

Other Works by Lu Xun

(in English)

A Brief History of Chinese Fiction

A study of the development of Chinese fiction from early myths and legends down to well-developed long novels written at the end of the Qing Dynasty.

452 pages 20 × 13.5 cm. Half-cloth

Selected Stories of Lu Xun

A selection of 18 short stories, which show clearly Lu Xun's method of creative writing and thoroughgoing critical realism.

264 pages 21 × 13 cm. Half-cloth and paper

Old Tales Retold

A collection of eight stories based on ancient myths and legends.

136 pages 18.5 × 13 cm. Paper

The True Story of Ah Q

The story deals with the tragedy of Ah Q, farm labourer, who suffers a lifetime of humiliation and persecution, dreams of revolution and ends up on the execution ground. It bitterly criticizes the bourgeoisie, which led the 1911 Revolution and failed to arouse the peasants.

76 pages 18.5 × 13 cm. Paper

Wild Grass

A collection of 23 prose poems.

68 pages 18.5 × 12 cm. Paper

Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk

A collection of ten essays dealing with the author's childhood and early youth.

130 pages 18.5 × 12 cm. Paper

Published by FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
Beijing, China

Distributed by GUOZI SHUDIAN, P.O. Box 399
Beijing, China

Volume Four



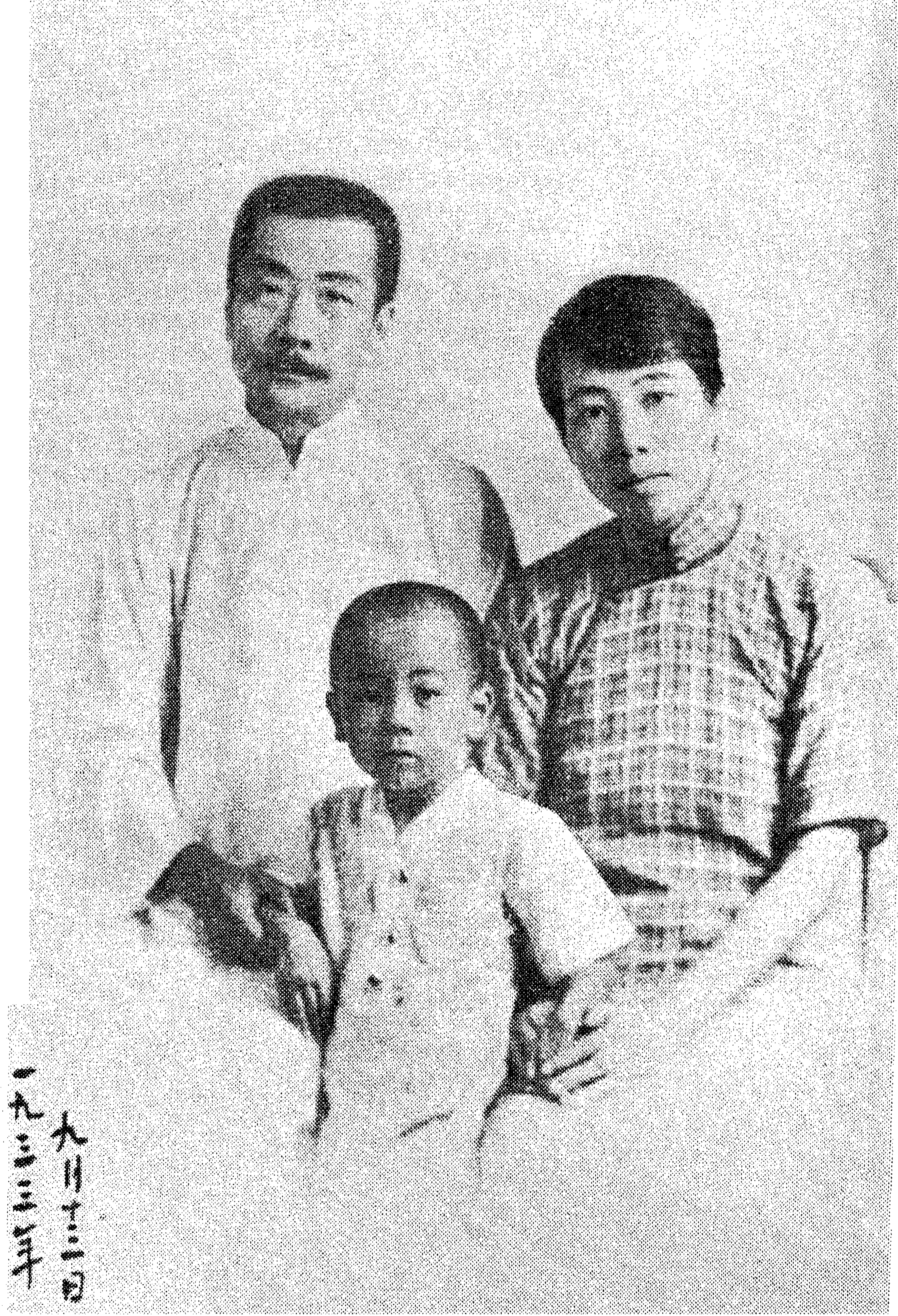
LU XUN
SELECTED WORKS

LU XUN

SELECTED WORKS

Translated by

Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang



Lu Xun with his wife and son.
Taken in September 1933

LU XUN
SELECTED WORKS

VOLUME FOUR

Translated by
YANG XIANYI *and* GLADYS YANG

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
BEIJING

First Edition	1960
Second Edition	1964
Third Edition	1980

Printed in the People's Republic of China

CONTENTS

Editor's Note	7
1934	
WOMEN ARE NOT THE WORST LIARS	13
THE CRITICS OF THE CRITICS	15
INVECTIVE	17
"BEIJING TYPES" AND "SHANGHAI TYPES"	19
THE NEW YEAR	22
A CHANCE FOR CHIT-CHAT	24
TWO OR THREE THINGS CHINESE	26
A REPLY TO THE <i>INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE</i>	35
ON THE ADOPTION OF OLD FORMS	37
LET US DO A LITTLE READING	41
THE CASE OF MRS QIN LIZHAI	43
AN ILLUSTRATED PRIMER	46
HUNG BY THE HEELS	49
THE TAKE-OVER POLICY	51
TOYS	54
SNACKS	56
NOW IS THE TIME	58
IMPRACTICAL ADVICE AND SCEPTICISM	60
THE REAL NATURE OF THE "RADICALS"	63
THE WORLD OF CICADAS	65
IN MEMORY OF WEI SUYUAN	67
SETTLING OLD SCORES	74
IN MEMORY OF LIU BANNONG	76
NOTES AFTER READING (1)	80
NOTES AFTER READING (2)	82
THOUGHTS ON A CHILD'S PHOTOGRAPHS	84
SETTING THE FASHION AND STICKING TO TRADI- TION	88
HOW TO FIND CONTENTMENT IN POVERTY	91

HOW EXTRAORDINARY!	94
ON PARADING GODS AND BITING MEN	97
NOTES AFTER READING (3)	100
A LAYMAN'S REMARKS ON WRITING	102
FORGETTING MEAT AND FORGETTING WATER	126
HAVE THE CHINESE LOST THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE?	129
ON "FACE"	131
FATE	135
