is in Tianjin "resting his men, while waiting for another chance." Since I do not read his journal *Jiayin*, I do not know what he has been saying. Is it the language of officials, bandits, the people, or that of yamen runners and thugs?

January 24, 1926

* Referring to Duan Qirui, President of the Northern warlord government in Beijing

THE CLASSICS AND THE VERNACULAR

I remember how the men who campaigned for writing in the vernacular were sneered at and slandered at first; but when the vernacular stood firm, certain persons changed their tune. "Nevertheless," they said, "without studying the classics one cannot write well in the vernacular" Of course we should appreciate the efforts these traditionalists make, yet we cannot but smile pityingly at their traditional tactics. All who have read a few old books have picked up the old tactics of considering every new idea a "heresy" which must be rooted out. After a struggle, however, when the "heresy" stands firm, they find that after all it "comes from the same source as the sages' teaching." Everything foreign is barbarous and dangerous and must be driven out; but when the "barbarians" become masters of China, researches show that they too are descended from the Yellow Emperor. How extraordinary! There is nothing that is not embraced by our ancient tradition!

Those who use old tactics can naturally make no progress, and even today they are still claiming that "without a thorough study of several hundred volumes of the classics" one cannot write well in the vernacular. They have dragged in Mr Wu Zhihui* as an example, and the way they gush about him makes one's flesh creep. This proves that wonders never cease. Actually Mr Wu's

* A reactionary Kuomintang politician

“writings in everyday speech” are by no means the same as “the essays of prattling children.” Can he not “dash off ten thousand characters at one sitting”? These certainly include classical allusions which prattling children cannot understand, as well as allusions to recent events of which the younger generation is ignorant. When I first went to Tokyo at the end of the Guang Xu period, Mr. Wu was already battling there with the minister Cai Jun. With such a long fighting record, his wealth of experience certainly cannot be compared with that of the prattling children of today. Hence many of his allusions can only be understood by those who know all about those happenings, great or small; and what strikes young readers first is the amazing flood of his eloquence. This may be what scholars consider his great virtue, but in fact this is not the reason why his writings have lived. Indeed, the very reverse of what the scholars so flatteringly say is true: he is not deliberately displaying his great virtue, and he cannot get rid of what they call his great virtue — his writings and speeches simply serve as a bridge to reform, perhaps without his even intending them as a bridge.

The more worthless a character, the longer he wants to live, the more fervently he desires immortality, the more he likes to have himself photographed, the more he yearns to occupy men’s thoughts, the more airs he puts on. But since “subconsciously” he probably realizes his own worthlessness, he seizes on whatever is “ancient” that has not yet rotted away, hoping to live on as a parasite; or he finds something smacking of antiquity in the vernacular, to add glory to what is ancient. If this is all that “immortal works” amount to, it is rather pathetic. It is also rather pathetic if prattling children in 1925 still want to read journals like *Jayin*, even though “since Mr. Zhang Shizhao’s resignation it is acquiring new life.”

A man who has studied the classics is the best fitted to decry the classics — true. For he knows the evils and can “use his own spear to pierce his own shield,”* just as the best people to expose the evils of opium are those who have smoked it themselves and feel its dangers most keenly. But not even the younger generation would insist that you must smoke hundreds of ounces of opium before you can write an essay against it.

The ancient language is dead, and the vernacular is the bridge on the road to reform; for mankind is still progressing. Even writing can hardly have rules that will never be altered. It is said that somewhere in the United States they have forbidden the teaching of the theory of evolution, but in practice this ban will probably prove useless.

January 25, 1926

* Reference to a fable by Han Fei Zi of the third century B C. There was a man who sold shields and spears. “My shields are so strong that nothing can pierce them,” he boasted. “My spears are so sharp there is nothing they cannot pierce.” “What if one of your spears strikes one of your shields?” someone asked him. The man had no answer to that.

A FEW PARABLES

There is not much mutton eaten in my home town. Probably only a few goats a day. But Beijing is a veritable ocean of men, and the situation here is very different: wherever you go, mutton shops catch your eye. And snow-white flocks often fill the streets, but they are always sheep. Goats are very rare. I hear that goats are at a premium in Beijing because they are cleverer than sheep and can lead a whole flock of them, who follow obediently. So though shepherds sometimes keep a few goats, they use them as leaders for the sheep, and never kill them.

I have only once seen a goat like this. Sure enough, he was walking at the head of a flock of sheep, with a small bell on his neck — the badge of the intellectual. Usually sheep are led or driven by a shepherd. In a long file, shoving, jostling and crowding together, with an all too docile expression, they trot briskly after him to whatever awaits them. Their serious, busy air always makes me want to ask them a most ridiculous question:

“Where are you going?”

There are goats among men, too, who can lead the masses steadily and quietly on till they reach their destination. Yuan Shikai understood this, but unfortunately he did not make very clever use of it: perhaps he was not enough of a scholar to understand and employ really subtle methods. The warlords after him were even more stupid; they could only fight and kill each other wildly, with sad, ear-splitting cries. The upshot was that they were condemned for tyranny, and for despising scholar-

ship and disrupting education into the bargain. However, we live and learn. A quarter of the twentieth century has passed, and the wise man with a bell on his neck will do well in the end, though at the moment he may meet with some minor defeats.

By then everyone, especially the young, will obey regulations. Neither obstreperous nor unsteady, they will advance single-mindedly down the "right path," provided no one asks.

"Where are you going?"

* * *

Some gentleman may say, "Sheep will be sheep. What else can they do but follow obediently in a long file? Have you never watched pigs? They hold back, make off, squeal, and dash madly about; but still in the end they are taken to where they have to go. All their revolts are simply a waste of energy."

That is to say: If you must die, die like sheep, so that peace may be preserved and both sides will be saved trouble.

This is certainly an excellent, admirable plan. But have you never seen wild boars? With their two tusks they can make even experienced hunters keep out of their way. If pigs escape from the sties their swineherds have made them, and go into the mountains, before long they will grow such tusks.

* * *

Once Mr. Schopenhauer compared gentlemen to hedgehogs—rather a rude comparison I think. He meant no harm, of course; he was simply making an analogy. In his *Parerga und Paralipomena* he wrote much as follows: Some hedgehogs tried to ward off the winter's cold by huddling together for warmth, but they were so badly pricked by each other's quills that they immediately separated. Then the need for warmth brought them together again, and they suffered as before.

However, in the course of this dilemma they discovered the suitable distance at which to stay, and by observing this distance could live at peace. Now men gather together because of their social needs, but since each has many disgusting habits and intolerable defects, they separate again. In the end, they discover the correct distance to enable them to stay together — “etiquette” and “refined manners.” In England those who ignore these niceties are warned, “Keep your distance!”

But even such warnings are probably only effective among hedgehogs, for they keep each other at a distance in order not to get hurt, not because of the warning. If an animal without quills joined the hedgehogs, then no matter how it shouted, they would squeeze up against it. Confucius said, “Ceremony is not extended to the common people.” But judging by the situation today, it is not the common people who are forbidden to approach the hedgehogs, but the hedgehogs who do not care how they prick the common people in order to keep warm. Of course, people get hurt, but that is their fault for not having any quills to make others keep a suitable distance. Confucius also said, “Punishment does not extend to nobles.” So no wonder people want to be gentlemen.

Of course, you can resist these hedgehogs with teeth or horns, clubs or sticks, but you must be ready to accept the verdict of hedgehog society which will brand you as “low-class” or “impertinent.”

January 25, 1926

ON SEEING OFF THE KITCHEN GOD

As I sit and hear the firecrackers going off far and near, I realize that all the kitchen gods are going up to heaven one after the other, to complain of their hosts to the Heavenly Emperor.* However, they probably never say anything in the end. If they did, the Chinese would surely be even worse off than they are now.

On the day that the kitchen god is seen off, a sweetmeat the size of an orange is sold on the streets. We have this in my home town too, but flat, like a very thick baked cake. This is called the "Teeth Gluing Sweet." It is intended to glue the god's teeth together after he eats it, to prevent his wagging his tongue freely and complaining to the Heavenly Emperor. In China apparently we conceive of gods and devils as more naive than men. That is why we use such drastic measures in dealing with them, whereas men have to be invited to feasts.

Modern gentlemen generally avoid talking about food, especially about invitations to meals. There is nothing strange about this, for it really does not sound good. But there are a great many restaurants in Beijing, and a great many feasts are given. Do all those feasters just eat oysters and chat about the wind and the moon, flushed with wine as they sing folk songs? No, not at all. In

* The kitchen gods were believed to go up to heaven on the twenty-third of the lunar twelfth month to make a report on their master.

fact, quite a number of "unbiased views" originate there; but since the connection between the views and the invitations is invisible, these views sound most impressive. To my mind, though, there must be a human factor in the unbiased views expressed after drinking, for since men are not wood or stone, how can they talk nothing but sense? And it is only human to show a little bias for the sake of a friend's face. Besides, in China great stress has always been laid on "face" What do we mean by face? A man in the Ming Dynasty explained, "To give someone face means to put a good face on things" We do not know what he meant, but we can guess To expect unbiased, unprejudiced views in the world today is asking too much anyway, and it does no harm to listen to the "unbiased comments" after a meal and the fine talk after drinking. But anyone who thinks them genuinely unbiased is bound to be taken in — still this is not the fault of those expressing the views Part of the blame belongs to this fashion of inviting people to feasts but avoiding all mention of doing so, which forces men to be hypocritical.

Some years ago, I remember, after the "armed protest,"* when the gun-owning class liked to hold conferences in Tianjin, a young man told me indignantly, "They're not holding conferences. They settle all their business by a few words when drinking or gambling" He was one of those taken in by the theory that "unbiased views do not arise from feasts." So he was always indignant. Actually, things will probably not be as he wants for another thousand or even two thousand years.

Still, there are also simple souls who set no store by feasts. I suppose but for them China would be in an even worse state. Some meetings start at two in the afternoon,

* In May 1917, warlords in different northern provinces declared themselves independent and warned President Li Yuanhong that unless he resigned they would march on Beijing.

and those present discuss problems, study regulations, raise questions, and argue on and on until seven or eight in the evening, when for no apparent reason everyone feels rather impatient and exasperated, tempers are frayed, the discussion grows more involved, and the regulations become more and more impractical. Though they have agreed to adjourn only after a decision is reached, the meeting breaks up without anything having been settled. This is a penalty for despising food, and their impatience and exasperation from six to seven is just the stomach's warning to its master and to others. But since they have been taken in by the fallacy that meals have nothing to do with views, they ignore this warning. Then their stomachs drain all the brilliance from their talk — they do not even succeed in drafting a manifesto.

But I do not mean that all business must be transacted after a feast in Pacific Lake Restaurant or Xieying Café. I am not a shareholder in these concerns, nor out to find customers for them, and I doubt whether everyone can afford to go there. I am simply pointing out that at present there is still a connection between the expression of opinions and invitations to meals. Invitations still have a good effect on opinions; but this is just human, nothing shocking.

In passing, let me offer some good advice to all naive, young enthusiasts. If you hold a meeting without any food or drink, do not let it drag on too long. If you do, buy a few cakes to eat first; for in this way you are more likely to achieve results and reach a conclusion than if you discuss matters on an empty stomach.

The crude use of the Teeth Gluing Sweet may, for all I know, prove quite effective for the kitchen god, but it is not very suitable for men. The best way to deal with a man is to stuff him with wine and food so that he prefers to keep silent, but not to glue his lips together. The Chinese have very clever methods of dealing with men, yet act strangely towards gods and spirits. This joke

played on the kitchen god on the evening of the twenty-third is a case in point, but curiously enough even now the kitchen god does not seem to have realized it.

The Taoist priests' treatment of the gods governing the three parts of the body is even more devastating. Never having been a Taoist myself, I do not know all the details. From hearsay, however, I gather that the priests believe that this god lives inside the body, but one day when its host is asleep it slips off to heaven to report on his sins. In fact, this god is a spy in the human body. This is the same god so frequently referred to in the novel *The Canonization of the Gods*. But it seems quite easy to thwart it, for there is a fixed date for it to go up to heaven, and provided you do not go to sleep that day the god can do nothing, but must keep all your sins to itself till its chance comes again the next year. This god, then, is not even given the Teeth Gluing Sweet; and is therefore even worse off than the kitchen god, poor thing.

The god of the body does not go up to heaven but keeps all its host's sins to itself. The kitchen god goes up to heaven, but its mouth is so full of sweetmeats that it can only mumble something to the Heavenly Emperor before coming down again. Thus the Heavenly Emperor has not the least idea what is happening down below, so of course we go on this year as we always have, and the world remains at peace.

This is how we deal in China with gods and spirits.

Though we believe in gods and spirits, we think them more stupid than men; this is why we deal with them in a special way. When it comes to men, of course that is different; still we have our special way too, only it must be kept secret. If you speak about it, that shows a lack of respect. And it is true that to believe you have seen through it may at times show superficiality.

February 5, 1926

ON EMPERORS

The Chinese way of dealing with gods and spirits is to flatter dangerous deities like the god of plague or fire, but to try to cheat simpler deities like the tutelary god or the kitchen god. The treatment of emperors is similar. Rulers and ruled belong to the same country, and in troubled times "the winners become kings, while the losers become bandits." It is the usual rule for one to become emperor and for all the others to become his subjects, and there is not much difference in their outlook. Thus the emperor and his ministers have their way of fooling the people, while the people have their way of fooling the emperor.

In our family we used to have an old maidservant who told me what she knew — and believed — of the way to deal with emperors.

"An emperor is a real terror," she said. "There he sits on his dragon-throne, and whenever he loses his temper he wants to kill someone. He's a difficult customer. So you can't give him just anything to eat. If you give him something hard to get, and can't get any more straight away next time he wants it — like melons in winter, or peaches in autumn — then he'll fly into a rage and start killing people. So now he's given spinach all the year round, which is no trouble at all. But if you told him it was spinach he would lose his temper again, because it's so cheap. So nobody calls it spinach in front of him. They've made up another name: 'Red-beaked green cockatoo.'"

In my home town, we have spinach all the year round, and its root is just as red as a cockatoo's beak.

You would think an emperor who looked such a fool even to a simple woman like that could very well be dispensed with. But no, she felt he was needed, and we should let him lord it over us. He could be made use of, it seems, to crush others stronger than ourselves; thus it was absolutely necessary for him to be able to kill people whenever he pleased. But suppose you crossed his path and had to serve him? That would be rather dangerous. Such being the case, he must be trained to be a fool, so that all the year round he would put up with eating nothing but "red-beaked green cockatoo."

As a matter of fact, the men who make use of the rank and name of others, the donkeys in lions' skins, have the same idea and method as that old maidservant of ours; only they like the emperor to be weak while she wanted him to be a fool. The same device is used by the Confucian scholars who rely on some sagacious monarch to get their own way. Because they have to rely on him, they want him to have great authority and position; but because they hope to be able to control him easily, they like him to be a docile, simple soul.

The moment the emperor realizes his absolute power, he becomes difficult to manage. Since "All under heaven is the emperor's territory,"* he starts acting wildly, and says, "I won it and I lost it — what do I care?" So the sages' disciples have to feed him with "red-beaked green cockatoo," and this they call "the will of Heaven." They say that the Son of Heaven must act in accordance with the will of Heaven, and not just act wildly. As for the will of Heaven, it is only known to the Confucian scholars.

This means that anyone who wants to be emperor must take the advice of these scholars.

* A quotation from the *Book of Songs*.

Even so, unruly emperors may start acting wildly again. When you mention the will of Heaven, they retort, "Did not Heaven destine me to rule?" Then, far from venerating the will of Heaven, they oppose it, flout it, "shoot at Heaven,"* and let the country go to rack and ruin, till those sagacious gentlemen who rely on Heaven for a living do not know whether to laugh or cry.

Then all they can do is write books to condemn such rulers, reckoning that after a hundred years — that is to say, after their death — these books will have a wide circulation. For this makes them feel very good

But at most, all those books will show is that the policy of fooling the people and the policy of fooling the emperor were equal failures.

February 17, 1926

* A quotation from Sima Qian's *Records of the Historian*. A wicked king of the Shang Dynasty was said to have hung up skins containing blood, and shot at these, claiming that he was shooting at Heaven.

MORE ROSES WITHOUT BLOOMS

V

On March 18 in the fifteenth year of the Chinese Republic, Duan Qirui's government ordered guards with rifles and swords to surround and slaughter hundreds of young people who had come unarmed to Government House to demonstrate against foreign interference in our internal affairs.* And a decree was issued slandering them as "rioters"!

Atrocities like this are not only unknown to beasts, but are rare even among men. The only case bearing the least similarity is the massacre by the Cossacks ordered by the Russian tsar, Nicholas II.

VI

China is being devoured by tigers and wolves, yet no one cares. The only ones to care are a few students, who should be devoting all their attention to study but are too disturbed by the situation to do so. If the authorities have any conscience at all, should they not have admitted their faults, and summoned up what remained of their sense of right?

Yet they slaughtered them!

*In March 1926, the Japanese imperialists, allied with those of Britain and the United States, started an armed intervention in China which aroused great indignation. A demonstration in protest took place.

VII

Even if all these young people could be killed off, the murderers would never be victorious

China would perish together with her patriots. Though the murderers have hoarded up money and could bring up descendants for a considerable time, they could not stave off the inevitable. What joy could they have in their "numerous progeny"? Though their extinction might be postponed, they would be living in a barren land utterly unsuited to human habitation; they would be miners toiling in the deepest pits, they would be following the meanest trades. . . .

VIII

If China is not to perish, then, as past history tells us, the future holds a tremendous surprise for the murderers.

This is not the conclusion of an incident, but a new beginning.

Lies written in ink can never disguise facts written in blood.

Blood debts must be repaid in kind. The longer the delay, the greater the interest!

IX

All this is empty talk. What relevance has anything written by the pen?

Bullets shed the blood of young people, true. And this blood can neither be hidden by written lies, nor soothed by written dirges — not even authority can suppress it, for it can neither be cheated nor killed.

March 18, 1926

The darkest day since the
founding of the Republic

“DANGEROUS GROUND”

To most people, especially the Chinese who have long been trampled by foreigners or their slaves and underlings, the killer is always the victor, the killed the vanquished. The recent incident proves the truth of this.

No further comment is needed on the March 18th Incident — the Duan government's massacre of unarmed citizens and students during the demonstration. It simply makes us feel we are not living in the world of men. But so-called public opinion in Beijing is still discussing the matter, although no written or spoken word can make that hot young blood shed in front of Government House flow back and restore the dead to life. So this empty clamour will die away as memories of the massacre fade.

Yet to my mind, some of these observations are more frightful than the weapons of destruction. Certain commentators say that the students should not of their own accord have trodden on dangerous ground. If that is the case, then we Chinese are destined to perish wretchedly unless we are willing to be slaves “without a murmur.” Still, I do not know yet what the majority opinion is. If this is true of everyone, then the whole of China — not only in front of Government House — will be dangerous ground.

It is hard to appreciate the suffering of others. And because of this, the killers use murder as their sole rule of conduct, and take delight in it. But again, just because it is hard to appreciate the sufferings of others, the horror of death made clear by the killers fails to warn off those

who come after and to keep them enslaved for ever. All records of revolts show that when some rebels fell others took their place. Of course, most of them were moved by their sense of justice, but another important reason, I think, is that men who have not known the horror of death are not likely to be awed by it.

However, I earnestly hope that these demonstrations will cease. If at the cost of so much bloodshed we gain a new realization and resolve, and remember it for ever, then perhaps our loss will not have been too great.

Of course, most progress in the world has come through the shedding of blood. But this bears no relation to the amount of blood spilt, for many nations have still perished in spite of great bloodshed. This recent loss of so many lives has simply elicited the judgement "They should not of their own accord have trodden on dangerous ground." This reveals the true nature of certain men's thoughts, and teaches us how much dangerous ground there is in China.

I happen to have before me Romain Rolland's *Le Jeu de L'Amour et de La Mort*, in which he says that Carl believed a few imperfections or even crimes were excusable if they contributed to human progress, yet they were unwilling to kill Courvoisier, for the republic did not want to have to carry his corpse in its arms — the burden would have been too heavy.

For those aware of the heavy burden of the corpse and unwilling to carry it, the sole panacea for the "life" of posterity is the death of martyrs. But to a people unaware of this, this corpse simply increases the pressure upon them till they all perish.

China's young would-be reformers know the heavy burden of the corpse, hence all these demonstrations. What they do not know is that there are men who do not feel the heavy burden of the corpse, who have also killed the heart that feels this burden.

Indeed, dangerous ground lies before us For China's sake, our awakened youth should not be willing to die so lightly again.

March 25, 1926

A TRAGI-COMEDY

In retrospect, it is clear that the massacre of March 18 was engineered by the government. Unfortunately many straightforward young people fell into this trap, and more than three hundred of them were killed or wounded. The key to such a trap lies in the success of "rumours."

Since ancient times, as a general rule in China, scholars have had murder in their hearts and have always found some way to kill their opponents. To mention cases which I have seen for myself: all conspirators in the Guang Xu period called their opponents "followers of Kang Youwei." In the Xuan Tong period they used the expression "revolutionaries." After the second year of the Republic, they used "rebels." Today, of course, they use "Communists." Actually, last year when some "true gentlemen" called others "rascally teachers" or "academic bandits" there was murder in their thoughts; for these epithets are not like "stinking gentry" or "literati." The use of "ruffian" or "bandit" implies that such men should be killed. However, this may be the unduly intricate mental process of a "pettifogger."

Last year, to "regenerate the schools," many rumours were spread about the low tone of educational institutions and the vileness of the "academic bandits," all of which proved most effective. This year, to "regenerate the schools" many more rumours are being spread about the activities of those vile Communists, which again have proved most effective. So the demonstrators have been labelled Communists, and there were more than three hundred casualties: if only one of the dead had been a

so-called Communist leader, this would have proved even better that this demonstration was a "rebellion."

Unfortunately no such man was found. So it looks as if this was not Communist-inspired. But no, it seems it still was, only all the Communists got away, proving even more how hateful they are. And this demonstration was a "rebellion" too. The evidence for this is one wooden stick, two pistols and three bottles of paraffin. We need not question whether these things were carried by the demonstrators or not, even supposing they were, if these were all the weapons carried in a clash in which more than three hundred were killed or injured, what a pathetic rebellion this was!

But the next day an order was issued for the arrest of Xu Qian, Li Dazhao, Li Yuying, Yi Peiji and Gu Zhaoxiong. For they had "unlawfully mustered the people," just as last year the girls at the Women's Normal College "unlawfully mustered men students" (a quotation from Zhang Shizhao's request to disband the college). So they "unlawfully mustered" a crowd armed with one wooden stick, two pistols, and three bottles of paraffin. An attempt by such a crowd to overthrow the government would naturally result in more than three hundred casualties; and since Xu Qian and the others had so little regard for human lives, they should naturally be considered guilty of murder; especially since they did not take part themselves, and may all have run away.

This is politics, and actually a little beyond me. But looking at it from another angle, this order for their arrest seems meant to drive them out of their universities. The threatened arrest of these rioters seems intended simply to drive away the president of the Sino-French University and chairman of the Committee for the Rehabilitation of the Qing Imperial House (Li Yuying), the president of the Sino-Russian University (Xu Qian), a professor of Beijing University (Li Dazhao), the dean of Beijing University (Gu Zhaoxiong), and the president of the

Women's Normal College (Yi Peiji) Since three of these are also members of the Russian Indemnity Fund Committee, nine "lucrative posts" altogether are being vacated

That same day there was another rumour to the effect that more than fifty other people would be arrested, however, so far only a few names have appeared in today's *Beijing News*. Such a plan might well be conceived by such men as Zhang Shizhao, secretary general of the Duan government To accuse more than fifty people of high treason reflects great credit on the Republic I suppose most of them are teachers too, and if they give up more than fifty "lucrative posts" altogether, and escape from Beijing to set up a school elsewhere, it will be another amusing episode in the history of the Republic.

And the name of that school should be the "Unlawfully Mustered" College.

March 26, 1926

IN MEMORY OF MISS LIU
HEZHEN

I

On March 25 in the fifteenth year of the Republic, the National Beijing Women's Normal College held a memorial service for two girls, Liu Hezhen and Yang Dequn, who were killed on the 18th in front of Duan Qirui's Government House. I was pacing alone outside the hall, when Miss Cheng came up to me.

"Have you written anything, sir, for Liu Hezhen?" she asked.

I answered, "No."

"I think you should, sir," she urged. "Liu Hezhen always liked to read your essays."

I was aware of this. All the magazines I edit have a very poor circulation, quite likely because they often cease publication suddenly. Yet in spite of financial difficulties, she was one of those who ordered *The Wilderness* quite generously for a whole year. And I have felt for some days that I should write something, for though this has no effect on the dead, it seems to be all the living can do. Of course, if I could believe that "the spirit lives on after death," that would give me greater comfort — but, as it is, this seems to be all I can do.

I really have nothing to say, though. I just feel that we are not living in the world of men. In a welter of more than forty young people's blood, I can barely see,

hear or breathe, so what can I say? We can make no long lament till after our pain is dulled. And the insidious talk of some so-called scholars since this incident has added to my sense of desolation. I am beyond indignation. I shall sup deeply of the dark desolation which is not of the world of men, and present my deepest grief to this world which is not of men, letting it delight in my pain. This shall be the poor offering of one still living before the shrine of the dead.

II

True fighters dare face the sorrows of humanity, and look unflinchingly at bloodshed. What sorrow and joy are theirs! But the Creator's common device for ordinary people is to let the passage of time wash away old traces, leaving only pale-red bloodstains and a vague pain; and he lets men live on ignobly amid these, to keep this quasi-human world going. When will such a state of affairs come to an end?

We are still living in such a world, and some time ago I felt I must write something. A fortnight has passed since March 18 and soon the forgotten Saviour will be descending. I must write something now.

III

Miss Liu Hezhen, one of the more than forty young people killed, was my pupil. So I used to call her, and so I thought of her. But now I hesitate to call her my pupil, for now I should present to her my sorrow and my respect. She is no pupil now of one dragging on an ignoble existence like myself. She is a Chinese girl who has died for China.

I first saw her name early last summer, when Miss Yang Yinyu as president of the Women's Normal College dismissed six members of the students' union. She was one of the six, but I did not know her. Only later — it may have been after Liu Baizhao* led his men and women lieutenants to drag the students out of the college — did someone point out one of the students to me and tell me that was Liu Hezhen. When I knew who she was, I secretly marvelled. I had always imagined that any student who could stand up to the authorities and oppose a powerful president and her accomplices must be rather bold and intractable; but she nearly always had a smile on her face, and her manner was very gentle. After we found temporary lodgings at Zongmao Hutong and started classes again, she began attending my lectures, and so I saw more of her. She still always had a smile on her face, and her manner was very gentle. When the college was recovered, and the former members of the staff who felt they had now done their duty prepared to resign, I first noticed her in tears through concern for the college's future. After that, I believe, I never saw her again. At least, as far as I remember, that was our last meeting.

IV

On the morning of the 18th I knew there was a mass petition before Government House; and that afternoon I heard the fearful news that the guards had actually opened fire, that there had been several hundred casualties, and that Liu Hezhen was one of the dead. I was rather sceptical, though, about these reports. I am always ready to think the worst of my fellow-countrymen, but I could neither conceive nor believe that we could stoop

* See footnote on p 236 above.

to such despicable barbarism. Besides, how could smiling, gentle Liu Hezhen have been slaughtered for no reason in front of Government House?

Yet on that same day it proved to be true — the evidence was her body. There was another body, Yang Dequn's. Moreover these made clear that this was not only murder but brutal murder, for their bodies bore the marks of clubs also.

The Duan government, however, issued a decree declaring them "rioters."

But this was followed by a rumour that they were the tools of other people.

I could not bear to look at this cruel sight. Even more, I could not bear to hear these rumours. What else is there I can say? I understand why a dying race remains silent. Silence, silence! Unless we burst out, we shall perish in this silence!

V

But I have more to say.

I did not see this, but I hear that she — Liu Hezhen — went forward gaily. Of course, it was only a petition, and no one with any conscience could imagine such a trap. But then she was shot before Government House, shot from behind, and the bullet pierced her lung and heart. A mortal wound, but she did not die immediately. When Miss Zhang Jingshu who was with her tried to lift her up, she was pierced by four shots, one from a pistol, and fell. And when Miss Yang Dequn who was with them tried to lift her up, she was shot too. The bullet entered her left shoulder and came out to the right of her heart, and she also fell. She was able to sit up, but a soldier clubbed her savagely over her head and her breast, and so she died.

So gentle Liu Hezhen who was always smiling has really died. It is true her body is the evidence Yang Dequn, a brave and true friend, has also died; her body is the evidence. Only Zhang Jingshu, just as brave and true a friend, is still groaning in hospital. How magnificent of these three girls to fall so calmly, pierced by the bullets invented by civilized men! The valour shown by Chinese soldiers in butchering women and children and the martial prowess of the Allied troops* in teaching students a lesson have unfortunately been eclipsed by these few streaks of blood.

But Chinese and foreign murderers are still holding their heads high, unaware of the bloodstains on their faces. . . .

VI

Time flows eternally on: the streets are peaceful again, for a few lives count for nothing in China. At most, they give good-natured idlers something to talk about, or provide malicious idlers with material for "rumours." As for any deeper significance, I think there is very little; for this was only a peaceful petition. The history of mankind's battle forward through bloodshed is like the formation of coal, where a great deal of wood is needed to produce a small amount of coal. But petitions do not serve any purpose, especially peaceful ones.

Since blood was shed, however, the affair will naturally make itself more felt. At least it will permeate the hearts of the kinsmen, teachers, friends and lovers of the dead. And even if with the flight of time the bloodstains fade, the image of a gentle girl who was always smiling will live on for ever amid the vague sorrow. The poet Tao Qian wrote:

* The joined forces of the eight imperialist powers, which attacked China in 1900.

*My kinsmen may still be grieving,
While others have started singing.
I am dead and gone — what more is there to say?
My body is buried in the mountains.*

And this is quite enough.

VII

As I have said before, I am always willing to think the worst of my fellow-countrymen. Still, quite a few things have surprised me this time. One is that the authorities could act so barbarously, another that the rumour-mongers could sink so low, yet another that Chinese girls could face death so bravely.

Only last year did I begin to notice how Chinese women manage public affairs. Though they are few, I have often been impressed by their ability, determination and indomitable spirit. The attempt of these girls to rescue each other amid a hail of bullets, regardless of their own safety, is a clearer indication of the courage of Chinese women which has persisted through the thousands of years of conspiracies against them and suppression. If we are looking for the significance of this casualty for the future, it probably lies here.

Those who drag on an ignoble existence will catch a vague glimpse of hope amid the pale bloodstains, while true fighters will advance with greater resolution.

Alas, I can say no more. But I have written this in memory of Miss Liu Hezhen.

April 1, 1926

EMPTY TALK

I

I have never approved of petitions, but not because I feared massacres like that of March 18. In fact, I never dreamed of such a thing, though I always judge my fellow Chinese from a "pettifogger's" point of view. All I knew was that they were apathetic, without conscience, and not worth speaking to; besides, this was simply a question of handing in a petition — and the students were unarmed. I never suspected such treachery and savagery. I suppose the only ones who could foresee it were Duan Qirui, Jia Deyao, Zhang Shizhao and their kind. The loss of forty-seven young lives was entirely due to deceit. They were simply lured to their death.

Some creatures — I cannot think what else to call them — say the popular leaders are morally responsible. These creatures seem to think that firing on an unarmed crowd is right, that the road in front of Government House is "dangerous ground," and that the martyrs walked into the trap themselves. The popular leaders do not see eye to eye with Duan Qirui and his like, and have never plotted with them, so how could they foretell such dastardly brutality? Anyone with a streak of humanity left in him could never, never foresee such brutality.

I think if you want to accuse the popular leaders, they have only two faults: one is that they still believe a petition serves some purpose, the other that they have too high an opinion of the men they are up against.

II

Still, this is being wise after the event. Before this happened, I doubt if anyone could have foretold such a tragedy, at most, you would expect this to be merely one more case of labour in vain. Only wise, learned men could know of it beforehand, and say that delivering a petition means certain death

In "Idle Chat" Professor Chen Yuan wrote:

If we advise patriotic women not to take too active a part in mass movements in future, they will certainly accuse us of despising them, so we dare not interfere. However, we cannot but hope that young boys and girls will not join in any movements in future, lest, as happened this time, bullets rain down, and they are trampled on, killed or injured.

So now, at a cost of forty-seven lives, all we have bought is this knowledge: the road in front of our Government House is a place where "bullets rain down," and if you want to go to certain death you should wait till you have grown up and do so of your own accord.

I suppose if our "patriotic women" and "young boys and girls" take part in school sports they will run no serious danger. As for petitions delivered amid bullets raining down, even grown-up, patriotic men should remember this well: No more!

Just look at the result. Simply a few elegies and essays, and material for gossip. Certain leading citizens are negotiating with certain authorities for a burial ground — a major petition has become a minor petition. A funeral, of course, is the most suitable ending. But the strange thing is that these forty-seven dead seem to have deliberately tried to get a government burial ground, for fear they might grow old and die without one. The Zoo is very near, yet the three tablets before the graves of

the four martyrs¹ there bear no inscription; so what will happen far away at the Summer Palace?

If the dead are not buried in the hearts of the living, then they are dead indeed.

III

Of course, bloodshed is often unavoidable if you want reform, but bloodshed does not necessarily mean reform. Blood should be used like money: it is not good to be miserly, but extravagance is also a great mistake. I am deeply grieved by the sacrifice made this time.

I hope we shall have no more such petitions

Though petitions are common in any country, they do not cause death; but we know that China is an exception, unless you can stop these bullets from raining down. You can only fight according to the rules when your opponent is a hero. No doubt the end of the Han Dynasty can be called "the good old days," so I hope I shall be excused if I quote an anecdote from a story about that period. When Xu Chu² went into battle with uncovered shoulders, he was wounded in several places by arrows, and Jin Shengtan³ in his comments laughed at him. "Who told you not to cover your shoulders?" asked Jin.

In the modern world since the invention of so many firearms, trench warfare is the general rule. This is not because we begrudge sacrificing human life, but because we do not want to throw it away for nothing, for a soldier's life is precious. And where there are not many soldiers, their lives become even more precious. I do not

* Men who attempted to assassinate Yuan Shikai and another official during the 1911 Revolution

² A famous general under Cao Cao in the Three Kingdoms Period

³ (1609-66), a literary critic.

mean by this that we should keep them jealously at home. We want the maximum profit for the minimum capital, or at least a fair return. To drown a foe in a torrent of blood or fill a gap with the bodies of one's fellow-countrymen is already out of date. This is a very great loss from the modern military point of view.

The best thing the dead have done for those surviving them is to have torn off the human masks from those creatures' faces and exposed their hearts, more vicious than anyone could have dreamed. So they have taught those who are battling on to use new tactics in fighting.

April 2, 1926

THIS "SUPPRESSION OF REDS"

Many people have died in the numerous battles great and small fought in the area between Beijing and Tianjin, all to "suppress the Reds" Volleys fired in front of Government House killed forty-seven demonstrators and wounded over a hundred, and an order went out for the arrest of Xu Qian and four other "leaders of the rioters," also to "suppress the Reds" Planes from Fengtian (Mukden) bombed Beijing three times, killing two women and wounding one small brown dog, again to "suppress the Reds"

Whether the soldiers who fell between Beijing and Tianjin, the two women killed by bombs, and the small brown dog which was wounded were Reds or not, we common people cannot tell since no decree has been issued. As for the forty-seven shot before Government House, the first decree announced that they had been shot "by mistake." The official note of the Beijing Procuratorial Bureau stated that "the purpose of this demonstration was reasonable enough, and they were guilty of no misdemeanour" And the State Council decided to "pay ample compensation for the dead" But what has happened to all the "rioters" led by Xu Qian and the others? Have they some magic formula which can ward off bullets?

In short, there has been a suppression, but where are the Reds?

Let us not consider where they are for the time being. At all events, the martyrs have been given a funeral, Xu Qian and the others have run away, and there are two

vacancies on the Russian Indemnity Fund Committee
On the sixth, the *Beijing News* reported:

Yesterday representatives of the teachers' union of nine colleges held a meeting at the College of Law and Political Economy at which Zha Liangzhao took the chair. When he had reported on his negotiations with the Minister of Education Hu Renyuan over the reorganization of the Russian Indemnity Fund Committee a few days previously, a representative proposed that they should firmly oppose the government's plan to fill the vacant posts with officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, education and finance, not because they objected to any individuals, but because the Russian fund was very large and educational circles expected so much from it.

There was another item of news under the headline: "Five Private Universities Also Interested in Russian Fund Committee."

The death of these forty-seven people has certainly done no small service to educational circles in China. Who can deny that "ample compensation" should be paid?

From now on, I suppose, those in Chinese educational circles will have to stop accusing their opponents of "accepting Russian roubles."

April 6, 1926

A SLAP-DASH DIARY

June 28

Sunny A high wind.

This morning I went out to buy medicine, and found the whole street hung with five-coloured national flags, and rows of military police. Near the middle of Fengsheng Hutong, the police drove me into a small alley. Presently I saw clouds of dust rise on the main road and a car drove past. Soon there came another car, then another, another, then another. . . I could not see the occupants clearly, but I caught a glimpse of caps with gilded edges. There were soldiers on the running boards, some with big swords fastened on their backs with red silk. The people in the alley looked overcome with awe. Before long the cars disappeared and we gradually dispersed, but the military police said nothing.

I walked to Xidan Street, and found the whole street there hung with five-coloured national flags too, and rows of military police. A group of ragged children with leaflets in their hands were shouting, "Extra! Welcome General Wu!"* One asked me to buy a copy, but I did not.

Near Xuanwu Gate a man in a yellow uniform with sweat pouring down his face strode through the gate. "F — your mother!" he shouted suddenly. Many people turned to stare at him, but when he walked past they stopped watching. As I went through the gate I met another boy in rags carrying a handful of leaflets, who thrust one at me without a word. I saw it was a

* Wu Peifu, a Northern warlord.

lithographed leaflet issued by a Mr Li Guoheng, and was to the effect that he had suffered from piles for many years but been cured by some wonderful doctor.

When I reached the pharmacy which was my destination, I found a crowd outside watching two men quarrelling. An old, pale-blue umbrella blocked the door. I pushed at the umbrella, but it would not budge. At last the head under it turned to ask, "What do you want?" I told him I wanted to go in to buy medicine. He said nothing, but turned back to go on watching the quarrel, keeping his umbrella where it was. I summoned up courage and charged forward, and was able to charge straight in.

In the pharmacy, a foreigner was sitting at the counter. All the other assistants were young compatriots of mine, neatly and stylishly dressed. It flashed into my mind that in ten years they would all be high-class Chinese gentlemen, and I instantly felt low-class myself. So with both hands I respectfully presented the prescription and bottle to a compatriot whose hair was parted.

"Eighty-five cents," he said, walking off with them.

"Hey!" I could not contain myself; my low-class temper was aroused. I knew the medicine cost eighty cents, and the bottle five. Since I had brought my own bottle, why should I pay an extra five cents? "Hey!" is just as effective in its way as our national oath "His mother's!" It can convey so much meaning.

"Eighty cents!" He caught on at once, and let the five cents go — an example of the way a true gentleman "follows what is right as water flows downhill."

I paid eighty cents, and after a short wait the medicine was produced. I felt one need not always be too polite to compatriots like this. I uncorked the bottle and tasted it then and there.

"It's quite all right." An intelligent man, he knew I did not trust him.

"H'm." I nodded to show agreement. Actually it was not quite all right. My palate was not so insensitive that I could not tell it was a little too acid; he had been too lazy even to use the measure, and had obviously put in too much diluted hydrochloric acid. But this did not worry me, for I could take a smaller dose each time, or add some water to provide a few extra doses. Hence my "H'm." An ambiguous answer, "H'm" — it is hard to say what it means.

"Good morning." I took the bottle and started out.

"Good morning. Won't you drink some water before you go?"

"No, thank you. Good morning."

Being citizens, after all, of the land of Confucian propriety, we finally parted politely. After withdrawing politely through the glass door, I hurried on through the dust and blazing sun; but when I was nearly at East Chang'an Street there were those rows of military police again. I tried to cross, but one of them barred my way and said, "No!" I told him I just wanted to go a dozen steps to the other side. His answer was still "No!" In the end I had to make a detour.

Reaching Mr. L's house after my detour, I knocked at the gate, and the servant who appeared told me that Mr. L had gone out and would not be back till lunch time.

"It is nearly lunch time now," said I. "Can I wait?"

"No," said he. "What is your name?"

Here was a proper fix. I had come so far — in the face of such odds — for nothing. It was really too bad. After ten seconds' thought I took a card from my pocket and asked him to tell his mistress there was someone who wanted to wait here, if convenient. After a few minutes he came out again, and the result was still "No!" His master would not be back till three. I should return then.

After another ten seconds' thought, I decided to call on Mr. C. Once more I hurried through the dust and blazing sun, arriving this time without being stopped on

the way I knocked at the gate and asked if Mr C was in. The man who opened the gate said he would look. "This sounds very hopeful," I thought. Sure enough, I was immediately ushered into the sitting-room, and Mr C hurried out to greet me. First of all I asked him to give me lunch. Then he offered me some bread and wine, while he himself had noodles. In the end I finished a whole plate of bread, with butter, as well as nearly four plates of meat and vegetables.

When I had finished we chatted until five.