NAPOLEON AND JENNER	138
A REPLY TO THE EDITOR OF <i>THE THEATRE</i>	139
TO THE EDITOR OF <i>THE THEATRE</i>	145
SPOOKS AND SPECTRES IN THE CHINESE WORLD OF LETTERS	147
RIVAL SCHOOLS OF READING	155
AH JIN	158
THE VULGAR SHOULD KEEP OUT OF GENTLEMEN'S WAY	163
1935	
HERMITS	167
ON SATIRE	173
"SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER" (1)	176
STREET VENDORS PAST AND PRESENT	179
CONFUCIUS IN MODERN CHINA	182
WHAT IS SATIRE?	191
GOSSIP IS A FEARFUL THING	194
"SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER" (2)	198
FROM HELP TO TWADDLE	201
FAMOUS MEN AND FAMOUS SAYINGS	203
"TRUST TO HEAVEN FOR FOOD"	208
TRAGEDIES ALMOST DEVOID OF INCIDENT	210
"SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER" (3)	213
"SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER" (4)	216
"SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER" (5)	219
THE WRITING-BRUSH AND OTHER MATTERS	224
"SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER" (6) — TWO EXPLOITATIONS	227
"SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER" (7)	230
ABOUT DOSTOYEVSKY	234
NOTES WITHOUT TITLES (7, 8, 9)	236

1936

THE EXHIBITION OF SOVIET GRAPHIC ART	253
I WANT TO CHEAT	256 •
A PREFACE TO BAI MANG'S <i>THE CHILDREN'S PAGODA</i>	261
WRITTEN IN DEEP NIGHT	263
THE INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT IN MARCH	275
REPLY TO A LETTER FROM THE TROTSKYITES	279
REPLY TO XU MAOYONG AND ON THE QUESTION OF THE UNITED FRONT AGAINST JAPANESE AGGRESSION	283
JOTTINGS IN MID-SUMMER	301
THIS TOO IS LIFE	305
DEATH	310
"FOR FUTURE REFERENCE" (3)	316
SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF ZHANG TAIYAN	322
A FEW MATTERS CONNECTED WITH ZHANG TAIYAN	327

APPENDICES

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF LU XUN'S LIFE AND WRITING	335
A NOTE ON THE ROMANIZATION OF CHINESE NAMES	344
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF CHINESE HISTORY	346

ILLUSTRATIONS

LU XUN WITH HIS WIFE AND SON	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<i>Facing page</i>
MANUSCRIPT OF "A REPLY TO THE <i>INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE</i> "	34
LU XUN'S STUDY IN HIS SHANGHAI LODGING	160
LU XUN WITH THE WOODCUT DISCUSSION GROUP	256
FOUR COLLECTIONS OF LU XUN'S ESSAYS WRITTEN BETWEEN 1934 AND 1936	328

EDITOR'S NOTE

The essays in this volume come from four collections: *Fringed Literature** and three volumes of *Essays of Qiejieting*.

Fringed Literature, a collection of sixty-one essays written in 1934, was first published in 1936. The thirty-six essays in the first series of *Essays of Qiejieting* were also written in 1934, the forty-eight in the second series in 1935, and the thirty-five in the third series in 1936. The three collections of *Essays of Qiejieting* were all published in July 1937 after Lu Xun's death, the first two having been edited by Lu Xun, the last by his wife Xu Guangping.

Between 1934 and 1936, when the essays in this volume were written, the spearhead of Japanese invasion had struck south from the northeastern provinces to Beijing and Tianjin. On April 17, 1934, the Japanese imperialists openly declared that China belonged to their sphere of influence. In 1935, He Yingqin signed the He-Umezu Agreement whereby the Kuomintang government substantially surrendered China's sovereign rights in the provinces of Hebei and Chahar. In November of the same year, the Japanese occupied Inner Mongolia and set up a puppet "autonomous government" there. In 1936, they set up a North China Garrison Headquarters, continuously increased the number of troops along the Beijing-Liaoning Railway, sent secret agents and smuggled goods

*So called because most of the essays in this collection appeared in literary supplements surrounded by patterned borders

into all parts of China to create incidents and stir up trouble, in preparation for a full-scale war of aggression to conquer all China. Despite these acts of aggression, the reactionary Kuomintang government maintained its policy of non-resistance, betraying the country to Japan and devoting all its energy to suppressing patriotic movements, launching a fifth offensive against the revolutionary base of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1934, the Red Army, led by the Chinese Communist Party, set out on the famous Long March in order to advance north to fight Japan. On August 1, 1935, the Chinese Communist Party published the "Appeal to Fellow-Countrymen Concerning Resistance to Japan and National Salvation." On November 28, it published the "Ten-Point Programme for Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation," calling for the establishment of a national united front, for the cessation of civil war, and for all-out resistance to Japanese aggression. This call of the Party immediately gained wide support from the whole people including, of course, literary circles. On December 28, 1935, the Society for National Salvation was set up by cultural circles in Shanghai. In May 1936, the All-China Association for National Salvation was established, and over a thousand patriotic publications appeared in different parts of the country. At that time the common demand in the literary and art movement was to unite all writers and artists, whether old or new, regardless of class and party, except those who collaborated with the enemy, to co-operate in the common task of resisting Japan and saving the country, and to form an anti-Japanese national united front of writers and artists. Early in October, Chinese writers and artists published a Declaration on Uniting to Resist Aggression and on Freedom of Speech, signed by all representative figures in cultural circles. This laid the foundation of the anti-Japanese national united front of writers and artists.

From 1934 to 1936, Lu Xun lived in Shanghai where the White Terror was rampant. Though he had tuberculosis and his health was failing he went on fighting, leading the progressive writers, courageously exposing and attacking the reactionary measures of Chiang Kai-shek's government and defeating its "cultural offensive." During this period he also resolutely combated various reactionary trends in literature. He severely criticized the sycophantic writers represented by Lin Yutang, as well as those who advocated belles-lettres in the style of the late Ming Dynasty, or talked of standing aloof from mundane affairs and posed as a cultured élite. He also exposed such "pedlars of revolution" as Yang Cunren, such "poets" as Zeng Jinke. Lu Xun not only made clear his revolutionary stand in these courageous fights, but on the eve of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression he openly set down in writing his support of the Chinese Communist Party. In his "Reply to a Letter from the Trotskyites" he said:

I count it an honour to have as my comrades those who are now doing solid work, treading firmly on the ground, fighting and shedding their blood for the survival of this generation of Chinese.

He was referring here to the Chinese Communist Party led by Chairman Mao Zedong and the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

Lu Xun's essays of these years made a most glorious contribution in the realm of ideas to Chinese revolutionary literature. First, he made valuable proposals on the questions of popularization and elevation in literature and art. In his view, the masses were not as stupid as some educated men tended to think

They want knowledge, they want new knowledge. They want to study and they can absorb new things. Of course, if language consists of nothing but new

terms and a new syntax they will not understand; but if what they need is given them gradually, they can take it. Perhaps their digestions are stronger than those of many scholars with more preconceived ideas ("A Layman's Remarks on Writing")

Here he has indicated the relationship between popularization and elevation: the two are not incompatible, but popularization may lead gradually to elevation.

Lu Xun during this period also expressed most outstanding views on critically taking over the cultural heritage. He pointed out that the new class and the new culture did not suddenly drop down from heaven but developed mainly in the revolt against the old ruling class and its culture, developed in the clash with old traditions; thus the new culture must stem from the old and adopt certain of its attributes; it should adopt the best elements, those close to the people or to the revolution, abandoning all that was feudal and backward. In his essay "On Using Old Forms," he took Chinese painting as an example to make a vivid, detailed analysis of this problem.

Lu Xun's death on October 19, 1936, was an irreparable loss for the Chinese people. But Lu Xun's spirit will live on for ever. His magnificent writings will always be part of the most prized heritage of Chinese literature.

1934

WOMEN ARE NOT THE WORST LIARS

In "On Lying"* Mr Han Shiheng declares one of the reasons for lying to be weakness, and the fact cited in evidence is: "That is why women lie more often than men"

This may not be a lie, but it may not be a fact either. True, we often hear men claim that women lie more often than men; but no proof of this is available and no statistics either. Schopenhauer, who railed against women, was discovered after his death to have among his papers a prescription for curing syphilis. Another young Austrian savant,** whose name I forget, wrote a massive tome to prove women inveterate liars — but later he committed suicide. I suspect that he was mentally deranged himself.

To my mind, the statement "women lie more often than men" is less accurate than "women are often said to 'lie more often than men.'" But of course no figures for this are available either.

Take the case of Lady Yang and the lies the literati told after An Lushan's revolt.*** Instead of blaming Emperor Ming Huang they blamed her for all the troubles. Few indeed dared say:

* Published in *Free Talk*, a supplement of *Shen Bao*, on January 8, 1934.

** Otto Weininger (1880-1903), an Austrian philosopher.

*** An Lushan revolted in 755 and Lady Yang, as the Tang emperor's favourite, was held responsible.

*Ignoring the decline of Xia and Shang,
They accused Bao Si and Da Ji instead.**

In fact, the same was true in the case of these two beauties. Women have surely been penalized far too long for men's sins as well as their own.

This year is "Women's National Products Year."** So promoting Chinese products is up to the women too. Before long they will be read another lecture, for it is by no means certain that they can increase the production of Chinese goods; but by advocating this and then blaming the women the men will have done their duty

I remember a poem written by someone to express his indignation on behalf of a certain woman:

*His Majesty had put up the white flag in surrender,
But deep in the palace I did not know it;
Two hundred thousand troops all laid down their
arms;
Was there a single man among them?****

Well said!