Outside the sitting-room was a great plot of ground planted with many trees. And some children were always hanging about under one of the apple trees. Mr. C said they were waiting for apples to fall, for the rule was that whoever picked one up could have it. It tickled me to think that children should have so much patience and be willing to wait so long. But strange to say, by the time I took my leave, three of them already had apples in their hands.

Once home I picked up the paper, and read:

General Wu spent one night at Changxindian. He had an additional reason apart from those already given. After he left Baoding, Zhang Qihuang consulted an oracle on the general's behalf, and learned that it would be most auspicious to enter Beijing on the 28th, for then he would certainly conquer the northwest. To arrive on the 27th would not be so good. And to this General Wu agreed. This is the reason for his arriving one day late.

At that, I thought of all the "No's" I had heard today, and knew my luck was not so good. I might as well consult an oracle too about this evening. However, knowing nothing about fortune-telling and having none of the paraphernalia, I could not think how to start. Finally I invented a new method. I would pick a book at random, close my eyes, open the book, and put my finger on some

words, then open my eyes and see what was written there That would be my oracle

I used the poems of Tao Yuanming, and acted according to plan. The two lines I hit on were.

*The meaning is beyond words,
Who could untie this knot?*

I studied it for some time, but could not make out what it meant

A SLAP-DASH DIARY CONTINUED

July 2
Sunny.

This afternoon after buying medicine outside Qianmen Gate, I went round to Dongdan Arch to have a look at the East Asia Company. Though this shop sells Japanese books merely as a side-line, it has quite a few works on China. Since my purse was light, I bought only Hideo Yasuoka's *The Chinese Character as Seen in Fiction*, then left. It is a slender volume, with a scarlet and orange cover, and costs one dollar twenty.

I started reading it this evening under the lamp. Yasuoka quotes thirty-four books, but some are actually not fiction and some are different parts of the same book. I was bitten several times by mosquitoes, and though there seemed to be no more than one or two they would not let me sit still. Only after lighting the mosquito incense was I gradually able to settle down in peace.

Mr. Yasuoka says most politely in his introduction, "The Chinese are not the only people like this. There are Japanese of this type, too, I am afraid." But when he goes on, "Seeing how strong and widespread these habits are in China, we need not scruple to call them Chinese characteristics," as a Chinese I cannot help breaking into a sweat. One glance at the table of contents will show you why.

- I General Remarks
- II Undue Emphasis on "Face" and

Appearances

- III Fatalism and Resignation
- IV Patience and Endurance
- V Cruelty and Lack of Sympathy
- VI Selfishness and Servility
- VII Miserliness and Greed
- VIII A Passion for Empty Conventions and Ceremonies
- IX Extreme Superstition
- X Licentiousness and General Lechery

Mr. Yasuoka seems to have great confidence in Smith's* *Chinese Characteristics*, judging by the number of times he quotes it. This book was translated into Japanese twenty years ago, but apparently we Chinese have not paid much attention to it. Mr. Yasuoka's first chapter is based on Smith's contention that the Chinese as a nation are fond of acting. The moment anything excites them they turn into actors, each word, each phrase, each gesture, each step they take, is posing or posturing. It does not come from the heart, but is aimed at impressing an audience. For, laying so much stress on face, they are always trying to look high and mighty — this explains all such talk and behaviour. In short, the crux of the matter and the key to the Chinese character is this "face."

If we look around and consider ourselves, we shall see that this is no malicious exaggeration. There is said to be a good couplet for the theatre: "The stage is a miniature world, and the world a large stage." We look upon everything as acting, and anyone who is serious as a fool. This is not solely for the sake of appearances, however, for when a man feels unjustly treated but dares not avenge himself, he can ease his conscience by calling all the world a stage. This being so, the injustice is an

* A.K. Smith (1854-1932), an American missionary who spent more than fifty years in China.

illusion, and the failure to take vengeance is not cowardly. So if you come across injustice but do not draw your sword to uphold the right, you can still be a true gentleman of the old school.

I do not know whether the foreigners I have met are influenced by Smith or are judging by their own experience, but quite a few of them are making a special study of Chinese "face" or the way we "keep up appearances." To my mind, though, they have pretty well grasped the art already and are now applying it. A little more proficiency will not only ensure their success in diplomacy, but will win them the friendship of "upper-class Chinese." By then, in place of the expression "China" they should use "the Flowery Kingdom," for this too has some bearing on "face."

I remember when I came to Beijing at the beginning of the Republic, the notices in front of the post-offices read "Bureau of Postal Affairs." But then a great cry was raised against foreign interference in China's internal affairs, and, perhaps by a coincidence, within a few days all such names were changed. The "Bureau of Postal Affairs" became the "Bureau of Postal Service." So the foreigners were simply looking after the postal "service," which has nothing to do with our internal "affairs." This play-acting has continued to this day.

When the champions of national characteristics or morality shed bitter tears, I never believe in their sincerity. If real tears flow from their eyes, we should look at their handkerchiefs to see whether they have been soaked in paprika or ginger water. Do they really believe all that talk about preserving the national heritage, upholding morality, championing justice, regenerating the schools . . . ? An actor on the stage looks much more impressive than he does behind the scenes. But though the spectators know he is only acting, so long as his performance is convincing they can still be moved by it. So

the play-acting goes on, and anyone who exposes it is considered a killjoy.

When the Chinese first heard of the Russian "Nihilist Party" they flew into the same sort of panic as they do today at any mention of "Reds." Actually, no such party ever existed. There were only nihilists or men with nihilist ideas. This term was coined by Turgenev to describe those who had no god and no religion, who denied all tradition and authority and wanted a return to a life where each could exercise his own free will. Such people, however, seem bad enough to the Chinese. But let us look at some men in China, those at least of the upper class. Do they believe in and obey god, religion or the authority of tradition, or do they simply fear these and try to use them? See how good they are at changing sides and at taking no definite stand, and you will realize that they really believe in nothing, but want to pose as believers. So if you want to look for nihilists, there are quite a few in China. The only difference between them and the Russian nihilists is that the latter speak and act the same way as they think, while ours think one way but speak another way, act one way off stage but another way on the stage. We might distinguish these unusual people by calling them "play-acting nihilists" or "face-saving nihilists," even if the adjectives seem to have nothing to do with the noun.

This evening, I wrote to Pinqing asking him to borrow me a copy of *Luqiu's Studies** from Kongde College.

At midnight, just before going to bed, I tore off today's sheet from the calendar, and found the sheet underneath printed in red. "Tomorrow is only Saturday," I thought. "Why is it red?" When I looked carefully, I saw two lines in minute characters: "Commemoration of the Restoration of the Republic and the Mobilization of Forces

* A collection of miscellaneous writings edited by Gu Sili in the Qing Dynasty.

at Machang.”* And I wondered, “Will flags be hung up tomorrow?” . . . Then I stopped thinking and went to bed.

July 4
Sunny.

This morning I was woken up again by a fly crawling over my face and, unable as usual to drive it away, I had to get up. Pinqing's reply has come. There is no *Lüqiu's Studies* in Kongde College library.

This all started with *The Chinese Character as Seen in Fiction*. Because that book mentioned Chinese cooking, I wanted to look the subject up. I have never paid much attention to this matter: the only old references to it I have read are the section “Eight Delicacies” in the *Book of Ceremony*, an imperial bill of fare mentioned in *Youyang Miscellany*, and the recipes devised by the scholar Yuan Mei. There is *Essentials of Cooking* by He Sihui of the Yuan Dynasty, but I merely flipped through it in a bookshop. It was probably a Yuan Dynasty edition, so I could not afford it. Yang Yu's *Handbook for Cooks* written in the Tang Dynasty is in *Lüqiu's Studies*, but since I cannot find that collection, I have to give up.

In recent years, I have often heard fellow-countrymen and foreigners praise Chinese cooking as delicious and hygienic, Number One in the world, and Number X in the universe. But I never know what food they are referring to. In some parts of China, people eat onions and garlic with unleavened bread; in other parts they eat rice with vinegar, paprika or salted vegetables. Then there are many Chinese who can only afford rice or bread with

* In July 1917, the warlord Zhang Xun tried to restore the Qing Emperor Pu Yi with the connivance of President Duan Qirui. But popular opposition made Duan pretend to support the Republic. He mobilized forces at Machang to crush Zhang Xun.

coarse salt, while many more have not even salt to lick. This can hardly be the cooking considered delicious and hygienic, Number One or Number X by Chinese and foreign gentlemen. They must mean the banquets served to important people. Still, I do not think we should rank Chinese cooking Number One simply because rich men eat that way; just as, though last year a few "high-class Chinese" appeared, the rest of us are still "low-class."

In Mr. Yasuoka's study of Chinese cooking, in his last chapter "Licentiousness and General Lechery," he quotes from *The Middle Kingdom* by Williams. Here we read:

Many articles of food are sought after by this sensual people for their supposed aphrodisiac qualities, and most of the singular productions brought from abroad for food are of this nature . . . A large proportion of the numerous made dishes seen at great feasts among the Chinese consists of such odd articles, most of which are supposed to possess some peculiar strengthening quality . . .

When I read this I could not help bursting out laughing, though I seldom take offence when foreigners point out our faults. It is true that the food in Chinese feasts is rather rich, but this is not the daily fare of ordinary people. And although many rich Chinese are profligates, they would hardly go so far as to mix aphrodisiacs with their food. "King Zhou was bad, but not as bad as all that"* When foreigners who study China probe too deep and are over-sensitive, they often end up by becoming more sex-conscious than the Chinese.

Mr. Yasuoka also said:

Bamboo shoots mean just as much to the Chinese as prawns. In fact, bamboo shoots are even more

* A quotation from the *Analects*. Zhou was the last king of the Shang Dynasty.

popular here than in Japan. This may sound laughable, but it is probably because the erectness of the bamboo shoots reminds them of something else

My home county, Kuaiji, is famous even today for its bamboos. The ancients set great store by them; indeed, the "bamboo arrows from Kuaiji" were well-known. But they set store by bamboo because it could be made into arrows for war, not because it stands "erect," and resembles the male genitals. Where bamboos abound there are many bamboo shoots, and being so plentiful they cost no more than cabbages in Beijing. When I was at home, I ate bamboo shoots for over ten years, but when I think back now to my feelings then, I cannot by any stretch of the imagination persuade myself that I ate them for their erectness. There is a plant — squaw root — which because of its appearance is considered to cure impotence, but it is a medicinal herb, not food. Anyway, although bamboo shoots are often seen in bamboo groves in the south or on the table, they are just like lamp-posts in the street or pillars in a house: though "erect" they probably have nothing to do with the extent of a man's sexual capacity.

But just clearing up this point is not enough to prove that the Chinese are a moral people. We have a great deal of research to do before we can reach a conclusion, yet the Chinese refuse to study themselves. As Mr. Yasuoka has also said:

More than ten years ago there appeared . . . an anonymous novel called *Student Life in Tokyo*, apparently based on facts, aimed doubtless at presenting a malicious picture of immorality in Japan. However, after reading the whole book, we find that the author has unwittingly devoted all this effort to writing a confession of the immorality of Chinese students rather than an attack on the Japanese. This is quite a joke.

This is true, and we shall find even stronger evidence of Chinese immorality in such ostensibly moral bans as those on co-education or women models for artists

I have not had the honour of assisting at any "great banquets," having merely been present at several ordinary feasts where we had bird's-nest and shark's fin. Come to think of it, I never felt particularly randy either during or after those feasts. What I find strange even now is the customary appearance among all that well-cooked food of a plate of live shrimps. According to Mr. Yasuoka, the shrimp also has aphrodisiac properties. I have heard the same said in China too. What I find so strange, though, is this mixture of two extremes, as if cannibalism had suddenly cropped up in our well-seasoned, civilized society. The more so since this barbarism is not barbarism advancing towards civilization, but a lapse back into barbarism from a civilization already attained. If we compare the former to a sheet of white paper on which words are to be written, the latter is a sheet of black paper covered with scrawls. On the one hand, we go in for ceremony and music, honour Confucius and study the classics. Our four-thousand-year-old civilization is very well-seasoned indeed. On the other hand, we calmly burn, slaughter, rape and plunder, doing things to our fellow-countrymen which barbarians would never do to their own people. The whole of China is one huge feast like that.

To my mind, in our diet we should get rid of everything over-cooked and soggy; we should also make a clean sweep of raw or still living things. We should eat meat which though well-cooked is still a little raw, still has fresh blood in it. . . .

This is noon, our usual hour for lunch, and time for this discussion to end. We are eating dried vegetables, dried bamboo shoots no longer "erect," bean vermicelli and salted vegetables. What Professor Chen Yuan hates about Shaoxing are its "yamen clerks" and "the writings

of pettifoggers.” What I hate is its food. The *History of Kuaiji Compiled in the Jia Tai Period* is being lithographed, but has not yet appeared. I must read it later to discover just how many famines Shaoxing has had to frighten its people into fearing the world may end tomorrow, so that they make such a point of hoarding dried provisions. They dry all their vegetables in the sun, also their fish and beans, and dry bamboo shoots till they lose their shape. The special qualities of water chestnuts are their juiciness, tenderness and crispness, yet the Shaoxing people dry even these. I hear that Arctic explorers often develop scurvy because they eat only tinned food and cannot get anything fresh. If explorers were to go from Shaoxing, taking their dried vegetables with them, they might be able to penetrate a little further.

This evening I received a letter from Qiaofeng¹ and the manuscript of Wei Congwu's translation of Bunin's short story *Light Sobbing* which has been lying quietly in a publisher's office in Shanghai for half a year. At last I have managed to retrieve it.

The Chinese always refuse to study themselves. The national character as seen in fiction is a good subject. So is the relationship between Taoist thought (I do not mean Taoism as a religion, but alchemy) and important historical events, as well as its influence today. So is the way in which Confucians have adapted the “sage's way” to suit themselves, and the difference between the arguments used by sophists to persuade princes in the Warring States Period and those of modern politicians. Also the number of large-scale persecutions of writers in China since ancient times, the means by which “rumours” are fabricated and spread, and their effect through the centuries. . . . There is no dearth of new subjects for research.

* Zhou Jianren, Lu Xun's younger brother.

HOW I DREW MY PAY

This afternoon I was working with Mr C in the Central Park when a well-meaning old colleague suddenly warned me that the ministry was paying salaries today — thirty per cent — but we must draw it in person within three days.

Otherwise?

What would happen otherwise he did not say. But it was as clear as daylight. Otherwise you would get no pay.

All men who handle money give themselves airs, even though it is not theirs to give as alms, for this helps them to forget their own futility and insignificance. Though you actually leave goods in pawnshops as security, you find supercilious looks and high counters. Though you actually change silver dollars for coppers with the money-changers, they hang up notices saying "Silver Dollars Bought," as if *they* were the purchasers. Of course you should be able to find the right place to cash a money order, yet sometimes they fix very short hours for business, and you have to take a number, queue up, wait, and put up with their rudeness. There are police to keep order, too, carrying that distinctively Chinese object — a whip.

You won't obey, eh? No money for you, then, but a beating.

As I have said before, the officials of the Chinese Republic are all sons of the people, not a special race. High-minded scholars or newspapermen may consider them as a different species, much more odd and contemptible than the rest of us; yet judging by my experience in these last

few years, they are not really so different. They behave very much like our other fellow-citizens, and whenever they handle money also like to give themselves airs

This business of drawing pay in person has a long history, and since Fang Xuanchuo started complaining in the eleventh year of the Republic I wrote a short story on this subject called "The Double-Fifth Festival" But though history is said to move in cycles, it never repeats itself, and the present is slightly different from the past. In the good old days, the advocates of drawing pay in person were the doughty leaders of the Association to Demand Back Pay — to save time I will not go into these special terms one by one; besides, it would be a waste of good paper. They rushed about day and night, appealing to the government or importuning the Ministry of Finance. But once they had the money they were loath to share it with those who had not helped to get it, and imposed this slight inconvenience on these undeserving people. Their idea seemed to be: We got this money, so in a way it is ours. If you want it, you must come here like mendicants. Look how clothing or congee are distributed — no one ever delivers them to the beggars' homes!

But that was in the good old days. Now, no matter what "demands" you make, you will not get a cent. If there happens to be a "pay day," it comes as an unexpected favour from above, and has nothing to do with any "demands." Though there are benefactors still who order us at short notice to draw our pay in person, they are no longer doughty leaders skilled in demanding money, but "loyal subjects" who sign on every day and are not pluralists. So whereas formerly drawing pay in person was a punishment for those who did not join in the demand for back pay, it is now a punishment for those who will not attend office every day on empty stomachs.

But this is only the general idea, and more than this you can hardly understand without first-hand experience.

Just as you may hear all about hot-and-sour soup but not really know how it tastes till you try it yourself. I have recently been indirectly warned by certain prominent citizens whose motives are unknown that it is a pity I kept on attacking people last year in my writings, instead of discussing literature and art, the world and China. Actually, this is a sign of my increased understanding. Since I cannot fully grasp or clearly explain even the small affairs in which I take part, how can I speak of such great and noble matters about which I know so little? I can speak only of those private affairs which concern me closely. As for high-sounding concepts like "justice," let the experts on justice kill time discussing them.

In short, the present advocates of "drawing pay in person" are not a patch on the old ones to my mind. As Zhang Shizhao said, "The world is going to the dogs." Even men who simply grumble like Fang Xuanchuo are few and far between.

"Go on!"

I left the park as soon as I heard the alarm, leapt on a rickshaw and hurried straight to my yamen.

As soon as I entered the gate, the sentry snapped to attention and saluted. This shows the advantage of being a fairly big official. your face is remembered even after a long absence. Inside, the place was empty, for the office hours had been changed to the morning, and everyone must have drawn his pay in person and gone home. Then I found a messenger, and learned the rules for drawing pay in person. You must first get a slip of paper from the accountant's office, and take that to the hall to draw your money.

In the accountant's office, a clerk looked me over, then produced the slip. I realized he was an old hand who knew all his colleagues, and his was the important task of identification. After taking my slip I nodded specially to him, to bid goodbye and express my hearty thanks.

Then I went to the hall, where the first thing I came to was a side-door on which was pasted a notice "Section C" In smaller characters I read: "Less than one hundred dollars" I saw that my slip was for ninety-nine dollars, and was reminded of those lines.

*Men, who live for less than a hundred years,
Know a thousand years of griefs and fears**

Thinking this, I charged straight in. I found an official of approximately my rank, who told me that "Less than a hundred dollars" referred to the whole salary. mine was not there but further inside.

Further inside I found two large desks, beside which several men were sitting. An old colleague whom I knew greeted me. I produced my slip, signed my name, and received a money order — so far so good. Beside this group sat a very fat official, no doubt in a supervisory capacity, for he had boldly unbuttoned his cambric shirt — it may have been linen for all I know — disclosing rolls of fat down which sweat was slowly trickling

The thought struck me: Everybody is talking about "famished officials," but there seem to be quite a few "liberal minds in well-nourished bodies" about still. And two or three years ago, when the teachers were demanding their back-pay, there were cases of belching in the staff room after over-eating, the gas in some men's stomachs being in revolt.

When I went out the official of approximately my rank was still there, so I got hold of him to complain.

"Why are you up to these tricks again?" I asked.

"It's his idea. . . ." He gave a good-natured smile.

"What happens if someone is ill? Carry him here on a stretcher?"

"He says an exception can be made in such cases . . ."

I understood at once. But since to outsiders — those outside the yamen — it may not be so clear, a word of

* A verse by an anonymous poet of the Han Dynasty.

explanation seems needed. "He" meant the minister or vice-minister. Though the remark sounds rather ambiguous, if you look into it you will find it true, but if you look too far, it may become more ambiguous. At all events, since I had received my pay I should "know when to stop," otherwise it might be dangerous. In fact, I had already said more than I should.

Leaving the hall, I came across some more old colleagues and chatted with them. I learned that there was a "Section E" too, to pay the salaries of those already dead, who, I take it, do not have to come "in person." I also learned that this time it was not only "he" but "they" who had proposed this drawing of pay in person. At first hearing, "they" sounds like the chiefs of the Association to Demand Back Pay, but no such organization exists any longer in the yamen, so naturally "they" must be some other group.

The pay we "drew in person" this time was for February 1924. Hence two theories were current before the payment. One was that this was our salary for February 1924. But in that case newcomers and those newly promoted would be left out, hence naturally the other theory arose: the past could be forgotten and this was our pay for this June. Still, this theory was not too satisfactory either, for to say that the past could be forgotten also had its drawbacks.

Some time ago, certain individuals did try hard to work out some such method. Last year, after dismissing me from my post, Zhang Shizhao thought he had damaged my social status, and some scholars nearly danced for joy. But since they were clever men after all, who had read German books "which covered the bed, the tables and the floor," they realized at once that just the loss of my post would not ruin me completely, because I could still draw back pay and go on living in Beijing. Accordingly their section chief, Liu Baizhao, proposed in a conference at the ministry that there should be no more back pay:

whatever you drew in any month should be counted as that month's pay. Had this plan really been carried out, it would have been a great blow to me and subjected me to economic pressures. However, it failed to be passed. It was a fatal mistake to say that "the past could be forgotten," for Liu Baizhao and the others were unwilling to style themselves revolutionaries and propose a completely fresh start in every respect.