January 8, 1934

* A quotation from Du Fu's poem "Going North." Bao Si was the queen of King You of the Zhou Dynasty, Da Ji was the queen of the last ruler of the Shang Dynasty. Their beauty was said to have made their royal masters neglect affairs of state, thus causing their kingdoms to fall.

** Because Chinese goods could not compete with the foreign products flooding Chinese markets, various vain appeals were made to patriots to "Buy Chinese." In December 1933, four popular bodies in Shanghai decreed that 1934 should be "Women's National Products Year."

*** This verse is generally attributed to Lady Hua Rui, a concubine of the king of Shu in the tenth century, who is said to have recited it to the new emperor after the fall of the kingdom.

THE CRITICS OF THE CRITICS

Times certainly change! Up to last year all critics as well as those who were not critics were criticizing literature, and naturally most of them were dissatisfied, though a few found something good to say. But last year there was a volte-face: writers as well as those who were not writers started criticizing the critics.

This time very few have anything good to say. The most extreme will not admit that there have been any genuine critics of late. If they admit it, they roar with laughter at the fellows' stupidity. Why? Because critics so frequently have their own particular yardstick which they hold up against a work. If the work measures up to it, well and good, if not, it must be bad.

But does the history of literary criticism disclose a single critic without a definite yardstick? All without exception have one. It may be beauty, it may be truth, it may be human progress. Your real freak would be the critic without a yardstick. A magazine may claim unlimited range, but there precisely lies its limitation, the handkerchief used to camouflage sleight-of-hand. Thus an editor who believes in "art for art's sake" and professes to be impartial, finds scope in book reviews alone for plenty of tricks. If a book belongs to the school of "art for art's sake" and suits his taste, he may publish an article praising this school or a review lauding the work to the skies. Or he may print a pseudo-radical appraisal, posing as an out-and-out revolutionary, to ram it into the ground. So dust is thrown into the readers' eyes. But a man with any memory cannot be so in-

consistent and must have some definite criterion. We cannot blame him for having a yardstick. We can criticize him only if his yardstick is wrong.

But the critics of critics have cited the case of Zhang Xianzhong.* To examine scholars, Zhang hung a cord between two pillars, past which he ordered the candidates to walk. Those who over-topped the cord were killed, so were those who failed to reach it, till all the talent of Shu** was slain. If we compare critics who have definite views with Zhang Xianzhong, the hearts of readers will certainly swell with rage. But a criterion for literature is quite different from a cord to measure scholars. A discussion of the merits and weaknesses of writing is not the same as measuring men's height. Citing this example is not criticism but slander.

January 17, 1934

* Leader of a peasant uprising at the end of the Ming Dynasty. Past historians had maligned him with many tales of cruelty.

** Another name for Sichuan Province.

INVECTIVE

Another criticism of the critics is the allegation that they simply indulge in "invective" and hence are no true critics.

But let us consider what "invective" is.

If you call someone a prostitute when she is a respectable woman, that is invective, but if she sells her smiles for a living, it is not invective but the truth. Poets cannot be bought like official posts, rich men are tight-fisted — these are true statements because the facts bear them out. Even if you describe them as invective, poets still could not be bought, and your wishful thinking will come up with a bump against reality.

Wealth does not ensure literary talent any more than "a flock of little ones" ensures a clear understanding of child psychology. "A flock of little ones" simply proves that the parents can breed and raise children — it confers no right upon them to rant about children. If they do, it merely shows they have no sense of shame. This may sound like invective, but it is not. If you disagree, you will have to admit that the best child psychologists in the world are the men and women with the largest families.

To say that all children fight over a scrap of food is not fair — in fact, this is invective. A child acts according to its nature, which is modified by environment, and so we find Kong Rong* taking the smallest

* According to the *Later Han History*, Kong Rong was the sixth of seven brothers. When he was only four years old they were given pears, and he chose the smallest. Asked the reason, he said, "As I am small, I should take a small pear."

pear. If children fight, that is the family influence; for even grown men and women squabble over property, don't they? The children have learned this from them.

But while it is true that invective wrongs many innocent people, indiscriminate condemnation of invective means shielding all scoundrels.

January 17, 1934

“BEIJING TYPES” AND “SHANGHAI TYPES”

Ever since a Beijing gentleman published an article boosting “Beijing types” and debunking “Shanghai types,” quite a controversy has been raging. First a Shanghai gentleman expressed his indignation in the pages of a certain journal, and to deal a blow at the Beijing gentleman quoted a certain other gentleman’s view that the author’s place of origin has no bearing on his work *

In fact, this is no way to convince the Beijing gentleman. For the expressions “Beijing types” and “Shanghai types” refer not to natives of those cities but to those who congregate there. Thus not all “Beijing types” are natives of Beijing, nor are all “Shanghai types” Shanghai-landers. Dr Mei Lanfang, a genuine “Beijing-type” exponent of opera, had his ancestral home in Suzhou.** But a man cannot be judged according to his home town, though the elegance or squalor of his surroundings does influence an author’s morale. As Mencius said, “A man’s position affects his air, just as nourishment does his body.” Beijing was the imperial capital of the Ming and Qing dynasties,

* Shen Congwen in “Different Types of Men of Letters” taunted Shanghai writers with having so little to do that they could attend several forums every week. Su Wen struck back in “Shanghai Writers,” quoting a remark by Lu Xun to the effect that a man was often ridiculed for things over which he had no control, namely his name and place of origin.

** Actually Mei Lanfang’s native place is Taizhou in Jiangsu. In 1930, during his tour of the United States, he was awarded a doctorate by Pomona College.

Shanghai is where various foreign powers have concessions. The old capital swarms with officials, the concessions with businessmen. Thus the literati in Beijing are akin to officials, those in Shanghai to merchants. Those akin to officials help the officials to win fame, those akin to merchants help the merchants to make money, filling their own bellies in the process. In a word, the sole difference between them is that the "Beijing types" are the protégés of officials, while the "Shanghai types" are the protégés of businessmen. But whereas those fed by officials are fed in secret and can still put on airs before outsiders, those fed by merchants are fed openly and cannot hide the fact. Thus, the former sometimes forget themselves and think they are superior to the latter. And since the official contempt for merchants is traditional in China, this lowers "Shanghai types" even further in the eyes of "Beijing types."

It is true, moreover, that students in Beijing have reason to be proud of their part in helping to launch the May 4th Movement. But although this past glory remains to them, of the warriors of that period some "made their name and withdrew from the fray," some "settled down" and even more "rose in the world." In fact the lesson of that bitter struggle almost seems to be: "If you want an official post, murder and arson are the best way to it."*

*The Yellow Crane has gone, never to return;
Only Yellow Crane Pavilion remains.***

In the crisis the year before last, the scholars in Beijing hoped to take shelter behind their ancient culture, and their one great hope lay in the evacuation of old books and art treasures to the south.*** Does this not make the nature of Beijing thoroughly clear?

* A quotation from the Song Dynasty scholar Zhuang Jiyu

** From a poem by Cui Hao of the Tang Dynasty

*** When a Japanese attack seemed imminent, instead of taking steps to defend or evacuate the people of Beijing, the authorities simply removed all old treasures

But after all Beijing still has old relics, old books and the citizens of the old capital. And as most of the scholars and literati there are university lecturers or professors, it should be easier for them than for “Shanghai types” to carry out research work or write. I am therefore looking forward to some great work of scholarship or art.

January 30, 1934

THE NEW YEAR

This lunar New Year in Shanghai has been livelier than last.

Different epithets are used in print and in speech. Some refer contemptuously to the "obsolete calendar,"* and others affectionately to the "old calendar." But men's behaviour at this "New Year" is the same: they settle accounts, sacrifice to the spirits and the ancestors, let off firecrackers, play mahjong, pay New Year visits, and wish each other happiness and prosperity.

Though those papers which continue to come out despite the New Year have expressed regret,** that is mere sentiment and no match for reality. Some heroic authors call on men to strive, show indignation and commemorate the dead all the year round; but mere exhortations are no match for reality. China has too many distressing anniversaries which, customarily, should at least be observed in silence. There are quite a few cheerful anniversaries too, but as we are afraid these may be "utilized by reactionary elements to make trouble," men cannot make merry either. What with repressive measures and boycotts, all the good festivals have been squeezed out; and since all that is left to us now is this fast-dying "obsolete" or "old" New Year, it becomes doubly dear. So we must have a special celebration —

* The Kuomintang declared the lunar calendar obsolete

** In 1934, February 13 was New Year's Eve by the lunar calendar. The *Shen Bao* put out an extra supplement, and a writer in its columns expressed regret over this additional holiday task.

this is not something to be passed over lightly as a "vestige of feudalism"

The heroes who call on others to suffer and toil all the year round certainly do not know the meaning of suffering or toil themselves. In point of fact, those who suffer and toil need rest and relaxation from time to time. Even the slaves in ancient Egypt sometimes uttered a laugh. Such laughter expressed contempt for everything. And the only ones who could not understand its meaning were the slave-owners, those who were content to be slaves, and those slaves whose toil was light, who had ceased to suffer

I have not celebrated the old New Year for twenty-three years now, but this time I let off fireworks for three nights in succession till even the foreigners next door complained. This and the fireworks were my only pleasure this year

February 15, 1934

A CHANCE FOR CHIT-CHAT

Last year "humour" was in luck. Apart from *The Analects*,* there was talk of nothing but humour and everyone was a humorist. This year, however, the humorists are out of luck, this is wrong and that is wrong, all crimes are attributed to humour, which has even been described as the clown on the literary stage. To condemn humour is like taking a bath: anyone who does that will be clean.

If it is true that "all the world's a stage," then naturally there must be clowns in the realm of literature too — but there must also be "black faces."** It is very common for clowns to play the part of clowns, but very odd if "black faces" play these parts. Such things do happen in operas, however. This makes the straight and the crooked alike curse heartily; it makes the warm-hearted angry, the soft-hearted sad. Is this because the actor does not know his part well enough to raise a laugh? No, he is more amusing than a genuine clown.

Anger or sadness are aroused because after the "black face" has played the part of a clown this is not the end. An opera must have several types of character: hero, heroine, old man, clown, rascal and so on. Otherwise it is too quickly over. If for some reason the "black face" takes the clown's part, the usual rule is for the clown to take the "black face's" part. Leaving the singing out of it, it is ridiculous enough if the "black face" puts on a

* A fortnightly edited by Lin Yutang.

** Actors in Chinese opera who paint their faces black and play the part of roughs.

fatuous expression to play the clown, while the clown puts on a ferocious expression to play the "black face," till the stage is full of white-nosed and black-faced clowns. But the ridiculous is not necessarily humour. This is an example proving that "there is no humour in China."

What is more deplorable is that Mr. Lin Yutang, known as the "master of humour," should actually turn serious and quote from the ancients in *Free Talk*.

Now when a man drinks wine and behaves with abandon or remains silent and obscure he does so simply to preserve his own integrity, but today those scabby turtles are blaming him for the country's downfall. That being so, I suppose those "who flock together one day but scatter the next, who take this side one day but another the next, who behave as gentlemen one day but as mean men the next, and then as gentlemen again" are free from blame.