So now whenever the ministry receives money, it only issues back pay. Even if a man who was still here in February 1924 is not in Beijing now, it is difficult to say that because he is absent what is owed him can be discounted. But since the other theory was put forward, we should adopt some of its ideas as well, and make a compromise. So this time the date on our receipt was February 1924, while the money was for June 1926.

This way, we are not forgetting the past, while those newly appointed to posts or newly promoted receive a little extra too; thus everyone should be happy. As for me, I stand neither to gain nor to lose, provided I stay in Beijing and can get myself identified.

Looking back through my brief diary, I find I have been paid four times this year: three dollars the first time, six dollars the second, eighty-two dollars fifty cents the third — in other words, twenty-five per cent of my salary, which I received the night of the Double-Fifth Festival; and thirty per cent or ninety-nine dollars the fourth, which was today. When I reckon what is still owed me, I make it nine thousand two hundred and forty dollars, not counting my pay for July.

Already I feel a millionaire in spirit; the pity is that this "spiritual glory" is not too reliable. Liu Baizhao, for instance, has already tried to overturn it. In future, some clever financiers may set up another Association to Deal with Back Pay, with several people sitting in an office and a plate outside, to summon all those whose payment is in arrears. Then after a few days or a few

months, the men in the office will disappear, and after that the plate will disappear too, then the millionaire in spirit will become a pauper in the flesh

Still, I did get ninety-nine dollars today, so I feel less worried about my livelihood and am using this leisure to voice a few of my views.

July 21, 1926

RECORD OF A SPEECH

FOREWORD BY PEILIANG*

Mr Lu Xun will soon be going to Xiamen. Though he says he may not stay there long because of the climate, he will be away from Beijing for at least six months or a year, and his absence will be felt most keenly. On August 22, Mr. Lu Xun attended the meeting arranged by the students of the Women's Normal College to commemorate the anniversary of the disbanding of the college, and made a speech. Fearing this would be his last public appearance in Beijing for some time, I took down the speech as a small token of remembrance. Some people find Mr. Lu Xun a little too cold and aloof, when all the time he is filled with fervent hopes and feels things most deeply. This speech reveals his ideas even more clearly, so this record I made to commemorate his departure may not be entirely without significance. My own role that day, I had better make clear — to save simple souls needless thought — was that of a steward at the meeting.

Yesterday evening I checked my translation of *The Worker Shevyrjov*, meaning to have it reprinted. I stayed up so late that even now I am not quite awake. And as I was checking, so many ideas occurred to me that my brain was in a whirl — in fact, it still is. So I am afraid I shall not have much worth saying today.

* Xiang Peiliang, a contributor to Lu Xun's magazine *The Wilderness*. He later became a stooge of the Kuomintang.

It is rather curious how I came to translate *The Worker Shevyrjov*. Twelve years ago the Great War broke out in Europe, and later we joined in with our "Declaration of War Against Germany" We sent many workmen to Europe to help, and then the war was won, or, as we said, "Justice triumphed" Of course, China had her share of the booty, a part of which was the German books from the German Merchants' Club in Shanghai These came to quite a number, mostly literature, and they were all brought to Beijing and stored in the guardhouse above Wu Men in the Forbidden City. After acquiring these books, the Ministry of Education decided to have them sorted out and catalogued — there was a catalogue, as a matter of fact, but some people felt it was no good and a new one must be made A great many men were sent to do this, myself among them. Later the minister wanted to know what the books were. How could that be managed? He told us to translate the titles into Chinese, translating the meaning when possible, otherwise translating phonetically all names like Caesar, Cleopatra, Damascus. . . . We each received ten dollars a month as subsidy, and I made about a hundred dollars, for there was something called an administration fee too. So we palavered there for more than a year, while several thousand dollars were spent. Then came the peace treaty with Germany, after which the Germans asked for the return of their books, and our staff was responsible for the whole of this transaction — during which maybe a few volumes did get lost Whether the minister had read *Cleopatra* and the other books or not I do not know.

Speaking of something I do know, the result for China of declaring war against Germany was that the arch inscribed "*Iustitia Vincit*" was erected in Central Park, and the result for me was simply this translation of *The Worker Shevyrjov*, for I choose this volume out of those German books we recatalogued.

Why did I choose this of all the works of literature in that pile of books? I cannot remember too clearly. I think it was because I felt that just before and after the founding of our Republic we had many reformers who fared much as Shevyrjov did, and I wanted to hold a mirror up to ourselves. But I realized when reading it again last night that the descriptions of the persecution of reformers and the sufferings of the representatives hold true not only for that time but for today, and for the future too. Even several decades from now, I believe, there will still be many reformers who will fare much as Shevyrjov did. That is why I want to have the book reprinted . . .

Artzybashev, the author of this book, is a Russian. And today the mere mention of Russia terrifies people. Actually terror is quite uncalled for in this case, for Artzybashev is not a Communist and his works are not popular in Soviet Russia. I hear he is blind now and having a very hard time, so he can never present me with a single rouble. . . . At any rate, this has nothing to do with Soviet Russia. But the strange thing is there is much in the book very reminiscent of China. We need not mention the sufferings of the reformers and people's representatives, even the old woman who urges people to keep quiet is just like our literati. When a teacher is dismissed because he refuses to be insulted by his superior, she blames him behind his back for his disgusting pride. "Look," she says. "My master slapped my face twice, but I didn't say a word, just put up with it. Later, when they found out how unjustly I'd been beaten, he gave me a hundred roubles with his own hands." Of course, our literati would not put it quite so bluntly, but would use more decorous language.

But Shevyrjov's views in the end are too frightening. He works first for society, but when society persecutes him and wants to kill him, he changes and longs to have

his revenge on mankind. Everyone is his enemy, he wants to destroy everything. In China there has never been anyone who wanted to destroy everything, and there probably never will be, at least I hope not. But China has always had other types of wreckers, so that what we do not destroy is often destroyed. As things are wrecked we patch them up, and so our lives go on, wrecking and patching up at the same time. This college was wrecked by Yang Yinyu, Zhang Shizhao and others, then patched up and put in order, to carry on.

Literati of the type of that old Russian woman may say this shows disgusting pride which should be punished. Of course, this sounds all right, but is not altogether true. There is a country woman living in our house at this moment who lost her home during the fighting, and had to come here as a refugee. She is not proud in the least, nor has she opposed Yang Yinyu, yet her home has vanished — destroyed. Once the fighting is over she will certainly go back, for even if her house is wrecked, her furniture lost, and her fields lie waste, she has to live on. She will probably gather together what little remains, patch it up, put it in order, and carry on.

China's civilization is feeble, mangled and pitiful after being wrecked and patched up in this way time and again. Yet many people boast of this, including the wreckers. Take the lady who wrecked this school: if you sent her to a conference of international women and asked her to speak about women's education in China, she would certainly mention the Women's Normal College in Beijing.

It is most deplorable, this Chinese habit of wrecking something which belongs to someone else, or is about to belong to someone else. When Yang Yinyu knew she was going to lose her job, she tried first by craft through the "rumours" spread by the literati, then by force through some women hirelings, to drive out all those "silly girls" and destroy them. When I first read

of Zhang Xianzhong's¹ massacre of the people of Sichuan, I could not fathom his motive, later, after reading another book, I understood. He wanted to become emperor, but because Li Zicheng^{**} entered Beijing first and ascended the throne, he determined to wreck Li's position. How could he do this? To be emperor, you must have subjects, so if he killed everyone off, no one could be emperor. Without subjects no one could rule. Li Zicheng would be left alone — an actor without an audience, just like a president of a disbanded college. Though this is an extreme case, and a fantastic one, there are many people with ideas like this. Zhang Xianzhong was not the only one.

We are Chinese for better or worse and cannot get away from China, but not being wreckers of the Chinese type we have to live on, being wrecked and patching things up again and again. Many of our lives are wasted. The sole consolation we can think of is hope for the future. Hope is dependent on life. while there is life there is hope, and while there is hope there is light. If the historians have not lied, nothing in the world can live on because of darkness. Darkness can depend solely on things about to die. Once they die the darkness will also vanish — it cannot last for ever. There will always be a future, though, and it is bound to grow bright. And provided we are not creatures of darkness, but are willing to perish for the light, our future will surely be a long and bright one.

POSTSCRIPT BY LU XUN

Four days after attending that meeting, I left Beijing. In Shanghai I read in the paper that the Women's Normal College had become the Normal Department of the

* See footnote on p 116 above

** Leader of a peasant revolt at the end of the Ming Dynasty.

Women's College under the presidency of the minister of education, Ren Kecheng himself. The dean of the Normal Department was Lin Suyuan. Later I saw the *Beijing Evening Post* of September 5, which reported:

At half past one this afternoon, Ren Kecheng and Mr. Lin swooped down on the Women's Normal College with some forty security officers and soldiers from the garrison headquarters, to take over the school by force.

So just one year after the incident, force is being used again. I wonder whether this time next year those who have troops will hold another meeting to commemorate the occupation of the college, or whether those who have troops will hold another meeting to commemorate the occupation of the college, or whether those who have been attacked will hold a meeting to commemorate the wrecking of the college. I have copied out these notes taken by Mr. Peiliang as a memento of this year.

October 14, 1926

A LETTER FROM SHANGHAI

Shanghai
August 30, 1926

Dear Xiaofeng,

The day after we parted I caught a train to Tianjin, which I reached that evening. Nothing happened on the way, but I was just leaving Tianjin station when a fellow in uniform — some customs official I suppose — suddenly grabbed my basket.

“What’s this?” he demanded.

By the time I had answered, “Things I need for my journey,” he had shaken the basket twice and stalked off. Luckily there was no ginseng soup, salted vegetable soup or glassware in the basket, so no damage was done. All is well.

Since I travelled from Tianjin to Pukou by special express, it was not too noisy, though still fairly crowded. I had not been on this train for seven years, not since I escorted my family to Beijing. Now it seems they segregate the sexes. In the next compartment there was a family consisting of one man and three women, but they drove the man out and invited another woman in. And as we were nearing Pukou, there was a storm in a teacup. Because that family of four gave the attendant too small a tip, a great, strapping attendant came to our door to make a speech “for them to hear.” The gist was that money, of course, was essential. What did a man live for, if not money? Still, he worked as an attendant just for

a few tips because his heart was in the right place, not there (pointing to one armpit) He could have sold his land to buy guns and gather bandits under him, then after some good fun become an officer and make big money. But because his heart was here (pointing to his breast), he was content to be an attendant and make just enough money to send his kids to school to make decent citizens of them . . . If driven too hard, though, he was capable of anything, however bad! There were six of us, and not one disputed what he said. I heard he was later given an extra dollar, and that was that.

I have no intention of following in the steps of those bold literati who attack Generalissimo Sun Chuanfang in a certain Beijing weekly.¹ But once I reached Xiaguan, and remembered that this was the home of high morality where the ancient game of pitchpot** was still being played, I could not help feeling amused. To me, Xiaguan looked the same as seven years ago, except that then it was raining and this time it was fine. Being a little too late to catch the special express I had to take the night train, so I rested for a while in a hotel. The porters and waiters were as honest as ever, and the salted duck, grilled pork and roast chicken were as cheap and good as before. I had two ounces of *gaoliang* wine, which also tasted better than in Beijing. This may just have been my fancy, of course, but perhaps there was some reason for it too, for the wine had a tang of the growing *gaoliang* about it, and when I closed my eyes after drinking I felt I was in the fields after rain.

I was in the fields when a waiter came in to say that I was wanted. Upon going out, I found several civilians and three or four soldiers carrying rifles. I did not count

* This is ironic. The "bold" literati were not really opposed to Sun Chuanfang.

** A game played at feasts in ancient China, when arrows were thrown into a pot, and the loser had to drink. In an attempt to revive the old traditions, Sun re-introduced this game in 1926.

them, but there was quite a crowd. One of them said he wanted to see my luggage. I asked him which he would take first. He pointed at a leather suitcase with a sacking cover. When I had unroped it, unlocked it and opened it, he squatted down to fumble among the clothes. Having fumbled for some time he seemed to lose heart. He stood up and waved his hand, at which the soldiers "about turned" and marched out. And as the leader left he even nodded to me very politely. This was my first encounter with the modern "gun-owning class" since the Republic. I felt they were not so bad. Had they been as good at spreading "rumours" as those who call themselves the "gunless class," I should not have been able to travel at all.

The night train for Shanghai left at eleven o'clock, and since there were very few passengers you could quite well lie down to sleep. Unfortunately the seats were so short, you had to lie hunched up. The tea on this train was excellent, served in glasses, with a good colour, smell and taste. It may have been because I have been drinking tea made with well water for all these years that I was so pleasantly surprised, but I believe it was really good. So I drank two glasses while looking out of the window at the Changjiang Valley by night, and scarcely slept at all.

On this train I first came across students who talk in English, and first heard such terms as "wireless" and "submarine cable." And it was on this train that I first saw young gentlemen too frail for the weight of clothes, in silk gowns and shoes with pointed toes, who ate pumpkin seeds while reading some frivolous paper which they never seemed to finish. Apparently the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang have more than their share of these types, which means the game of pitchpot will go on for some time.

Now I am in a hotel in Shanghai, but eager to move on. I find I enjoy travelling after a few days of it, and

would like to go on and on I once heard of a race in Europe called Gipsies, who love to wander and will not settle down At the time I thought them most peculiar, but now I see they have reason. I was too ignorant then.

It is raining here, so it is not too hot.

Lu Xun

A LETTER FROM XIAMEN

September 23, 1926

Dear H M,*

I have been here for nearly a month, lazing in a three-storeyed building, not writing much to anyone. This house is by the seashore and the wind from the ocean roars round it day and night. The beach is covered with shells, and I have been out to collect them several times, but found nothing out of the usual. Not many people live nearby. I know of only one shop in the neighbourhood where I can buy tinned goods and cakes. It is kept by a woman who looks old enough to be my mother.

The scenery is not bad at all, with mountains and water. When I first arrived, a colleague told me how different the hills and sea look in spring and autumn, morning and evening. He also pointed out certain cliffs: one like a tiger, another like a toad, yet another like something else . . . I cannot remember them all, and the fact is they are not so very lifelike. I am sorry to say I am blind to natural beauty, not much moved even by magnificent views seen in a happy hour. But for several days I have been unable to forget the relics of Zheng Chenggong.** Not far from where I stay is a city wall built — so tradition goes — by him. The thought

* Xu Guangping.

** (1624-66), a patriot at the end of the Ming Dynasty, who opposed the Qing Dynasty and defeated its armies many times, finally making Taiwan his base against them. Xiamen was captured by the Qing army in 1680 after his death.

that this Xiamen was the last place except Taiwan to be conquered by the Manchus makes one feel sad and proud at the same time. Taiwan only fell in 1683, the twenty-second year of that "sagacious and benevolent sovereign" Kang Xi, the year in which they started reprinting the thirteen classics and the twenty-one dynastic histories. Today when many of our citizens are agog to read the classics, and the *Twenty-one Histories* in the imperial edition have become treasures, collectors of old books are paying high prices to acquire them as family heirlooms. But Zheng Chenggong's city wall is being cold-shouldered. I hear even the sand at its base is being stolen and sold to someone on Gulangyu opposite, endangering the foundation of the wall. Early one morning I saw many small, heavily laden junks heading under full sail towards Gulangyu — my sand-selling compatriots, no doubt.

It is very quiet here. You have to go a long way to buy a new Beijing or Shanghai publication, so sometimes this place is rather lonely. Still one does not see that confounded *Modern Critic* either. I do not know why it is that a magazine edited by so many true gentlemen and literati cannot sell better.

These days I have been thinking of compiling a volume of my essays this year. Since writing them, especially those related to Chen Yuan, I have been given good advice by quite a few "neutral" gentlemen, who say it would be foolish to go on. This good advice did not stop me, but my recent change of surroundings seems to have put an end to my random thoughts, and even made me forget my editing work. One night not long ago, I suddenly heard a song by the artist Mei Lanfang. It was a gramophone record, of course, and it pierced my unhappy ears like a blunt, badly made needle. This made me think of my random thoughts, which may be causing similar discomfort to those gentlemen who admire the artist's singing, so that they want me to stop. But my thoughts

are printed, instead of setting up a vibration in the air. They need not read them unless they want to. Why should they try to fool me by posing as neutral? I want my writings to lie on the bookstalls to be bought by those who wish to read them. I want no true gentlemen to appreciate them. Most people like the peony, I dare say, but there are some who like the mandrake or nameless little wild flowers — Pengqi has even planted a cactus in a teapot as a miniature garden. But I find some of my old manuscripts are rather difficult to read — can you copy some for me?

The wind is up again. It is windy almost every day, just like Beijing, except that there is little dust. Occasionally I go for a stroll among the tombs. As Borel says in his book on Xiamen, the whole of China is one vast graveyard. And many of the epitaphs make no sense. Some have the name of the deceased mother but not the son; some give the name of the district first, some bear the inscription "Respect paper with writing on it,"* though to whom this advice is given I do not know. This lack of sense is owing to education. If you ask an illiterate fellow who the man in the tomb is, he will answer, "My father." If you ask his name, he will answer, "Zhang Er." And if you ask his own name, he will tell you, "Zhang San." Written down like this, nothing could be clearer. But the men who write epitaphs will insist on showing off their literary accomplishments, and the finer the writing the more confused it becomes. They do not know that from the Yuan down to the Qing Dynasty there were scholars who studied the art of writing epitaphs without reaching any conclusion.

Nothing has changed with me; but it is so quiet here that I do not want to write anything.

Lu Xun

* The feudal rulers preached respect for the written word



Lu Xun, autumn, 1926, in Xiamen

HOW "THE TRUE STORY OF AH Q" WAS WRITTEN

In Number 251 of *Literature Weekly*, Mr. Zheng Zhenduo discusses *Call to Arms*, especially "The True Story of Ah Q" This has reminded me of a few small matters, which I want to take the opportunity of mentioning here For this will serve as my contribution — as an article — and may be of interest to some.

Let me first quote Mr Zheng.

It is not without reason that this story has aroused such interest. Still, there are episodes in it that might well be revised, such as the last chapter "The Grand Finale." When I first read this in the *Morning News*, I did not agree with it, nor do I now. The writer seems to have concluded this story too hastily. Not wanting to go on writing, he casually gave Ah Q this "Grand Finale." Surely even the author himself, when he started the story, cannot have guessed that a man like Ah Q would finally want to be a revolutionary and come to such an end Apparently he had a dual personality.

We need not go into the question here of whether Ah Q really wanted to be a revolutionary, whether he really became one, whether or not he had a dual personality. It will take quite long enough to explain how this story was written. As I have often said, my writing does not pour out of me but has to be squeezed out. People hearing this frequently think I am being modest, when in

fact it is the truth. I have nothing to say, nothing to write, but one of my self-prejudicial foibles is to raise a cry from time to time, to make things livelier for everyone. I am like a worn-out cow, which is clearly not much use; but even an old crock can be utilized. So if the Zhangs want me to plough their field or the Lis want me to turn their mill, all right. And if the Zhaos want me to stand in front of their shop with an advertisement on my back, saying, "This dairy has excellent cows and sells first-rate, pasteurized, nourishing milk," though I know I am lean and a bull and have no milk, so long as they do not sell poison I shall not protest for I sympathize with their wish to enlarge their business. But if they treat me too harshly I shall refuse, for I have to find my own fodder and need time to recover my breath. I shall refuse too if someone wants to monopolize me and keep me in his own cowshed, for I may sometimes want to turn other families' mills as well. If they want even to sell my flesh, of course I shall refuse still more firmly, for obvious reasons which need no explanation. In any of the three types of refusal mentioned, I either run away or just lie low in the wilderness. And I do not care in the least if this turns me from "profound" into "shallow," from a "fighter" into a "beast," or if I am compared with Liang Qichao or Kang Youwei. I shall go on running away or lying low instead of coming out to get into trouble, for I really am very wise in the ways of the world.

I could never have guessed to begin with — in fact I did not guess — that so many people would read my *Call to Arms* during the last few years. I was simply complying with the wishes of some friends: when they asked me to write, I wrote. I was not very busy either, for not many people knew that I was Lu Xun. I used quite a number of pen-names: L S, Shenfei, Tangsi, A Certain Individual, Xuezhì, Fengsheng; and before that I used Zishu, Suoshi, Lingfei, Xunxing. Lu Xun grew out of

Xunxing, because the editor of *New Youth* at that time did not like pen-names that looked like pseudonyms.

It is pathetic to think that there are people today who imagine I want to be some sort of leader, and have still not got this clear even after a hundred odd investigations. I have never called on anyone bearing a banner with "Lu Xun" inscribed on it. It was others who discovered "Lu Xun is Zhou Shuren." Such people are of four kinds. The first want to know about the author's life in order to study his stories. The second act purely out of curiosity. The third point this out to get me into trouble, because I also write critical essays. The fourth think this information may provide a useful opening for them.