Although he is quoting from a Ming Dynasty essayist,* the tone is far from "humorous" or "calm." This is another example.

However, Mr. Lin's belief that all these recent attacks in various papers on his magazine *The World of Man* were organized by someone using different pseudonyms is a wrong conclusion, as witness the fact that these articles use different arguments and are written in different styles. Among the writers there may be "famous men" who have tried in vain to climb the ladder to officialdom, there may be real clowns pretending to be "black faces," and there may be serious-minded men making honest criticisms. The ways of the world are so complex that even chit-chat needs to be analysed and fought out. Perhaps this is a chance for *The World of Man* after all.

April 26, 1934

* Zhang Xuan.

TWO OR THREE THINGS CHINESE

1. CHINESE FIRE

We are told that the fire used by the Greeks was stolen from heaven in ancient times by Prometheus. But Chinese fire is different: it was discovered — or invented — by the sage Sui Ren. Not having stolen it, he escaped being chained to a peak and having his liver devoured by a vulture. But he never had Prometheus' fame either and was never worshipped.

China has a fire god too. Not Sui Ren but a ridiculous incendiary.

Ever since Sui Ren discovered or invented fire, it has been possible to eat savoury cooked meats, light lamps and work at night. But as an early philosopher said, "The disadvantage comes with the advantage." Conflagrations started at the same time, and there appeared certain remarkable men who deliberately set fire to the dwellings invented by the sage You Chao.

Good Sui Ren deserves to be forgotten. Since indigestion was in the sage Shen Nong's* province, Shen Nong is remembered today. As for destructive fires, though we do not know exactly who invented these, some pioneer there must have been. The only way out, therefore, was to give him the ambiguous title of Fire God and to show respectful fear. In his pictures he has a scarlet face and hair, but when sacrificing to him you must avoid the

* To Shen Nong was attributed the invention of medicine.

use of anything red, using green in its place. Presumably he is like the Spanish bulls — the sight of red enrages him and makes him run amok

That is why he is worshipped. There are many such evil spirits in China.

Yet apparently it is they who make things lively in the world of men. During festivals in China the Fire God only is worshipped — not *Sui Ren*. And if there is a fire, the victims as well as those neighbours who escaped must sacrifice to the Fire God to express their gratitude. It may seem rather odd to offer thanks for a calamity, but they say that unless you sacrifice there will be a second fire. So it is safer to offer thanks. And this applies not to the Fire God only but to some men as well. I suppose it is a form of etiquette.

Incendiarism is a fearful thing, yet it may be more exciting than cooking. I do not know the position in foreign countries, but in China no matter what history you consult you will find no biographies of cooks or lamp-lighters. However good a man is at cooking or lamp-lighting, he has no chance of making a name in the world. But *Qin Shi Huang* is still so famous for his burning of the books that he is quoted as a precedent for Hitler's burning of the books. If Mrs Hitler were good at turning on lights or making toast and a historical precedent were wanted, I fancy it would be very hard to find. Fortunately, though, feats of this kind never shake the world.

According to a Song Dynasty anecdote, incendiarism originated with the Mongols who, because they lived in tents — not having sense enough to live in houses — started fires wherever they went. This is a lie. But since few Mongols could read the language of the Hans, they made no protest. As a matter of fact, there was a famous incendiary at the end of the Qin Dynasty — *Xiang Yu*. As soon as he burned *Efang Palace* his

fame spread throughout the empire, he still appears on the stage today and is well known even in Japan. But who knows the names of those who lit the lamps in the Qin Palace before it was burned down?

Today we have produced bombs and shells, and what with planes, which are very progressive too, it is much easier than before to make a name. And a man who starts greater fires than ever before will be more highly respected. Seen from a distance he appears like a Saviour, and the blaze is taken for brightness.

2 CHINA'S KINGLY WAY

The year before last I was privileged to read Nakazato Kaizan's* great work "A Letter to China and the Chinese People." I remember his saying that both the Zhou and Han dynasties had aggressive rulers, yet the Chinese sang their praise and welcomed them. They even praised the rulers of the Yuan and Qing dynasties who had come from the north. So long as the invasion was able to pacify the country and safeguard men's lives, it was the Kingly Way for which the Chinese longed. He is therefore most indignant at the present pig-headedness of the Chinese.

This "Letter" was translated and published in a magazine in Manchuria, but as it was never circulated in other parts of China, apparently not a single answer to it has appeared. Last year it is true, one of Dr. Hu Shi's speeches reported in a Shanghai paper contained this remark: "There is only one way to conquer China. That is to put an absolute stop to all aggression but try to win the hearts of the Chinese people." Needless to say, this

* A Japanese novelist

was a coincidence, yet it does seem rather like an answer to that letter

Winning the hearts of the Chinese people is Dr Hu Shi's definition of what is known in China as the Kingly Way. But I doubt whether he believes his own arguments. China has never had an absolutely Kingly Way, as Dr Hu Shi with his "passion for history and research" should know well.

Yes, the Chinese did sing the praises of the Yuan and Qing dynasties; but that was on a par with thanking the Fire God, not a proof that their hearts had been won. Had it been hinted that unless they sang praises their treatment would be still worse, even if they were being treated rather badly some of them would still sing praises. Four or five years ago when I joined a society which demanded freedom,* Chen Dezheng, then Commissioner of Education in Shanghai, asked angrily, "Are you not satisfied under the rule of the Three People's Principles? Very well, we will take back the little freedom you writers have" And sure enough, so they did. Each time I am conscious of having less freedom than before I admire Mr. Chen's profound knowledge of the Kingly Way, and sometimes cannot help wishing that we had sung the praises of the Three People's Principles. But now it is too late

Though the Chinese Kingly Way appears the opposite of the Tyrant's Way, in actual fact they are complementary. Sooner or later the tyrant will come along too. Men sing praises in the hope that tyranny will be lightened, or at least not intensified

According to the historians, the first emperor of the Han Dynasty was the son of a dragon;** but actually he started

* The China Freedom League organized by Soong Ching Ling and others.

** His mother was said to have dreamed of a dragon — symbol of an emperor — before his birth.

life as a bully. It is hardly correct, though, to call him an aggressor. As for King Wu of Zhou, he entered the Middle Kingdom with the avowed intention of conquering it, and as he evidently belonged to a different race from the Shangs, in modern parlance I suppose we can call him an invader. But we have no records left of what the people said at the time. Confucius and Mencius advocated the Kingly Way as hard as they could, but they were subjects of Zhou, who wandered from state to state and were active, so possibly they just said that with the aim of becoming officials. To put it more politely we can say they wanted to "enforce the Way," which would be easier if they were officials, and the easiest way to become officials was to praise the Zhou Dynasty. But according to the records, although the Zhou were the founders of the Kingly Way and expert in its use, when King Wu first attacked, Bo Yi and Shu Qi stopped his horse and protested till they had to be removed by force. Then the troops of Shang resisted so hard that their blood had to be spilled all over the field. Then the Shang people revolted. Though they had been dubbed "perverse" and outlawed from under the jurisdiction of the Kingly Way, there does seem to be some inconsistency. The whole Kingly Way was reduced to absurdity by the revolt of a single "perverse" people.

Confucians and Taoists are two celebrated Chinese products. The highest aspiration of the Taoists is immortality, of Confucians the Kingly Way. But unfortunately neither of these has ever materialized in China. As the facts throughout our long history testify, it is untrue to say that there ever was a Kingly Way and charlatanry to claim that one still exists. As Mencius lived during the Zhou Dynasty he was ashamed to speak of the Tyrant's Way. Had he lived today, when the range of human knowledge has widened, no doubt he would be ashamed to speak of the Kingly Way.

3. CHINESE PRISONS

I believe men do in fact learn from experience: hence the changes in human affairs. During the long period from the Song to the end of the Qing Dynasty scholars were chosen entirely for their skill in writing abstruse essays intended to echo the opinions of the sages, and not till China was defeated by France* was the error of this method perceived. Thereupon, to remedy the situation, Chinese students were sent to the West to study and munition plants were set up. But after China was defeated by Japan** the authorities realized that this was still not enough and did their best to open new schools. Then every year they had great trouble with the students. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty and the Kuomintang's assumption of power, they understood that this too was a mistake but the only possible remedy was to build new prisons.

China was long ago studded with prisons of the Chinese type; but towards the end of the Qing Dynasty a few Western-style — or “modern” — prisons were built. Since these were for display to any foreigner who might be passing that way, they doubtless come under the same category as students sent abroad to pick up some of the “modern” etiquette in order to get on well with foreigners. Thanks to this fortunate chance, the convicts got fairly good treatment: they were given baths and a certain amount to eat, so that these were very happy places indeed. And two or three weeks ago the government, wishing to rule by benevolence, issued an order forbidding the appropriation of the prisoners' grain. Since then they must have been even happier.

As for prisons of the old type, as these were apparently modelled on the Buddhist hell in addition to the prison-

* In the Sino-French War (1884-85)

** In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894.

ers confined there you have jailers who torment them. They sometimes also take advantage of their right to bleed the felons' relatives white. But everyone considers this fitting. If anyone were to object, that would be tantamount to pleading the prisoners' case and he would be suspected of belonging to an "evil" party.* Modern civilization is spreading at such a rate, however, that last year an official somewhere even proposed that convicts should go home once a year to have a chance to satisfy their sexual appetite, surely this man is a great humanitarian! Actually this official had no special sympathy for the convicts' sexual desires but, safe in the knowledge that nothing would come of it, he raised his voice simply to remind the world of his existence. Public opinion, however, was thoroughly roused. One critic declared that if this went on men would lose their fear of prison and enter gladly — he seethed with indignation to think what would become of public morals. We cannot fail to be struck by the sincerity and honesty of this man, brought up for so many years on the "teachings of the sages" yet still less tactful than that official. It is clear, however, that in his view harsh treatment is essential for prisoners.

Considered from another angle, a prison does seem rather an ideal refuge for those whose motto is "Safety first!" Few fires break out, no burglars break in and no bandits raid the place. In case of war, no airmen are fool enough to take prisons as their target. In case of revolution, instances of freeing prisoners have been known but none of butchering them. When Fujian declared itself independent** the convicts are said to have been

* Meaning the Chinese Communist Party which was called by all kinds of bad names by the Kuomintang reactionaries

** The November coup d'état of 1933 when some generals of the 19th Route Army turned against Chiang Kai-shek and set up a revolutionary government. They were soon defeated by the Kuomintang.

released, but once they were out it was rumoured that men they disagreed with had disappeared. However, such a case was unprecedented. In brief, prison seems to be a pretty good place. Once men are allowed to take their families in, there may be requests for admittance even when there are no more of our present floods, famine, fighting and terror. So torture is essential.

Mr and Mrs Noulens, who were thrown into jail in Nanjing as communist agitators,* staged three or four hunger strikes — to no effect. They did not understand the spirit of Chinese prisons. One official said in surprise, "If they don't eat, what business is it of ours?" This has nothing to do with benevolent government, and saving a little grain is good for the prison. If Gandhi had not chosen a good place, he would have failed completely.