When I was staying near the West Gate, I suppose only the staff of *New Youth* and *New Tide* knew that I was Lu Xun. Among these was Sun Fuyuan, who was then editing the *Morning News* supplement. I do not know whose idea it was, but they suddenly decided to have a column called "Humour" once a week. So he came to ask me to write.

Ah Q seems to have figured in my imagination for several years, but I had never felt the slightest urge to write about him. This request made me remember him, so I wrote the first chapter that evening, "Introduction." To make it fit into "Humour," I added some unnecessary jokes at random, which actually do not suit the story as a whole. I used the pen-name Ba Ren* to show that I was not refined, little thinking this name would get me into trouble again. I did not realize this until this year when I read Mr. Gao Yihan's "Idle Chat" in *Modern Critic*. He wrote much as follows:

I remember that when "The True Story of Ah Q" was being published as a serial, many readers went in fear and trembling, dreading lest an attack on them

* A classical allusion, meaning a rough, uncouth fellow.

should follow. One friend actually told me that he was sure the instalment published the previous day had been an attack on him, and therefore he believed the author was So-and-so, the only man who knew about this incident. . . . After that he grew hypersensitive, imagining all his secrets were being attacked in "The True Story of Ah Q," and suspecting everyone connected with the paper which published the story of being its writer. When he finally learned the author's name and realized that he had never met him, a great load was lifted from his mind, and he went about telling everyone that the story was not an attack on him after all (Volume IV, No 89)

I feel very sorry for this Mr. So-and-so who spent all those days as a suspect because of me. I wish I knew who he was. The name Ba* Ren might lead one to think the author was from Sichuan. Even after this story was included in *Call to Arms*, people still asked me who exactly I was attacking. I can only blame myself bitterly for not making it clear I was not as base as all that.

After the publication of the first chapter my worries began — a new instalment was needed every week. I was not busy at the time, but was leading a vagabond life, sleeping in a room which was really a sort of corridor and had only one back window, not even a proper place to write in, to say nothing of quiet in which to sit and think. Though Fuyuan was not so fat then, he already had a constant smile and the knack of persuading people to write. He would call on me once a week, and take the first opportunity to say, "Well, sir, 'The True Story of Ah Q' . . . has to go to the printers tomorrow."

So then I had to write. And I used to think, "The proverb says, 'Beggars fear dogs and scholars fear the annual examination.' I am not a provincial graduate, yet I have this weekly test. It's a hard life. . . ."

* Ba was the name for part of Sichuan

However, chapter followed chapter. But gradually I began to take the story seriously, and Fuyuan also felt there was not much "humour" about it, so from the second chapter onwards it was printed in the section "New Literature."

So week after week passed, and inevitably the problem arose whether Ah Q would become a revolutionary or not. To my mind, as long as there was no revolution in China, Ah Q would not turn revolutionary; but once there was one, he would. This was the only fate possible for my Ah Q, and I would not say he has a dual personality. The first year of the Republic has gone, never to return; but the next time there are reforms, I believe there will still be revolutionaries like Ah Q. I only wish that, as people say, I had written about a period in the past, but I fear what I saw was not the past but the future — even as much as from twenty to thirty years from now. Actually this reflects no discredit on the revolutionaries. Ah Q, after all, did roll up his queue with a chopstick. Fifteen years from now, when Gao Changhong "enters the publishing world," he will surely become a Chinese Shevyrjov too.*

After about two months' work on "The True Story of Ah Q," I really felt like finishing it. I cannot recollect clearly, however, whether this was because Fuyuan was against it, or whether I thought if I ended it he would protest. So I kept my idea of "The Grand Finale" to myself, though all the time Ah Q was moving towards his death. If Fuyuan had been there when I handed in the last chapter, he might have suppressed it and asked me to let Ah Q live a few weeks longer. But luck was with me. He went home, and Mr. He Zuolin who took his place had no feeling either way about Ah Q, so when

* Gao said that his first meeting with Lu Xun reminded him of Aladjev's first meeting with the anarchist Shevyrjov in *The Worker Shevyrjov*.

I sent in "The Grand Finale" he had it published. Since Fuyuan did not come back to Beijing till over a month after Ah Q had been shot, despite his knack of persuading people to write and despite his constant smile, he was no longer able to say, "Well, sir, 'The True Story of Ah Q' . . ." That is how I extricated myself from this business, and could turn to something else. What I did next I cannot remember clearly, but it must have been something of the same kind.

Actually "The Grand Finale" was not thrust "casually" upon Ah Q, though it is doubtful whether I had guessed it or not from the start. As far as I remember, I had not. But that is only natural, for who can guess a man's "grand finale" from the beginning? I cannot even guess my own, let alone that of Ah Q. Shall I end as "scholar" or "professor"? As "academic bandit" or "rascally scholar"? As "bureaucrat" or "pettifogger"? As "authoritative thinker," "pioneer in the realm of thought," or a "crafty old man"? As an "artist," "fighter" or an eccentric like Aladjev who liked entertaining callers???

Of course, Ah Q could have come to all sorts of different ends, but I do not know what they would be.

I thought once I had exaggerated, but I do not think so now. If I were to describe events in China today exactly as they happen, they would appear grotesque to people of other countries or those of a future, better China. I often have fancies which strike me as utterly fantastic, until I come across similar events, even more incredible. With my mean intelligence, I could never foresee such happenings.

Over a month ago, a bandit was shot here by two men in short jackets who had a pistol each and fired seven shots in all. I do not know why they had to fire so many shots — whether they could not kill him, or whether they went on shooting after he died. I remarked at the time to a group of my students that this was what had happened when they first tried to shoot criminals in the

early years of the Republic; now, after more than ten years, they should have been able to do better and spare the man so much pain. Beijing was different. Before the culprit reached the execution ground, the executioner would fire at the base of his skull from behind and kill him without his knowing it. Beijing was the most advanced place, after all: even executions were carried out better there than elsewhere.

But a few days ago I read the *Beijing World Daily* of November 23, and found that I had been wrong again. The title of a news item on the sixth page was "Killer Du Guillotined." Here is one of the five paragraphs of this article.

Du Guillotined, Others Shot. Because the Garrison Headquarters acquiesced in the Resolute Battalion's request to use the guillotine, before Du and the others reached the execution ground a big hay-chopper was made ready. The chopper was long, with a wooden frame and a thick, sharp blade in the middle. Beneath the blade was a groove which enabled it to move up and down the frame. After Du and the three others reached the execution ground, the guards in charge took them out of the lorry and made them face north — face the execution table. . . . Du did not kneel. When a police officer of the Right Fifth Area of Outer Beijing asked him whether he needed any help, he smiled but did not answer, then ran to the guillotine and lay down on his back under the blade waiting to be beheaded. The executioner had already raised the blade. When Du's head was in the right place, the executioner shut his eyes and brought the blade down quickly, severing the head from the body. There was a great gush of blood. Song Zhenshan and the others who were kneeling beside Du waiting to be shot stole surreptitious glances at this sight, and Zhao Zhen began to tremble. Then an officer with a pistol stepped be-

hind them, and shot first Song, then Li, then Zhao. Each one was killed with one shot. . . . The two sons of the murdered man who were among the spectators had sobbed aloud. Now that the execution was over, they shouted, "Father! Mother! You are avenged now! But what shall we do?" All who heard them were very moved. Then their relatives took them home.

If we had a genius with his finger on the pulse of this age, and he published a story about this scene on November 22, I believe many readers would think he was describing something that happened in the time of Lord Bao Zheng during the eleventh century, almost nine hundred years ago.

But what is to be done?

I have only seen two translations of "The True Story of Ah Q." The French translation, published in the August number of *L'Europe*, was merely one-third of the story, abridged. The English translation seems quite faithful, but since I know so little English I can hardly comment.

Xiamen, December 3, 1926

1927

A LETTER WRITTEN AT SEA

Aboard ship
The night of January 16, 1927

Dear Xiaofeng,

I received your letter a few days ago, but was too busy winding up my affairs to reply immediately. Now at last I am on the boat leaving Xiamen. We are already under way, on what sea I do not know. Anyway, on one side we have the boundless ocean, on the other I can see islands, but it is not at all rough — we might be sailing down the Changjiang River. Of course there is a slight roll, but this is negligible when you consider we are at sea. Storms on land are much more dangerous.

My cabin mate is a Taiwanese who can speak the Xiamen dialect, which I cannot understand. And he cannot understand the mandarin which I speak with a Shaoxing accent. He can also say a few words of Japanese, but I do not understand his Japanese too well either, so we have to communicate by writing. I have found out that he is a silk merchant, but since I know nothing about silk and he seems to have no views on anything but silk, he has had to go to sleep while I monopolize the light to write my letter.

Last month I started to collect some material, meaning to use the winter vacation to write a postscript for the new edition of my *Selected Tang and Song Stories*; but I have had to postpone this again. As for *Wild Grass*, I cannot say whether I shall go on with it or not. I think probably not, lest people start claiming to be my friends

and analysing my "innermost thoughts" But even before publishing it as it is, I must read through it carefully once more to correct the misprints, and since this will take some time I cannot send it to you yet

I only came aboard on the fifteenth, for first I was waiting for last month's salary, then for a boat The last week in Xiamen was really difficult, but I have gained in experience I used to think finding a rice bowl was hard, now I know it is also hard to get rid of one When I resigned, I gave ill health as the reason, for I thought not even a tyrant could forbid one to fall ill; and provided I did not have a stroke through rage, no one else need be involved But some young people would not accept this story and held several farewell meetings for me, with speeches, photographs, and far too much ceremony. I knew this would never do, so I explained again and again that I was wearing a "false paper coronet," and begged them to stop these farewells and valedictions. But then somehow or other the movement to reform the university started, and the first request made to the president was for the dismissal of the university secretary Dr. Liu Shuqi.

They say something similar happened here three years ago, but resulted in utter failure for the students, who then set up Daxia University in Shanghai. I do not know how the president defended himself then. However this time he declared that my resignation had nothing to do with Dr. Liu but was caused by the clash between the Hu Shi-ites and the Lu Xun-ites, which made me leave. This statement appeared in the *People's Bell*, the Gulangyu daily, and has already been refuted. But some of my colleagues got very excited and held meetings to demand an answer, whereupon the president simply replied, "I said no such thing." Still some of them were indignant on my behalf, and spread other rumours to weaken the effect of this "clash between cliques." Then "confusion was worse confounded." Had I been content

with my rice bowl in Xiamen University, this trouble might never have happened. But I had no idea things would turn out like this.

The president, Dr. Lim Boon-keng, is a Chinese of British nationality. He is always quoting Confucius and has written a book on Confucianism, the title of which I regret to say I have forgotten. I hear his autobiography, written in English, is to be published by the Commercial Press, and now he is writing *The Race Problem*. He really treated me very well, inviting me to several meals, including two farewell feasts. Now the theory of the clash between cliques has died down a bit, and the other day I heard him announce that I had come to Xiamen simply to stir up trouble, not to teach, thus I had not even resigned from my Beijing job.

Now that I have not gone back to Beijing, I suppose this theory will die down too. As for any new theories, unfortunately on this boat I do not hear them, but my guess is that my sins will increase daily, for the Chinese always "smile to your face and sneer behind your back." The young people of this "new age" are not the only ones like this. They call me "master" and "teacher" to my face, but spit poison and shoot at me behind my back. I have had at least two or three such experiences.

Recently I have heard of another crime of mine, in connection with Ji Mei School. Now Xiamen University and Ji Mei School are both secret places, about which outsiders probably know nothing; but since the students there have risen against their presidents, trouble has started. Formerly the school president Ye Yuan insisted that teachers from the Chinese department of the university go there to speak; so we were divided into six pairs, one pair going every week. The first to go were myself and Lin Yutang. We were welcomed most ceremoniously, the secretary coming to greet us the night before. And this gentleman told me that the president wanted the students to spend all their time studying and ignore

everything else I said since I believed they should also take an interest in outside affairs, my views were the reverse of the president's and I had better not go. He replied that it did not matter. I could still express my opinions. So the following day I went. The president was certainly most subtle he pressed me to a meal, and I worried as I ate. "He should have let me speak first," I was thinking. "Then if he didn't like it, he needn't ask me to a meal. Now I have eaten his food, and if I say something wrong that will make my crime worse. What shall I do?" In my talk that afternoon I said that clever people seldom achieved anything because they thought too much, so finally their plans came to nothing. The president was sitting behind me at the time, where I could not see him. But only a few days ago I heard that he also had blamed the student trouble in his school on me. How could I tell young people not to think too much? As I said that, he was shaking his head behind me.

I have always thought myself rather easy-going. I never send in unsolicited articles when others publish periodicals, and never go to make speeches when others hold meetings. Of course, if you force me to, I go, but then you must allow me to say what I want, otherwise I might just as well not say a word — I might just as well be a corpse. Here, however, I was told I had to speak, yet my speech had to be approved by the president! How could I know what someone else wanted said? I have never learned the art of "divining men's thoughts." It is true I deserve to have heads shaken over me.

Since last year, though, I have actually grown much worse — or perhaps much better. In spite of being attacked and stabbed from all sides, I seem to have no wounds, or at least to feel no pain. Even if they add to the list of my crimes, I shall not feel crushed by it. I have gained this immunity through much experience old and new. I am past caring. I have given ground until

there is nowhere left to retreat, and now I must struggle against them, despising them and despising their contempt.

It is time this letter ended. The moonlight on the ocean is so bright that the glittering waves around seem flecked with silvery scales. Beyond that stretches the emerald sea, which looks extremely gentle. I do not believe men can drown in such water. Don't worry, though! I am joking. You need not think I want to drown myself. I have not the least intention of jumping overboard.

Lu Xun

SILENT CHINA

A Talk Given at the Hongkong Y.M C A.,
February 16, 1927

First of all, I want to express my respectful appreciation to all of you who have come through this downpour to hear one of my empty and futile talks.

My subject today is Silent China

There is fighting now in Zhejiang and Shaanxi, but we do not know whether folk there are laughing or crying. Hongkong seems very quiet, but outsiders do not know whether the Chinese who live here are comfortable or not.

Men communicate their thoughts and feelings through writing, yet most Chinese nowadays are still unable to express themselves this way. This is not our fault, for our written language is a fearful legacy left us by our forbears. Even after years of effort, it is hard to write. And because it is hard, many people simply ignore it. A man may not be sure which character Zhang his name is, or may not be able to write his name at all, only to say it. Although he can speak, not many can hear him; so those at a distance are left in ignorance, and this is tantamount to silence. Again, because it is hard, some regard it as a treasure and amuse themselves by using erudite terms which only a small minority understands. We cannot be sure, indeed, that even this minority understands, and since the great majority certainly does not, this too is tantamount to silence.

One of the differences between civilized men and savages is that civilized men have writing to convey their thoughts and feelings to the rest of the world and to posterity. China also has writing, but a writing quite divorced from the mass of the people. Couched in crabbed, archaic language, it describes outmoded, archaic sentiments. All its utterances belong to the past, and therefore amount to nothing. Hence our people, unable to understand each other, are like a great dish of loose sand.

It may be amusing to treat writing as a curio — the fewer who know and understand it the better. But what is the result? Already we are unable to express our feelings. Injured or insulted, we cannot retort as we should. Consider, for instance, such recent happenings in China as the Sino-Japanese War, the Boxer Rebellion, and the 1911 Revolution. All these were major events, yet so far not one good work on them has appeared. Nor has anyone spoken out since the Republic was founded. Abroad, on the other hand, references are constantly being made to China — but by foreigners, not by Chinese.

This dumbness was not so serious during the Ming Dynasty, when Chinese expressed themselves comparatively better. But when the alien Manchus invaded our country they killed all who talked about history — especially late Song history* — and those, of course, who talked about current events. Thus by the reign of Qian Long, men no longer dared express themselves in writing. So-called scholars took refuge in studying the classics, collating and reprinting old books, and writing a little in the ancient style on subjects quite unrelated to their own time. New ideas were taboo: you wrote like

* The Song Dynasty was overthrown by northern Tartars. The Manchus suppressed critical discussion of earlier conquests of the Han people.

either Han Yu¹ or Su Shi^{**} These men were quite all right in their own way — they said what needed to be said about their own time. But how can we, who are not living in the Tang or Song Dynasty, write in the style of an age so far removed from our own? Even if the imitation is convincing, the voice is from the Tang or Song Dynasty, the voice of Han Yu or Su Shi, not the voice of our generation. But Chinese today are still playing this same old game. We have men but no voices, and how lonely that is! Can men be silent? No, not unless they are dead, or — to put it more politely — when they are dumb.

To restore speech to this China which has been silent for centuries is not an easy matter. It is like ordering a dead man to live again. Though I know nothing of religion, I fancy this approximates to what believers call a "miracle."

The first to attempt this was Dr. Hu Shi, who a year before the May 4th Movement advocated a "literary revolution." I do not know if you are frightened of the word "revolution" here, but in some places people are terrified of it. However, this literary "revolution" is not as fearful as the French Revolution. It simply means a reform, and once we substitute the word "reform," it sounds quite inoffensive. So let us do that. The Chinese language is very ingenious in this way. All we want is this: instead of overtaxing our brains to learn the speech of men long since dead, we should speak that of living men. Instead of treating language as a curio, we should write in the easily understood vernacular. A simple literary reform is not enough, though, for corrupt ideas can be conveyed in the vernacular just as well as in classical Chinese. This is why a reform of ideas was later proposed. And this led to a movement for social reform,

* (768-824), a prose writer of the Tang Dynasty.

** (1036-1101), a poet of the Song Dynasty.

As soon as this started, opposition sprang up and a battle began to rage.

In China, the mere mention of literary reform is enough to arouse opposition. Still, the vernacular gradually gained ground, and met with fewer obstacles. How was this? It was because Mr Qian Xuantong¹ was at the same time proposing to abolish Chinese ideographs and romanize the language. This would have been merely a normal language reform, but when our die-hard Chinese heard of it, they thought the end of the world had come and hastily passed the relatively inoffensive literary reform in order to devote all their energies to abusing Qian Xuantong. The vernacular took advantage of this to spread, since it now had far fewer opponents and less obstacles in its way.

By temperament the Chinese love compromise and a happy mean. For instance, if you say this room is too dark and a window should be made, everyone is sure to disagree. But if you propose taking off the roof, they will compromise and be glad to make a window. In the absence of more drastic proposals, they will never agree to the most inoffensive reforms. The vernacular was able to spread only because of the proposal to abolish Chinese characters and use a romanized alphabet.

In fact, the time has long since passed for canvassing the respective merits of the classical language and the vernacular; but China abhors quick decisions, and many futile debates are still going on. Some, for instance, say: Classical Chinese is comprehensible in every province, whereas the vernacular varies from place to place and cannot be understood throughout the country. But, as everyone knows, once we have universal education and better communications, the whole country will understand the more intelligible vernacular. As for the clas-

¹Professor at Beijing University and a contributor to *New Youth* during the May 4th Movement.

sical language, it is not comprehensible to everyone in every province, but only to a few. Others argue that if everyone uses the vernacular, we shall not be able to read the classics, and Chinese culture will perish. The fact is, we of this generation had much better not read the classics. There is no need to be alarmed — if the classics really contain anything of value, they can be translated into the vernacular. Yet others urge that since foreigners have translated our classics, thus proving their worth, we ought to read them ourselves. But, as everyone knows, foreigners have also translated the hieroglyphic texts of the Egyptians and the myths of the African Negroes. They do so from ulterior motives, and to be translated by them is no great honour.

Recently others have argued that since thought reform is what matters, while language reform is secondary, it is better to use clear, simple, classical language to convey the new ideas, to arouse less opposition. This sounds like sense. But we know that the men unwilling to cut their long fingernails* will never cut their queues.

Because we use the language of the ancients, which the people cannot understand and do not hear, we are like a dish of loose sand — oblivious to each other's sufferings. The first necessity, if we want to come to life, is for our young people to stop speaking the language of Confucius and Mencius, Han Yu, and Liu Zongyuan.** This is a different era, and times have changed. Hongkong was not like this in the time of Confucius, and we cannot use the old sage's language to write on Hongkong. Such phrases as "Hongkong, how great thou art!" are simply nonsense.

* Towards the end of the Qing Dynasty it was fashionable for scholars to wear their nails very long. To cut their nails might have been bold, but to cut off their queues would have been a declaration of rebellion.

** (773-819), a prose writer of the Tang Dynasty.

We must speak our own language, the language of today, using the living vernacular to give clear expression to our thoughts and feelings. Of course, we shall be jeered at for this by our elders and betters, who consider the vernacular vulgar and worthless, and say young writers are childish and will make fools of themselves. But how many in China can write the classical language? The rest can only use the vernacular. Do you mean to say that all these Chinese are vulgar and worthless? As for childishness, that is nothing to be ashamed of, any more than children need be ashamed of comparison with grown-ups. The childish can grow and mature; and as long as they do not become decrepit and corrupt, all will be well. As for waiting till you are mature before making a move, not even a country woman would be so foolish. If her child falls down while learning to walk, she does not order him to stay in bed until he has mastered the art of walking.

First our young people must turn China into an articulate country. Speak out boldly, advance fearlessly, with no thought of personal gain, brushing aside the ancients, and expressing your true thoughts. Of course, to be truthful is far from easy. It is not easy to be truly oneself, for instance. When I make a speech I am not truly myself — for I talk differently to children or to my friends. Still, we can talk in a relatively truthful way and express relatively truthful ideas. And only then shall we be able to move the people of China and the world. Only then shall we be able to live in the world with all the other nations.

Let us think which are the nations today which are silent. Can we hear the voice of the Egyptian people? Can we hear the Annamese or the Koreans? Is there any voice raised in India but that of Tagore?

There are only two paths open to us. One is to cling to our classical language and die; the other is to cast that language aside and live.

LITERATURE OF A REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

A Talk Given on April 8, 1927
at the Huangpu Military Academy¹

The subject of my short talk today is "Literature of a Revolutionary Period." This college has invited me here several times, but I kept putting off coming. Why? Because I believed you invited me as I am the author of a few short stories, and you wanted to hear from me about literature. Actually I am not an author and have no special knowledge. The first subject I studied seriously was mining, and I could probably give you a better talk on coal-mining than on literature. Of course, my own liking for literature makes me read a good deal of it, but I have not learned anything from my reading which would be useful to you. And my experience in Beijing in recent years has gradually undermined my faith in the old literary theories on which I was brought up. That was the time when students were shot and there was a strict censorship, when to my mind only the weakest, most useless people talked about literature. Those who are strong do not talk, they kill. The oppressed have only to say or write a few words to be killed; or, if lucky

* The Huangpu Military Academy was founded after Sun Yat-sen reorganized the Kuomintang with the help of the Chinese Communist Party in 1924. To start with it was jointly run by both parties and trained many officers for the Northern Expeditionary Army. After Chiang Kai-shek's coup on April 12, 1927, the academy was taken over by the Kuomintang.

enough to escape, all they can do is shout, complain or protest, while those who are strong go on oppressing, ill-treating and killing them, and they are powerless to resist. What use is literature to people then?

It is the same in the animal kingdom. When a hawk catches a sparrow, the hawk is silent, the sparrow is the one to cry out. When a cat catches a mouse, the cat is silent, the mouse is the one to cry out. And the one that can only cry ends by being eaten by the one that is silent. An author if he is lucky may write a few things which win him a name during his lifetime or an empty reputation for some years — just as after the memorial service for someone who has died for the revolution, no mention is made of the revolutionary's actions but everybody can discuss the merits of the funeral couplets — this is a very safe business.

However, I suppose writers in this revolutionary place like to claim that literature plays a big part in revolution and can be used, for instance, to propagandize, encourage, spur on, speed up and accomplish revolution. But to my mind, writing of this kind lacks vigour, for few good works of literature have been written to order; instead, they flow naturally from the heart with no regard for the possible consequences. To write on some set subject is like writing a *bagu* essay,* which is worthless as literature and quite incapable of moving the reader.

For revolution we need revolutionaries, but revolutionary literature can wait, for only when revolutionaries start writing can there be revolutionary literature. So to my mind it is revolution which plays a big part in literature. The literature of a revolutionary period is different from that of ordinary times for, in a revolution, literature changes too. But only great revolutions can

* A form of essay set in the imperial examinations of the Ming and Qing dynasties. These essays, divided into eight sections, were stereotyped and devoid of real content.

effect this change, not small ones which do not count as revolutions

Everyone here is used to hearing about "revolution," but if you use this word in Jiangsu or Zhejiang you will terrify people and endanger yourself. Actually revolution is nothing strange, and we owe all social reforms to it. Mankind could only progress, evolve from protozoa to men, from barbarism to civilization, because of ceaseless revolutions. Biologists tell us, "Men are not very different from monkeys. Apes and men are cousins." How is it then that men have become men while monkeys remain monkeys? It is because monkeys will not change their ways—they like to walk on all fours. Quite likely some monkey once stood up and tried to walk on two legs, but many others protested, "Our ancestors have always crawled. You're not to stand up!" Then they bit him to death. They refused not only to stand but also to talk, being conservative. Men, however, are different. They eventually stood up and talked, and so they won out. But the process is still going on. So revolution is nothing strange, and all races not yet moribund are trying to revolt every day, though most of their revolutions are merely small ones.

What influence do great revolutions have on literature? We may divide this into three different periods:

(1) Before a great revolution, nearly all literature expresses dissatisfaction and distress over social conditions, voicing suffering and indignation. There are many works of this kind in the world. But these expressions of suffering and indignation have no influence on the revolution, for mere complaints are powerless. Those who oppress you will ignore them. The mouse may squeak and even produce fine literature, yet the cat will gobble it up without any consideration. So a nation with only a literature of complaint is hopeless, because it stops short at that. Just as in a lawsuit, when the defeated party starts distributing accounts of his grievances his

opponent knows that he cannot afford to go on and the case is as good as wound up, so the literature of complaints, like proclaiming one's grievances, gives the oppressors a sense of security. Some nations stop complaining when it proves useless and become silent nations, growing more and more decadent. Witness Egypt, Arabia, Persia and India all of which have no voice. But nations with inner strength which dare rebel when complaints prove useless wake up to the facts and their lamentations change into roars of anger. When such literature appears it heralds revolt, and because people are enraged the works written just before the outbreak of revolution often voice their fury — their determination to resist, to take vengeance. Literature of this kind heralded the October Revolution. But there are exceptions too, as in the case of Poland where although there had long been the literature of vengeance¹ the country owed its recovery to the Great War in Europe.

(2) During a great revolution, literature disappears and there is silence for, swept up in the tide of revolution, all turn from shouting to action and are so busy making revolution that there is no time to talk of literature. Again, that is a period of poverty when men are so hard put to it to find bread that they are in no mood to talk of literature. And conservatives, staggered by the high tide of revolution, are too enraged and stunned to sing what passes with them for "literature." Some say, "Literature is born of poverty and suffering," but this is a fallacy. Poor men do not write. Whenever I was short of money in Beijing, I made the rounds to borrow some and wrote not a single word. Only when our salary was paid did I sit down to write. In busy times there is no literature either. The man with a heavy load and the rickshaw man with a rickshaw both have to put

* Referring to the works of such early nineteenth-century Polish poets as Mickiewicz and Slowacki.

them down before they can write. Great revolutions are very busy and very impoverished times, when one group is contending with another, and the first essential is to change the existing social system. No one has the time or inclination to write. So during a great revolution the world of letters is bound to lapse into a temporary silence.

(3) When the revolution has triumphed, there is less social tension and men are better off, then literature is written again. There are two types of literature in this period. One extols the revolution and sings its praise, because progressive writers are impressed by the changes and advances in society, the destruction of the old and the construction of the new. Rejoicing in the downfall of old institutions, they sing the praises of the new construction. The second type of writing to appear after a revolution — the dirge — laments the destruction of the old. Some consider this "counter-revolutionary literature," but I see no need to pass such a harsh sentence on it. Though a revolution has taken place, there are many of the old school in society who cannot change overnight into new people. Since their minds are full of old ideas, when their surroundings gradually change, affecting their whole mode of life, they think back to the good old days and hanker after the old society. Because they keep harking back, they express most old-fashioned, outmoded sentiments, and create this literature. All works of this kind are mournful, expressing the writers' discomfort. The evident success of the new construction and the ruin of the old institutions make them chant dirges. But this longing for the past and this chanting of dirges means that the revolution has been carried out. Without a revolution, the old people would still be in power and would not chant dirges.

Only China today has neither type of literature — either dirges for the old or praise for the new; for the Chinese revolution is not yet accomplished. This is still the transitional period, a busy time for revolutionaries.

There is still a good deal of the old literature left, though, practically everything in the papers being written in the old style. I think this means that the Chinese revolution has brought about very few changes in our society, scarcely affecting the conservatives at all, and therefore the old school can still hold aloof. The fact that all — or nearly all — the writing in the Guangzhou papers is old proves that society here is equally untouched by the revolution, hence there are no paeans for the new, no dirges for the old, and the province of Guangdong remains as it was ten years ago. Not only so, there are no complaints or protests either. We see trade unions taking part in demonstrations, but with government sanction — not revolting against oppression. This is merely revolution by government order. Because China has not changed, we have no songs of mournful yearning for the past and no new marching songs. In Soviet Russia, however, they have both types. Their old writers who have fled abroad write mostly dirges for the dead, while their new literature strives to make headway. Though no great works have yet appeared, there is already a good deal of new writing and they have passed from the period of raging to that of paeans. Praising construction follows upon the completion of the revolution, but we cannot yet predict what will come later. I suppose it will be a people's literature, for as a result of the revolution the world belongs to the people.

In China, of course, we have no people's literature, nor does it exist yet anywhere in the world. Nearly all literature, songs and poems are for the upper class, who read them on full stomachs, reclining on their couches. A talented scholar leaves home and meets a beautiful girl, and the two of them fall in love; some untalented fellow makes trouble and they go through various trials, but finally all ends well. Reading like this is thoroughly delightful. Or the books may deal with interesting, happy upper-class people, or ridiculous lower-class people.

A few years ago *New Youth* published some stories about the lives of convicts in a cold land, and professors did not like them — they do not like to read about such low characters. A poem about rickshaw-boys is low-class poetry, a play about law-breakers is a low-class play. In their operas you find only characters like talented scholars and beauties. A talented scholar wins first place in the court examination and a beautiful girl is made a lady of the first rank; so the scholar and the lady are happy, the professors who read this are happy too, and low-class people, I suppose, have to be happy with them.

Some writers today use the common people — workers and peasants — as material for their novels and poems, and this has also been called people's literature when actually it is nothing of the sort, for the people have not yet opened their mouths. These works voice the sentiments of onlookers, who put words in the people's mouths. Though some of our present men of letters are poor, they are all better off than workers and peasants, otherwise they would not have had the money to study and would not be able to write. Their works may seem to come from the people, but in fact they do not: they are not real stories of the people. Now some writers have started recording folk-songs in the belief that here we have the authentic voice of the people, for these are sung by the common folk. However, old books have had a very great indirect influence on our common folk, who feel boundless admiration for those country gentlemen with three thousand mu of land, and often adopt these gentlemen's views as their own. Gentlemen frequently chant poems with five or seven characters to a line, so this is the common metre for folk-songs too. This is as regards their form, and as their content is very decadent too they cannot be called true people's literature. Present-day Chinese poetry and fiction are not really up to the standard of other countries. I suppose we have to call them literature, but we cannot talk about literature

of a revolutionary period, still less of people's literature. All our writers today are literati, and our workers and peasants will go on thinking the same way as the literati until they are liberated. Only when they achieve true liberation will there be a true people's literature. This is why it is wrong to say, "We already have a people's literature."

You gentlemen are actual fighters, fighters for the revolution, and I think you had better not admire literature just yet. Studying literature will not help in the war — at most you may write a battle song which, if well written, may make pleasant reading when you rest after fighting. To put it more poetically, it is like planting a willow: when the willow grows and gives shade, peasants knocking off work at noon can eat and rest beneath it. The present situation in China is such that only the actual revolutionary war counts. A poem could not have frightened away Sun Chuanfang,* but a cannon-shell scared him away. I know some people think literature has a great influence on revolution, but personally I doubt this. Literature is after all a product of leisure which does, it is true, reflect a nation's culture.

Men are seldom satisfied with their own occupation. I have never been able to do anything but write a few essays, and I am tired of that; yet you who carry rifles want to hear about literature. I myself would naturally rather hear the roar of guns, for it seems to me that the roar of guns is much sweeter to listen to than literature. This is all I have to say. Thank you for hearing me out.

* Sun Chuanfang (1884-1935), a warlord active in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. In 1926, he was defeated by the Northern Expeditionary Army in Jiangxi.

THE OTHER SIDE OF CELEBRATING THE RECOVERY OF SHANGHAI AND NANJING

In Guangzhou, it seems to me, grand commemorations and celebrations are unusually common. This is an inevitable phenomenon as the revolution makes headway and is victorious. Twice, already, I had rejoiced by myself on the days that I read the dispatches announcing the recovery of Shanghai and Nanjing. One of the penalties for "rejoicing while others exert themselves" is this difficult task of having to rack my brains to write something to order. Actually I am not too well fitted for jobs of this kind, for as soon as I take up my pen my thoughts always stray a thousand li away. So even now, though I would of course like to write something appropriate, my mind keeps wandering and fine, presentable sentiments are as hard to recapture as a kite with a snapped string. I suddenly remember the few youngsters I saw yesterday at Huangpu where they had come to join the cadets' corps; only when seeing them did I realize that those who brave death at the front are people like these, and I really should feel ashamed of tricking them into applauding my rambling remarks in the classroom.* Then I suddenly think back sixteen years to another time

* Two days before Lu Xun wrote this essay, he was invited to give a talk at the Huangpu Military Academy on "Literature of a Revolutionary Period"

when Nanjing was recovered,¹ and a stone tablet was erected for the martyrs; after the second year of the Republic the tablet was demolished by Zhang Xun,¹¹ but this year it is possible to set up another. Again I suddenly recall the news published in Hongkong's *Xunhuan Daily* of Li Dazhao's arrest in Beijing,¹² then his round face and drooping black Chinese-style moustache rise before my eyes and I wonder how he is now.

In the regions of darkness, the work of counter-revolutionaries is also going quietly ahead, and although they leave lamentations behind them there are also some people who rejoice. Lamentations and rejoicing, while certainly vastly different, are yet alike in that neither of them affects the situation. The final victory does not depend on how many people rejoice, but on how many fight on to the end. I remember a periodical which quoted these lines from Lenin:

The first thing is not to become intoxicated by victory and not to boast; the second thing is to consolidate the victory; the third is to give the enemy the finishing stroke, for he has been beaten, but by no means crushed.†

Russia is after all the old home of revolution, and Lenin an old hand at revolution; the above statement could only be made by one with a deep understanding of the

* Referring to the 1911 Revolution led by Sun Yat-sen, when the revolutionary army captured Nanjing

** A Northern warlord and former officer in the Qing army. After being defeated in the 1911 Revolution, he attacked and entered Nanjing again in September 1913 with the support of Yuan Shikai, chief of the Northern warlords.

*** Li Dazhao (1889-1927) was one of the earliest Marxists in China and one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party. On April 6, 1927 he was arrested in Beijing by the warlord Zhang Zuolin, who had him secretly murdered on the 28th. Lu Xun, while in Beijing, had known Li well.

† From *Lenin*, a speech delivered by Stalin at a memorial meeting of the Kremlin Military School, January 28, 1924. (J. V. Stalin, *Lenin*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1977, p. 28.)

reasons for the success or failure of previous revolutions and considerable experience in this line himself. The repeated setbacks suffered by Chinese revolutionaries in the past were due, I think, to the fact that they overlooked this. At the least little success, they grew so intoxicated by songs of triumph that their muscles relaxed and they forgot to fight on, whereupon the enemy seized the chance to strike back.

The year before last I wrote a short essay arguing that "dogs that have fallen into the water" must still be beaten. Some simple souls thought this harsh and unforgiving, too lacking in magnanimity and leniency; besides, if I treated others in this way they would pay me back in my own coin, and there would be no end to reprisals. However, though I cannot vouch for other countries, has there ever been a victor in China who was not harsh and unforgiving? To take some recent examples, didn't the first few emperors of the Qing Dynasty and Yuan Shikai after the second year of the Republic hound and wipe out all who opposed them? Only they paid lip-service to magnanimity and leniency, as well as kindness and benevolence; nor were they as explicit as Lenin. Lenin after all was a Russian who said what he thought, being much more straightforward than us Chinese. But even in China, in actual fact, up to the present, as for such fine-sounding expressions as magnanimity, leniency, kindness and benevolence, those who put them into practice have generally failed, the ones to succeed being those who only preached them. However, they deceived a pack of fools who believed in them.

Celebrations do not affect the revolution; at most they are just a kind of embellishment. Of course it is fine to have a lot of people celebrating, singing and growing intoxicated by revolution, but sometimes this may also lead to emasculation of the revolutionary spirit. As the power of the revolution increases, more and more people are bound to be in favour of it. After the unification of

the whole country, I fear even the Research Group* will be talking of revolution too. Didn't the *Modern Critic* change its tune at the end of last year? Comparing this with their comments at the time of the March 18th Incident, I really suspect they must all have got hold of some miraculous drug which has all of a sudden made new men of them. I used to have a biased view of Buddhism, thinking the ascetic Hinayana sect was genuine Buddhism; by the time rich men who drank wine and ate meat could, if they fasted just once, call themselves Buddhists and count as true believers, though the fine name Mahayana was given to the religion and it spread even more widely, because it was so easy to join this sect it became emasculated and may finally come to nothing. The same applies to revolution. The strict revolutionaries who fight on march forward, leaving behind them wide areas which have had revolution, so that we can relax, sing and cheer and appear in revolutionary colours too, whereas actually we have nothing at all to do with revolution. Once there are many people of this sort, the revolutionary spirit may grow emasculated and tenuous then gradually fade away, to be followed by retrogression.

Guangdong is where the revolution started; so it must be the first place to become the rear, and the first to be exposed to the danger I mentioned too.

Today, at this time of great celebrations, I venture to present these disjointed remarks to the revolutionary people of Guangzhou; and I sincerely hope they will not be disheartened by these words spoken out of turn, for there will be plenty of time to make amends in future. If they are disheartened all the same, it will be evidence that the revolutionary spirit has already become emasculated.

April 10, 1927

* A reactionary political group led by Liang Qichao and Tang Hualong who supported the rule of the Northern warlords.

REPLY TO MR. YOUHENG*

September 4, 1927

Dear Mr. Youheng,

I have read your various comments in *Beixin* today. Thank you for your expectations of me and your obviously good intentions. Now I want to give a brief answer to you as well as to those who have similar ideas.

I have plenty of free time and am certainly not too busy even to write. But I have not expressed my opinions for a long time, having decided on this last year summer, when I planned to remain silent for two years. I do not take this time limit seriously, sometimes considering it as a joke.

But the reason for my present silence is not the same as when I made this decision, for by the time I left Xiamen my ideas were already changing. It would be too tedious to explain the process of this change, so I will omit it, and hope perhaps to publish it in future. Speaking solely of recent times, one of the chief reasons is that I am frightened. And this fear is of a type I have never experienced before.

Even now I have not yet made a careful analysis of this fear. For the time being I will just mention a couple of things which I have detected, as follows:

Firstly, one of my illusions has been shattered. Previously I always had a certain optimism, under the impression that, generally speaking, it was the old who op-

*Shi Youheng was a young writer.

pressed and slaughtered the young; and as these old people gradually died off, China would become relatively animated. Now I know that this was an illusion. Generally speaking it seems to be the young who slaughter the young, and they have even less pity on the youth and life of others which cannot be recreated. If they were so pitiless to animals, it would be considered "wanton abuse of Nature." What I dread most to read are the gloating words of the victors: "hacked to death with an axe," "speared to death . ." Actually I am no radical reformer and have never opposed capital punishment. But I have expressed my total repugnance and grief at the slicing of limbs and the wiping out of whole clans, as I feel these are out of place in human society in the twentieth century. Of course, hacking with an axe or spearing a man are not the same as slicing his limbs, but couldn't we put a bullet through the back of his head? The result would be the same, the death of an opponent. But facts are facts, this blood sport has already started and the players are young people who, moreover, exult in it. I cannot yet tell how this drama will end.

Secondly, I have discovered that I am . . . What shall I call it? I cannot decide on a name for the time being. I have said before that since ancient times a man-eating feast has been set out in China, attended by the feasters and their victims. Those who are eaten have previously eaten others; those eating now will also be eaten later.* But now I have discovered that I myself am helping set out this feast. You have read my works, sir, so let me ask you a question. After reading them, do you feel numbed or more clear-headed? Do they stupefy you or enlighten you? If you feel they do the latter, then my self-indictment is basically proved. Chinese feasts serve live shrimps steeped in wine. The more frisky the shrimps, the greater the eater's relish and enjoyment. I am one

* See p. 157 above.

of those who help to prepare this dish by clearing the minds and intensifying the feelings of honest and innocent young people, so that if by any chance they land in trouble they will feel doubly wretched, and at the same time it will give their enemy particular pleasure to appreciate their more acute suffering. I have an idea that the enemy, no matter whether extirpating Communist or other revolutionary forces, if they capture educated people such as students belonging to the other party, will undoubtedly torture them more than they would workers or other uneducated people. Why? Because they can see keener and subtler expressions of pain, from which they derive special pleasure. If this supposition of mine is correct, then my self-indictment is entirely verified.

So I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing I can say.

As for poking fun at Professor Chen Yuan¹ and such men, that is easily done; only yesterday I wrote a little in this vein. But this is futile; I don't believe such people are the problem. In fact they have simply eaten at most half a shrimp or sipped a few mouthfuls of the vinegar. Besides, I hear they have already left their most respected "Mr. Gutong"^{**} and joined the revolution under the blue-sky-and-white-sun flag.^{***} I suppose, if this blue-sky-and-white-sun flag is planted further afield, even Mr. Gutong himself may come and make revolution. So there is no problem; all have joined the revolution — a mighty contingent.

The only problem then is my own backwardness. Another small matter too. That is, I am now apparently being punished for my past "pettifogging." Whoever plants peonies gets flowers, whoever plants thorns gets

* A leading member of the "Modern Critic group"

** The pen-name of Zhang Shizhao, minister of justice and minister of education in the Northern warlord government between 1924 and 1926.

*** The Kuomintang flag.

pricked this is what I deserve, and I bear no grudge. But the punishment seems excessive and that is unfair, moreover I deplore the fact that it has involved some colleagues and students too.

What crimes have they committed? Their only crime is that they often call on me and do not run me down. Everybody like this is now labelled as one of the "Lu Xun party" or "Tatler clique"; this is the great success which the "research group" and the "Modern Critic group" have been proclaiming. So in the past year Lu Xun has generally been considered as an "outcast". You may not realize it, but when I had been in Xiamen for a while I was moved to a big building with no neighbours around, only books to keep me company, and late at night I heard wild beasts howling below. But I was not afraid of solitude, especially as students sometimes came to chat. Then came the second blow: they said two of my three chairs were to be removed, as so-and-so's son had come and needed them. I was really angry and asked them: If his grandson came too, would I have to sit on the floor? I wasn't having it! The chairs were not taken away, but then came the third blow: a professor said with a faint smile, "He's acting again like an eccentric scholar." It seems that according to the divine laws of Xiamen, only an eccentric scholar is entitled to more than one chair. And that word "again" implied that I often acted like an eccentric scholar, a condemnation in the style of the *Spring-and-Autumn Annals*.^{*} No doubt, sir, you understand me. Then came the fourth blow, shortly before I was leaving. It was claimed that I was leaving firstly because I had no wine to drink, and secondly because I was disgruntled by the arrival of other people's wives. This too was attributed to my "scholar's temper."

* It was said when Confucius edited the Annals of the Spring and Autumn Period, evil-doers were intimidated by his comments.

This is simply a minor incident which happened to occur to me. But even from this example you probably could forgive me for being too scared to speak. I know you do not want me to become a tipsy shrimp. If I fight on, I may end up "sick in body and in mind"* Then they will jeer at me again for being "sick in body and in mind". Of course, these things are unimportant. But why ask for trouble? Why be a shrimp served in wine?

But the most fortunate thing for me at this time is that I never became a Communist. There was a young man who proved that I was one because I had written for *New Youth* edited by Chen Duxiu. However he was refuted by another young man who knew that at that time even Chen Duxiu did not preach communism. So they took a step back and said I was "on the Communist side," but that did not come off either. If I had left Guangzhou straight after leaving Sun Yat-sen University, I think they would put me on the list. However, as I did not leave, after the newspapers clamoured that I had fled to Hankou, nothing more came of it. There is after all still justice in the world: no one claimed that I was able to be in two places at once. Now it seems no labels are attached to me except that according to the "*Modern Critic* group" I am the "leader of the *Tatler* group." This is unlikely to endanger my life, so probably it does not matter much, as long as they do not deal me a second blow. But if some "leading character" like Tang Youren** says something else about "orders from Moscow," then I may find myself in hot water again.

Having digressed and gone off at a tangent, I had better get back to the problem of my "backwardness." I expect, sir, you have seen how I deplored China's lack

* Words used by a young man Gao Changhong to attack Lu Xun.

** A *Modern Critic* writer who later joined the Kuomintang and became a reactionary politician

of someone "who dare mourn the death of a rebel."¹ But what now? You have seen too, haven't you, that for the last six months I have not written a word? Though I have openly expressed my views in lectures, though I could not get anything published during this time, though I had already decided to remain silent, none of these arguments constitutes an adequate justification. In short, if I were to express such balanced views as "save the children" now, they would sound hollow even to myself.

Another thing, my former attacks on society were futile too. Society did not know that I was attacking it; otherwise, I would long since have perished. See what happens when one tries to attack men like Chen Yuan who is one member of this society, not to mention all four hundred million. I have only managed to live on because the majority of them are illiterate and did not know, and moreover what I said was as ineffective as an arrow aimed at the sea. Otherwise, a few miscellaneous observations could have cost me my life. The people's desire to punish evil-doers is no less keen than that of scholars and warlords. Recently it has dawned on me that proposals slightly reformatory in nature, not impinging on society, can only be tolerated as "senseless talk"; while if by any chance they prove effective, their advocate will probably land in trouble or lose his life. This has always been the case whether in the past or at present, in China or abroad. Take a current example. Hasn't Mr. Wu Zhihui** put forward certain proposals? Not only has he not incurred universal condemnation, he can even shout "Down with . . . ! Severely punish . . . !" This is because the Reds want to bring about com-

* See p. 225 above.

** A reactionary Kuomintang politician who called himself an anarchist and claimed that anarchism was more progressive than communism but could not be realized for another three thousand years.

munism in twenty years while his proposals would probably take several centuries to carry out, and viewed in this way they resemble senseless talk. Who has the time to worry about what will happen to his descendants more than a dozen generations later?

I have said enough and shall now draw to a close. I appreciate your attitude, sir, which is neither mocking nor malicious, so I have replied honestly. Of course, I am also taking this chance to complain. But I must make it clear that there is no false modesty in what I have said. I know myself, and I dissect myself just as ruthlessly as I dissect other people. Quite a few so-called critics with bellyfuls of malice have tried might and main yet failed to diagnose me correctly. This is why I have divulged a little this time. Of course, this is only a part; there is much that I am still keeping back.

I suspect that from now on I may have no more to say. What will follow when my terror has gone I have no means of knowing — it will probably be nothing good. However, I am still trying to save myself in the old way: firstly by benumbing myself and secondly by forgetting. As I struggle on, I still try to see some vestiges of the “pale bloodstains” that will fade away and record these on scraps of paper.

Lu Xun

ANXIOUS THOUGHTS ON “NATURAL BREASTS”

The *Shun Tian Times* reports that Miss Ouyang Xiaolan, head of the girls' school in Picai Hutong, Beijing, will not allow girls with bobbed hair to sit for the entrance examination, so most girls of this category cannot go to school. Yes, this had to be. She could not do otherwise. But since girls with unbound feet can still take the examinations, to my mind not all is dark. However, this is also rather too “modern.”

Both men and women suffer from their hair, this ancient curse, as we can see from the records written since the end of the Ming Dynasty. I suffered a lot for having no queue at the end of the Qing Dynasty, so I am against women cutting their hair. Queues were cut off in Beijing by order of Yuan Shikai; but this was no simple order, it must have been backed by swords. If not, the city would probably still be filled with queues today. The same applies to women's hair: it should be cut only when an emperor (or his equivalent) gives the order. Of course, even then many will not want to, but they will not dare disobey. In about a year they will get over it, and two years later the whole of society will take it for granted that women should have short hair. By then long-haired girls will start worrying about their chances of entering school. It has never been possible to introduce changes just by getting a few folk to give good reasons for them.

However, there are certain influential people who favour short hair for women, but sad to say they do not

stay long in one place. A comes and B goes, C comes and A goes. A likes it short, C likes it long. A has the long hair cut, C has the bobbed heads cut off. These seem to have been unlucky years for the young, especially for the fair sex. The newspaper described a district where short hair was encouraged, but another army came in, and whenever they found a bobbed-haired woman they would slowly tear out her hair and cut off her breasts. Such punishments prove that whereas it is generally recognized that men may wear their hair short, women must not follow suit. The breasts were cut off to make women look more like men, and to punish them for wanting to look like men. Judging by this, Miss Ouyang Xiaolan was not too strict after all.

This year girl students in Guangzhou are forbidden to bind their breasts, on pain of a fifty-dollar fine. The newspapers call this "the natural breast movement." And some people regret that we had no Fan Zengxiang* to draw up this regulation, for without some expression like "tender as euryale seeds,"** scholars are not satisfied. There have also been the usual witty articles and wisecracks in the papers. I suppose things will always be this way.

I used to be very worried by the thought that Chinese schoolgirls would grow up unable to nurse their own babies, and each family would have to have a wet nurse. But just to oppose breast-binding is useless. First, we must change popular ideas and have less inhibitions about the breasts; secondly, we must change girls' costume, and let them wear blouses that tuck into their skirts; for both the Chinese gown and jacket are unsuited to the liberation of breasts, which will make the lower part of

* (1846-1931), a Qing Dynasty official who wrote many love poems

** Legend has it that the Tang emperor, Ming Huang (712-755), compared the breasts of his favourite to euryale seeds.

the clothing seem baggy, which is neither convenient nor good-looking.

Another important problem is whether having larger breasts will suddenly be considered a crime or not, or debar a girl from school. Before the founding of the Chinese Republic, only those not ranked among the "four categories of citizens"* were debarred from the examinations. It is logical to argue that if bobbed hair is wrong because it makes men and women look alike, natural breasts which make women look more different from men should be considered meritorious. However, many things in this world do not depend on argument, but on some emperor's edict or warlord's sword

Otherwise, to those women guilty of bobbed hair will be added those guilty of natural breasts, or even those guilty of natural feet. A woman has so many parts to her body, life is very hard indeed

If we are not interested in reform or progress, but simply in safety, I advise girl students to have long hair, bound breasts and half-bound feet (what we call "civilized feet" which were first bound, then unbound). For though every place I passed on my way south had different schools of thought and different slogans, I have not heard a single word against this type of woman.

September 4, 1927

* Scholars, peasants, artisans and merchants. Such people as actors or yamen runners were considered too low to rank as citizens

ODD FANCIES

A bee that uses its sting loses its life; a cynic who uses
his sting prolongs his life

This is the difference between them

* * *

John Stuart Mill declared that tyranny makes men
cynical

He did not know that a republic makes them silent.

* * *

In war, the best job is that of an army doctor In rev-
olution, the best work is that at the rear. In murder,
the best thing is to be an executioner These jobs are
both heroic and safe.

* * *

When you speak with a famous scholar, pretend some-
times not to understand him. If you seem too dense, he
will despise you, if you seem too clever, he will dislike
you. So the best thing is not to understand him some-
times.

* * *

Most people know that the warlord's sword is used
to order soldiers about. They do not realize that it is
used to order intellectuals about as well.

* * *

Collections of speeches and more collections of
speeches.

But unfortunately none of these speeches make clear what has caused this great change in the speakers, nor whether they really believe what they are saying now.

* * *

Clever, powerful men treat the past as dead and gone.
Fools without power are really dead and gone.

* * *

Those who once had power want to go back to the past.
Those in power now want to remain as they are Those
who have not yet had power want reforms

This is a general rule.

* * *

By going back to the past, they mean going back a few years to the time they remember, not to the time of the Yu or Xia, Shang or Zhou Dynasty.

* * *

Every woman is born with the instincts of a mother and daughter. There is no such thing as wifely instincts.

Wifely instincts come through the force of circumstances, and are simply the combination of the instincts of mother and daughter

* * *

Beware of being deceived

You need not be on your guard against those who call themselves thieves, for on the contrary they are good men; but you must be on your guard against those who call themselves true gentlemen, for they on the contrary are thieves

* * *

Downstairs a man is on his deathbed, next door they have the gramophone on; in the house opposite they are playing with children. Upstairs two people are laughing wildly, and there is the sound of gambling. In the boat on the river a woman is wailing for her dead mother.

Men cannot communicate their grief or joy — all I feel is that they are noisy.

* * *

Every time a man in rags walks past, the lap-dog barks, though actually its master may not have told it or ordered it to do so.

Lap-dogs are often stricter than their masters.

* * *

Probably some day it will be forbidden to wear shabby clothes. If you do, you will be called a Communist.

* * *

When a man feels lonely, he can create; when his loneliness is dispelled, he cannot create any more, for he no longer feels any love

All creation is based on love.

* * *

A man who wants to commit suicide may fear the wide expanse of the ocean, the speed with which a corpse decomposes in summer.

But when he sees a limpid pool on a cool autumn night, he will usually kill himself.

* * *

The sight of women's short sleeves at once makes them think of bare arms, of the naked body, the genitals, copulation, promiscuity, and bastards

This is the sole respect in which the Chinese have a lively imagination.

September 24, 1927

HONGKONG AGAIN

September 28 was the third time I passed through Hongkong, a place I dread.

The first time I had a little luggage, but nothing happened. The second time I had no luggage, and I have written something* about what happened. This time I believe I felt more uneasy than on either of those occasions, for I had read Mr Wang Duqing's letter in *Creation Monthly* describing how those Chinese compatriots employed by the British throw their weight about when they board a ship to examine the passengers' luggage, cursing and beating people, or demanding a few dollars from them. And I had ten cases of books in the saloon, as well as six cases of books and clothes in my cabin.

Of course, it would be an experience to see how my compatriots behaved under the British flag, but I feared it would prove a costly one. Just to repack all those cases after they had been through them would take plenty of time. If I wanted to make an experiment, I should have taken one or two pieces only. Still, it was too late now. What must be must be. But should I pay up or let them go through all the cases? If they searched them all, how was I to repack single-handed?

* Lu Xun first visited Hongkong on his way from Xiamen to Guangzhou in January 1927. He returned the next month to address some students (see "Silent China," p 328 above), and in July wrote an article "On Hongkong" published the next month in the *Tatler*.

Our boat reached Hongkong on the 28th, and nothing happened that day. The next afternoon a steward hurried up and beckoned me outside the cabin.

"Customs examination," he said. "Go and open your cases."

I took my keys to the saloon. Sure enough, two British compatriots in dark green uniforms were standing by my pile of cases, wielding pointed iron rods. I told them there was nothing inside but old books, yet they did not seem to understand. They rapped out three words only:

"Open them up!"

"That's right," I thought. "How can they take the word of a perfect stranger?"

Of course the cases must be opened, so with the help of two stewards I opened them.

The moment the search started, I realized that the Hongkong customs officers were not like those in Guangzhou. When I left Guangzhou my luggage was examined too. But the officers there looked human and understood what I said. After taking out a bundle of papers or books, they would put it back where it came from without mixing everything up. That was the way to look through things. But it was very different in Hongkong, this "paradise of the British." The customs officers here were pale as ghosts and did not seem to understand me. They emptied out the contents of one of my cases and rummaged among them. Whenever they found a package, they tore off the wrappings. After undergoing this treatment, the books overtopped the case by six or seven inches.

Then we came to the second case.

"Open it up!"

"I may as well have a try," I thought.

"Must you open it?" I whispered to one of them.

"Give me ten dollars," he whispered back. So he did understand me.

"Two dollars."

I wouldn't have minded paying more, for this type of examination was terrible to repack ten cases would take me at least five hours. Unfortunately I had only two one-dollar notes. All my other notes were for ten dollars, but I did not want to part with them yet.

"Open it up!"

Two stewards carried my second case to the deck, and he went through the same procedure. Again one case of books became one case and a half, and several thick bundles of papers were also torn up. We bargained as he searched. I raised my offer to five, but he refused to come down below seven. By this time we were at the fifth case, and a crowd had gathered to watch the fun.

Since he had opened half the cases, I thought he might as well look at them all. So I stopped negotiating, and nothing was said except "Open it up!" But my two compatriots seemed to be losing interest, for by degrees they stopped looking through everything, and just pulled twenty or thirty books out to throw on top of each case, then marked it "Passed." A bundle of old letters appeared to arouse their interest and revive their spirits, but after reading four or five they set these aside too. I believe they opened one more case after that, then left this welter of books, and that was that.

I saw now that eight cases had been opened, two had been left untouched. And these two unscathed cases held books belonging to Fuyuan which I was taking to Shanghai for him. All my own were in an unholy mess.

"Some people are born lucky, and Fuyuan is one of them!" I thought. "But I haven't come to the end of my bad luck yet. Ah, well. . . ." I squatted down to pick up some of the scattered books, but had hardly collected any before another steward shouted at me from the door.

"Customs examination in your cabin! Go and open your cases."

Entrusting the repacking of my books to the saloon stewards, I ran back to my cabin. True, two British compatriots were there waiting for me. The bedding on my bunk was thoroughly rumped, and a stool was lying on top of it. As soon as I went in, they searched my wallet. I thought they wanted to see my visiting-cards to find out my name, but instead of looking at my cards they looked at my two ten-dollar notes, then gave them back to me and told me to be careful of them, as if they were afraid I might lose them.

Next they opened my suitcase which was full of clothes, and shook out only about a dozen garments which they tossed on the bed. Next they examined my basket, and found seven silver dollars wrapped in paper. Having unwrapped these and counted them, they fell silent. There was another package containing ten dollars, but being further down that escaped their notice. Next they examined my briefcase which lay on a bench, and in which were a package of ten dollars' worth of small silver coins, four or five dollars in loose silver, and several dozen coppers. Having examined these, they fell silent again. Next they turned to my portmanteau. This time I had quite a fright. I was a little slow in producing the key, but luckily just as my compatriots were raising their iron rods to smash the lock it was ready. I was able to breathe again. This portmanteau also held clothes and these, it goes without saying, were shaken out in the usual way.

"Give us ten dollars and we won't search you," said one compatriot as he went through my portmanteau.

I picked up some loose silver in a handkerchief and offered it to him, but he would not take it. He turned away and went on with his search.

Now for a short digression. While this compatriot was examining my suitcase and portmanteau, the other was examining my net-basket. He had a different method from that used to look through books in the sa-

loon. Then they simply created chaos, now he destroyed. First he tore up the carton from a bottle of cod-liver oil and threw it to the floor, then with his iron rod he bored a hole in the canister of litchi-scented tea given me by Mr. Jiang Jingsan. While boring this hole his roving eye fell on a small knife on the table. I had purchased this for a few coppers at the White Dagoba Temple Fair in Beijing, and taken it to Guangzhou where I peeled carambolas with it. I measured it later, and it was 5.3 inches long, including the handle. Still, he said I was guilty of a serious offence

"Here is a dangerous weapon. This is a serious offence" He pointed the small knife at me.

When I said nothing, he put the small knife down and poked a hole in a packet of salted peanuts. Then he picked up a box of mosquito incense.

"What is this?"

"Mosquito incense," I said. "Don't you see the name on the box?"

"No This looks suspicious"

He took out one stick of the incense and sniffed at it. I do not know what he did next, because the other one had finished with one case of clothes and wanted me to open another case. This time I was worried, for the second case held not clothes or books but photographs, manuscripts, some of my translations and my friends', as well as news cuttings, reference material, and other odds and ends. It would be too bad if these were destroyed or mixed up. But just at this point that compatriot walked over to have another look at the handkerchief with money in it. At that I saw light, and boldly picked up the silver coins in the handkerchief — ten dollars' worth — and showed them to him. He looked outside the door, reached out for the money, marked the second case as passed, then went over to the other compatriot. He must have made a sign to him, but strange

to say he did not take the money, simply tucked it under my pillow and went out.

All this time the other compatriot was jabbing viciously with his iron rod at a jar of biscuits. I thought after being given the secret sign he would stop, but no. He went on with his work, opened the sealed jar, threw the wooden lid on the floor and broke it in two, took out a biscuit, crumbled it, dropped it into the jar, and then finally sauntered off.

Peace reigned again. As I sat amid the shambles in my cabin, I realized that my compatriots had not made trouble to begin with out of spite. For even if we agreed on a figure, a little damage must be done first for the sake of appearances: the chaos showed that there had been an examination. Did not Mr. Wang Duqing point out that over these compatriots was a big-nosed white boss? This must have been why the customs officer looked out before taking the money. But I had not seen this boss.

The later destruction did show some spite though. I suppose it was my fault for giving them loose silver instead of banknotes, for those silver coins would make a bulge in a uniform pocket and could be detected by the boss. That is why he had to leave them for the time being under the pillow. No doubt he would collect them when his work was done.

The tramp of leather shoes drew near and stopped outside my door. I looked up and saw a white man, rather stout, doubtless the boss of those two compatriots.

"Examination over?" he asked, beaming.

Yes, indeed, that was the voice of the boss. But it was so obvious, why ask? Perhaps he wanted to commiserate because my luggage was in a special mess, or perhaps he was laughing at me.

He picked up a pictorial supplement of *The China Press* outside the cabin. I had used it as a wrapper, but my compatriots had torn it off and thrown it there. After leaning against the wall to read it, he passed slowly on.

I thought since the boss had passed, the examination must be over, so I repacked the first case.

But this was premature. Another compatriot came in and said, "Open it up." The following dialogue ensued.

"He has already seen it," I said

"Who has? This hasn't been opened. Open it up!"

"I've only just closed it."

"You don't say! Open it up!"

"Isn't this the sign showing it's been passed?"

"Ha, so you gave him money, eh? Using bribes . . ."

". . . ."

"How much did you give him?"

"Go and ask your people."

He left. And soon the other hurried in and took the money from under the pillow. That was the last I saw of them — now peace really reigned

Then I slowly repacked my belongings. I saw a few things grouped together on the table: one pair of scissors, one tin-opener, and one small knife with a wooden handle. If not for the ten dollars' worth of small silver coins, these would no doubt have been considered as "dangerous weapons" and used with the "suspicious" incense to threaten me. But that stick of incense had gone.

When the ship cast off everything seemed quieter. A steward came to chat with me, but he blamed me for all the ransacking of my luggage.

"You are too thin," he explained. "They suspected you of smuggling opium."

I was really flabbergasted. It is true that "human life is short, but knowledge is infinite." I had thought that if you competed for a rice bowl you would get knocked on the head, but that it was all right to give one up; however last year in Xiamen I learned that while having a rice bowl is hard, refusing one also annoys "scholars," who then criticize you for insubordination. I long ago learned what a ticklish business it is to grow a moustache, with the differences between Chinese and Western styles.

But this year in Guangzhou I learned that even the colour is restricted, for someone wrote to the paper to warn me not to let my moustache turn grey or red. As for this prohibition on thinness, I only learned it after going to Hongkong — I had never dreamed of it before

It is true, that Westerner supervising my compatriots in the customs was really very well-nourished.

Though Hongkong is just one island, it gives a true picture of many parts of China today and in time to come. At the centre are a few foreign bosses, with some "high-class Chinese" under them to praise their virtue, and some slavish compatriots to act as their stooges. All the rest are "natives" who suffer in silence. Those who acquiesce die in the foreign concessions, while those who will not acquiesce escape into the deep mountains, as the Miaos and the Yaos* did long ago.

The night of September 29, 1927, at sea

*Minority peoples driven from central China to the mountains in the southwest

IN THE BELFRY

While I was still in Xiamen, Bosheng arrived from Guangzhou where he told me Aier was also there. To seek a new life I suppose, Aier had written at length to Councillor K,* explaining his past and his hopes for the future.

“Do you know someone called Aier?” Councillor K asked Bosheng one day. “He wrote me a long letter, which I never finished. In fact, judging by his literary airs and the long letters he writes, he must be a counter-revolutionary!”

Some time later Bosheng told Aier this, and Aier leapt in the air.

“What!” he exclaimed “Me a counter-revolutionary?”

It was late autumn and still warm in Xiamen. On the hills wild pomegranates blossomed, and downstairs blossomed some yellow flowers — I do not know their names. I heard this anecdote upstairs in a building surrounded by granite walls, and saw in my mind’s eye Councillor K’s serious frown and Aier’s bright but rather puzzled young face. I seemed to see Aier leaping in the air before the frowning councillor too, and I could not help smiling as I gazed through the window at the distant sky.

But at the same time I remembered the words of Blok, writer of *The Twelve*, a once well-known poet of Soviet Russia:

* Referring to Gu Mengyu, a member of the council of Sun Yat-sen University.

The Communist Party does not interfere with the writing of poetry, but it stops you from feeling yourself a great writer. A great writer believes himself the centre of all creation and a rule to himself.

Is there really this contradiction between the Communist Party and poetry, between revolution and long letters? I wondered.

Those were my thoughts at the time. Now I think it necessary to add a few words of explanation.

I simply meant that there seemed to be a contradiction between political changes and literature, I was not suggesting that the Guangzhou government of that time was a Communist government consisting solely of Communist Party members. That I had no means of knowing. But some people were "executed" then, and right up to now I have heard no protests or clamour for vengeance from men or ghosts. So I take it they must have been genuine Communists. As for certain others, though they may be called Communists at the moment by the other side, once they meet and make up after a drink they will realize that it was all a mistake — they could have worked together all along.

Having made this clear, I can return with an easy conscience to my main subject. Mr. Aier soon wrote to tell me that he had found a job. This letter was not long; no doubt that term "counter-revolutionary" still rankled. But he complained of two things: first, he had to sit by the rice pan, which was extremely boring; secondly, as he was playing the organ one day a girl whom he did not know sent him a parcel of cakes, and that made him imagine things. He decided northern girls were too stiff and southern girls too lively, and this "brought its train of reflections."

I ignored his first point in the reply I wrote during our autumn siege by mosquitoes. It is natural to feel bored and sad if you have no rice pan in front of you, and the

fact that he still felt bored now that he had one showed clearly that he was suffering from revolutionary fever. Frankly, I honestly enjoy hearing about revolutions in distant lands, made by people I do not know; but the sad truth is that if revolution catches up with me, or somebody I know well is involved, I am not so pleased. If people urge me to fling myself into the revolution, of course I dare not say "No." But I feel more grateful to them if they ask me to sit down quietly and mix me a glass of evaporated milk. Naturally it would not do to tell him to resign himself to getting rice from the pan. On the other hand, I could not bring myself to advise him to leave the rice pan to fight for revolution, for Aier is one of my best friends. Hence I had to adopt the wonderful ancient method of pretending to be deaf and dumb, and ignoring the point. I did, however, admonish him most sharply on the second point, to the effect that, if he approved of neither "stiff" girls nor "lively" girls it was tantamount to liking girls half alive and half dead, and that was very wrong indeed.

Little more than a month after this, having dreams very like Aier's, I went to Guangzhou too. By the time I sat down beside the rice pan, he had already left. It is possible that he never received my letter.

I lived in the very centre and highest part of Sun Yat-sen University, generally known as "the Belfry." A month later I was told by a secretary in a melon-shaped cap that these were the best quarters where none but department heads could stay. After I moved out, however, I heard that some clerk moved in, which seemed very odd. But while I was there it was still a place where none but department heads could stay, so until I heard of the clerk moving in I felt rather overwhelmed by this undeserved honour.

Yet these best quarters were not too convenient to live in. It was difficult, at least, to sleep there. At night about a dozen rats would come out — or maybe two

dozens. I never could count them exactly — and gallop around in a quite uninhibited way. They ate all that was edible, and could even open boxes. Apparently the rats living upstairs in the lodgings which none but department heads of Sun Yat-sen University could have were specially intelligent. I have never met their like elsewhere. And first thing in the morning, the servants would sing at the top of their voices — songs I could not understand.

The young people of Guangdong who called on me during the day were mostly very friendly. Some were so eager for reform that they hoped I would flay the shortcomings of Guangzhou. I was very touched by their enthusiasm, but still I declined because I knew so little of local conditions. Besides, since there had already been a revolution there could not be much to attack. They were very disappointed, of course, when I brushed their requests aside, and some time later Mr. Shiyi wrote in *New Age*

Some of us do not agree with him at all. We believe there are still many things here that should be criticized, and we want to criticize ourselves. How can Mr. Lu Xun have failed to see our shortcomings?

Actually, half of what I said was true. I wanted to understand and criticize Guangzhou, but there I was, unhappily enshrined in the big belfry, treated as a professor by the college servants, treated as their tutor by the students, and treated as an outsider by the people of Guangzhou. High and dry, I had no way of finding things out. And the greatest obstacle of all was language. Till my last day in Guangzhou, the only phrases I knew apart from a few figures were *hanbaran* (all), which every outsider remembers because it sounds so quaint, and *diu-nama*,* the easiest oath for those learning a new dialect to master.

* The Guangdong dialect for the swear-word "Mother's!"

These two phrases sometimes came in useful. One day after I had moved to lodgings in White Cloud Street, the police caught a thief stealing electric light bulbs. The old caretaker Chen swore at the thief and beat him. He used a whole string of swear-words, of which I only understood these two phrases. Yet I felt as if I understood the whole argument. "He must mean," I thought, "that because the electric bulbs outside were practically *han-baran* stolen, he's going to *diunama*." Then as contented as if I had solved a great problem, I went back to my seat to edit my *Selected Tang and Song Stories*.

But I never knew whether I was right or not. And while there is nothing wrong in making guesses in private, to discuss Guangzhou on this basis would be rather rash.

As for my saying there could not be much to attack, this was not true. The fact is, at that time I had neither love nor hatred for Guangzhou, felt neither happy nor sad there, and had therefore neither praise nor blame. I came with illusions which were dispelled by reality, leaving me only a sense of desolation. Guangzhou, after all, is a part of China, though the strange flowers and fruits and the odd dialect may confuse a traveller's ears and eyes; still, in fact it is not very different from all the other places I have visited. If we call China a picture of a world that is not quite human, then the patterns of different provinces are the same, only the colours vary. The provinces north of the Yellow River are painted in yellow and grey, Jiangsu and Zhejiang in pale green and dark grey, Xiamen in pink and grey, Guangzhou in deep green and deep red. At that time I felt as if I had never travelled, so I had no special swear-words or abuse for the jasmine and bananas. But perhaps this feeling came to me in retrospect, and was not actually so definite at the time.

Later I felt rather differently, and was often bold enough to say a few harsh words. But what was the use?

In one speech, I said it was because the people of Guangzhou were weak that Guangzhou had become "the centre of revolution" and could become the centre of counter-revolution. . . . When it was translated into the Guangdong dialect, I fancy this was cut. In an article for some paper, I said that as the flag with the blue sky and white sun* spread, there would be more believers. But it would be like the case of Mahayana Buddhism: When even laymen were counted as believers the religious discipline would disappear, so I did not know whether this meant the spread of Buddhism or the end of Buddhism. . . . However, this article was never published. I don't know what became of it.

To northern eyes, the flowers and fruits of Guangdong were naturally rather exotic. My favourite was carambola fruit, smooth yet crisp, sour yet sweet. The tinned ones have lost the original flavour completely. The Shantou (Swatow) carambola is larger, but not so good. I frequently proclaimed the virtues of the carambola, and those who tasted it usually agreed with me. This was my most outstanding achievement that year.

During my second month in the belfry, when I wore the paper coronet of "dean," I had a busy time. There was nothing more important for this school than to take supplementary examinations and start classes, just as in any other school. So we nodded and held meetings, drew up time-tables, issued notices, hid the examination questions, distributed the papers . . . Then we held meetings and discussions again, added up the marks, and announced the results. It was the rule there for the servants to knock off at five each afternoon, so the gatekeeper was roped in by a clerk to paste up a list of examination results over ten feet long at night. By the next

* The Kuomintang flag.

morning, though, the list had gone, and we had to write it again. Then followed more discussions. Had the papers been marked correctly? Should this student pass or not? Was this teacher prejudiced? To what extent should a young revolutionary have preferential treatment? Was there enough preferential treatment? How could we help the students who had failed? Were we entitled and able to help? Were the questions too difficult? There were discussions too about students who had relatives in Taiwan: Should they be considered as Taiwanese themselves, and have special allowance made for them as "an oppressed people"? There was also a metaphysical discussion about taking the name of someone who "made no name" — could you say that meant using a false name in the examination? So the days passed, and every night a dozen or two rats galloped around, while first thing in the morning three servants sang at the top of their voices.

The thought of these discussions today makes me realize how men fritter away their short lives. At the time, however, I had no complaint. In one respect only was I conscious of a strange change: I began to dislike receiving long letters.

I used to receive many long letters, and thought nothing of it. But now I began to feel they were too long. If the purpose of the letter was not made clear on the first page, I would be annoyed. Sometimes when there was a friend with me, I would give him the letter and ask him to read it and tell me the gist of it.

"Quite right. 'Writing long letters is counter-revolutionary!'" I would think

Whether I also frowned like Councillor K or not I do not know, for I did not look in the mirror. I only remember that it struck me immediately that my life of meetings and discussions could hardly be called revolutionary either, so for my own sake I modified my earlier judgment:

“No Counter-revolutionary is too strong We should say it is not revolutionary. But even that is too strong. Actually, writing long letters simply means that a man has too much time on his hands.”

Some people say that culture can only develop when there is leisure. Judging by my experience in the belfry, that is probably true. Culture created by the leisured classes naturally suits the leisured classes alone. It is not at all surprising that some people recently have grown very excited, rubbing their hands and clamouring for justice — actually, even the structure of this belfry is rather odd. But of our four hundred million men and women compatriots, overseas Chinese and immigrants, some “live to eat, without a care in the world,” and some “spend all their time in enjoyment, saying nothing serious at all.” Why is it, then, that they have not produced a considerable output of literature (I confine myself to literature because this is limited in scope and easier to produce) So we must conclude that literature does not necessarily result from leisure, but to have literature you must have leisure. Men suffering from cold and hunger are not the ones who talk of flowers and the moon, and no coolie or slave dare dream of “reforming Chinese literature single-handed.”

I think this theory is much to my advantage. I have not felt able to write for a long time, but now I can blame the fact that I am so busy.

About this time, *New Age* published an article entitled “Where Is Mr. Lu Xun Hiding?” by Mr. Song Yunbin. This contained the following warning:

Since coming to Sun Yat-sen University, he has not recovered the courage of his “call to arms,” but seems to be saying, “In the north I was persecuted and provoked, but here there is neither persecution nor provocation, so I have nothing to say.” Ah, the pity of it! Mr. Lu Xun seems to have escaped from real society

and hidden in a cave. All the death agonies of the old society and the birth pangs of the new are before his eyes, but he refuses to see them. He has put away the mirror of human life, and gone back to the past. The pity of it! Mr. Lu Xun is an escapist.

And the editor added a polite comment to the effect that this was well-meant encouragement, not malicious abuse. I knew this quite well, and remembered how moved I was when I read it. So I did want to be as he said I had been before, and write something to make it clear that although I was not calling anyone to arms, I was at least busy with discussions and meetings. Sometimes I ate one meal a day, sometimes only one fish; still, I had not lost courage. "In the Belfry" was the subject I decided on. But I was still busy with discussions and meetings, and Mr. Song's article began with a quotation from Radek which filled me with mingled emotions — emotions which I wanted to express, yet which made me put off writing. The quotation was.

"In a time of great social change, no writer can be an onlooker."

But Radek wrote this because of the suicides of Yesenin and Soboly. When his article "Artists Without a Home" was translated and published in a periodical, it set me thinking. Then I realized that all revolutionary poets who had illusions or ideals before the revolution were likely to be driven to death by the reality which they themselves had longed for and sung. And if the actual revolution does not destroy the illusions and ideals of such poets, then it is no better than an empty announcement. But we must not belittle Yesenin and Soboly, who each in turn sang his own dirge, for they grasped the truth. And with their own destruction they proved the advance of the revolution. They were not just onlookers.

When I first came to Guangzhou, though, I did sometimes feel the situation was a little better. I had seen so many revolutionaries persecuted during recent years in the north, and so many young people arrested and killed, but here I saw nothing of this. Later I realized this was simply a "revolution by imperial sanction." While the dream lasted, however, it was rather comfortable. Had I written "In the Belfry" earlier, I should probably have written it differently. Unfortunately I left it till now, when I have seen for myself the reality of "Down with Counter-Revolution!"* and I really cannot recapture my earlier mood. So this is all I can write.

December 1927

* Referring to the White Terror of the Kuomintang in Guangzhou after April 1927

ROUSSEAU AND PERSONAL TASTE

Jean Jacques Rousseau who wrote the *Contrat Social* was abused and hounded even before his death, and people have still not stopped abusing him. Even the Chinese Republic, which has no connection with the *Contrat Social*, is playing its part in this.

Take, for example, the preface to the Chinese translation of *Émile* published by the Commercial Press which says:

The fifth book of this work deals with women's education; but far from advancing radical proposals, he does not even recognize women's individuality; hence this runs counter to his emphasis on humanity in the first four books. . . . So from our viewpoint today, we can say that he only went half way in upholding the rights of man.

However, in the first number of *Fudan University Journal*, Professor Liang Shiqiu* states that he has "a slightly different view." In fact, "slight" is not the word for it, for Professor Liang says, "There is nothing good in Rousseau's theory of education except what he says about women's education — which is really excellent." For that is "based on the differences in physique and temperament between men and women." Moreover, modern researches in biology and psychology have proved

* A reactionary writer.

that no two people are absolutely alike, and different people need different kinds of education. Hence Professor Liang says:

I believe that the word "man" should be removed absolutely and for ever from the dictionary, or banned by government decree, for its meaning is too ambiguous. A highly intelligent person is called a man, as well as some fellow who is stupid as an ox; so, too, is a delicate female, or a rough giant. All sorts and conditions of people are men. The modern idea of democracy and the conception of equality arise from ignoring the differences between men. Similarly, the modern movement for "equal rights for men and women" arose from ignoring the differences between men and women. Personality is an abstract term, meaning the sum total of all one individual's physical and mental attributes, but since these attributes vary, we have different personalities too. When we speak of insulting someone's personality, we mean denying individuality. Since Rousseau admits that a woman has her own personality, he shows respect for women. But those who ignore all distinctively feminine characteristics are the ones who insult women.

From this we are bound to reach the following conclusion:

"The right education for women is one that makes them completely womanly."

Then the right education should also make those who are "delicate" completely delicate, those "stupid as an ox" completely stupid. For only so can we avoid insulting the individuality of each man—we may use this word "man" for the time being, before it is removed for ever from the dictionary and banned for ever by government decree. Since Rousseau's views in the first four books of *Émile* are not like this, it proves beyond doubt that there is "nothing good" in them.

However, this "nothing good" applies only to "highly intelligent scholars." This is the right education for those who are "stupid as an ox." For after reading such arguments they can gradually approach a state of absolute stupidity. And this means respecting their individuality.

But this argument does not end here. In the first place, even if one knows about "natural inequality" it is not easy to differentiate clearly between real nature and what is "so gradually evolved by men that it looks natural." And when there are different schools of thought, we usually "accept what suits our own taste and propagate such ideas."

In Shanghai two years ago there was much talk of Matthew Arnold, and this year there has been much talk of Irving Babbitt*. No doubt this is also owing to personal taste.

Many problems seem to arise from personal "taste," and tastes vary as much as "men" — in fact, this is another word we should ask the government to ban. I will now copy a passage from Upton Sinclair, another American, to show respect to another kind of personality.

With any critic of Rousseau there is one question to be settled at the outset.

Why do you quarrel with this man? Is it because you wish to correct his errors, and clear the way to his goal of liberty, equality and fraternity? Or are you one of those who dread the torrent of new ideas and new feelings which Rousseau let loose upon the world? Is it your purpose to discredit the whole individualistic movement which he fathered, and to take us back to the good old days when children obeyed their parents, and servants obeyed their masters, and women obeyed their husbands, and subjects obeyed their popes and

* (1865-1933), literary critic and professor of Harvard University

kings, and students in colleges accepted without question what their professors told them?

Says Mrs. Ogi: "I suspect that last phrase is meant for Professor Babbitt."

"It is wonderful," says her husband, "that he should have that name. A judgement of Providence, without doubt!" — *Mammonart*, Chapter XLIV.

December 21, 1927

LITERATURE AND SWEAT

A Shanghai professor* lecturing on literature states that literature, in order to endure, must describe eternal human qualities. In England, for example, Shakespeare and one or two others wrote about eternal human nature, hence they are still read today; other writers failed to do this and so their works perished.

This is truly a case of "the more you explain the more bewildered I grow." I suppose many early English works must have been lost, but I never ascribed this before to their failure to describe eternal human nature. Now that I know this I am at a loss to understand how, if those works have perished, the professor was able to read them and be so sure that none of them described eternal human qualities.

Whatever lives is good literature, whatever is lost is bad. Whoever seizes "all under Heaven" is a king, whoever fails is a bandit. Don't tell me that the Chinese theory of history is going to be applied to the Chinese theory of literature as well!

And does human nature really never change?

Anthropoid ape, ape-man, primitive man, ancient man, modern man, the man of the future . . . If living creatures can indeed evolve, then human nature cannot remain unchanged. I doubt whether we can guess even primitive man's feelings, let alone those of ape-man; so the men of the future will probably not understand us either. To write about eternal human nature is certainly difficult

* Liang Shiqiu.

Take sweating, for example. I imagine men sweated in the distant past, they sweat today and will sweat for some time to come. This should therefore count as a comparatively "eternal" human quality. But the sweat of "exquisite" young ladies is sweet, while the sweat of workers "dumb as oxen" is rank. If one wants to write works that will live and win an immortal name for oneself as a writer, is it better to describe sweet sweat or rank sweat? Until this problem is solved a writer's position in the annals of literature is "in fearful jeopardy."

I hear that in England, for instance, most of the earlier novels were written for ladies, thus, naturally, sweet sweat predominated. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, under the influence of Russian literature, there was quite a reek of rank sweat. Which type will outlive the other it is still too early to say.

In China, to hear Taoists hold forth on the Tao or critics expatiate on literature is enough to make your flesh creep — who dares to sweat? But perhaps this is the eternal human nature of the Chinese.

December 23, 1927