But even these excellent prisons still have one deficiency. Hitherto, too little attention has been paid to the prisoners' ideology. To make good this deficiency, instruction is being given in a special type of newly invented jail called a reformatory. Not having been to one of these yet to reform myself, I do not know all the details; but I understand that the Three People's Principles are preached at all hours of the day to the prisoners to convince them of their mistakes. I have heard that you also have to write a thesis denouncing communism. If you will not or cannot do this, naturally you have the rest of your life to think it over; and if you do not come up to the mark, you must go on reflecting till your dying day. Nowadays men go into these places and men come out, but the former must be in the majority for I hear more reformatories are to be built. Occasionally

* Noulens was a progressive foreigner in Shanghai. On June 17, 1931, the Kuomintang government arrested him and his wife, and imprisoned them in Nanjing. Soong Ching Ling and others formed a committee for their defence.

you meet one of the good citizens who has passed the test and been released, but most of them seem at their last gasp — they must have exhausted all their energy on soul searching and their graduation theses. Their future is hardly hopeful.

答國際文學社問

原問——

- 一、蘇聯的存在與成功，對於你怎樣（蘇維埃建設的十月革命，對於你的思想的路徑和創作的性質，有什麼改變）
- 二、你對於蘇維埃文學的意見怎樣？
- 三、在資本主義的各國，什麼事件和種種文化上的進行，特別引起你的注意？

· 是前，舊社會的腐敗，我是覺到了的，我希望着新的社會的起來，但不知道這新的。該是什麼，而且也不知道。新的。起來以後，是否一定就好。待到十月革命後，我才知道這新的。社會的創造者是無產階級，但因為資本主義各國的宣傳，對於十月革命還有冷峻，並且懷疑。現在蘇聯的存在與成功，使我確

A REPLY TO THE *INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE*

The questions asked were.

- I What is your reaction to the existence and success of the Soviet Union? (What changes has the October Revolution brought about in your way of thinking and the nature of your writing?)
- II What do you think of Soviet literature?
- III What events and cultural trends in the capitalist countries have aroused your special interest?

I. In the past I was conscious of the rottenness of the old society and looked forward to the rise of a new society, without knowing, however, what form the "new" would take. Nor could I be sure that after the rise of the "new" all would be well. Not till after the October Revolution did I learn that the creator of this new society was the proletariat; but owing to the hostile propaganda of the capitalist countries I remained somewhat indifferent to the October Revolution and retained certain doubts. Now the existence and success of the Soviet Union have convinced me that a classless society will certainly come into being, and not only have my doubts been swept away but my courage has greatly increased. As far as my writing goes, however, since I am out of the revolutionary vortex and have long been unable to travel and see what is going on, I am thus only able to expose the evils of the old society.

II All I can read are translations — German and Japanese. What I find most interesting and useful are not so much the present novels about construction, but the earlier ones about fighting — *The Armoured Train*, *The Nineteen*, *The Iron Flood* and so forth. My chief reason for reading Soviet literature is that I want to introduce it to China, and for China at present the works on fighting are the more important.

III. Here in China I cannot see the vaunted “culture” of the capitalist countries. All I know is that in our country they and their stooges are using mechanics and chemistry, not to say electric appliances, to torture revolutionaries, and are using planes and bombs to slaughter our revolutionary masses.

March 23, 1934

ON THE ADOPTION OF OLD FORMS

To my mind, provided we can discuss it dispassionately, this question of "adopting old forms" is well worth studying today, yet right at the outset Mr Erye has attacked it* According to him, the results of the last ten years' "experiments in new forms" constitute "virtual surrender" and "opportunism" — this is chanting an incantation to overcome your enemy, or at the very least bespattering him with mud But Mr. Erye is an honest man for at the same time he is translating *The Form and Content of Art*,** and once that is published it will refute all his heated accusations. Besides, some of his statements are correct, as when he says that we should not mechanically separate experiments in new forms from the adoption of old forms

Of course this remark, i.e., form and content cannot be mechanically separated, is no more than common sense, as is also the remark that writing cannot be mechanically separated from the people. We "adopt" old forms — though Mr. Erye calls this "applauding the whole of past art" — merely because we must experiment with new forms. The adoption of certain features is not the same as applauding the whole, for no progressive artist could use the same concepts (contents) He might consider adopting certain features, however, because he knows that writing cannot be mechanically

* Referring to an article by Nie Gannu published on April 24, 1934, in a newspaper supplement, *Trends*

** A monograph by the Japanese writer Koreto Kurahara.

separated from the public. The time has passed when art was considered a sudden eruption of the artist's "inspiration," like a sneeze which relieves a man whose nose has been itching. Artists today keep the general public in mind and feel concern for it. This is a new concept (content). From this they go on to experiment with new forms. The first step is the adoption of some old form, which means the beginning of a new, a transformation of the old. To my mind, this does not involve a mechanical separation of form and content, nor can it be condemned as opportunistic, on a par with imitating the form of *The Two Sisters** because that has good box-office value.

Of course, the adoption of old forms, or rather experimenting with the new, demands hard work on the part of the practitioners of art, but theoreticians and critics are responsible too for guiding and commenting on their work as well as discussing it with them. And one cannot discharge this responsibility merely by criticizing others for failing to give clear expositions. Since we have our own history of art and we live in China, we should look through the history of Chinese art. What can we adopt? It seems to me that although we cannot see genuine pre-Tang paintings, we know that most of these had stories as their themes, and there is a lesson for us here. We can take from Tang paintings the magnificence of Buddhist frescoes, the simplicity and clarity of line drawings; we should reject the languor and effeminacy of the Song paintings of the Imperial Academy, but adopt their precision and remarkable finish; while as for Mi Fei's** school of landscape painting, that is utterly useless. Whether the later expressionistic drawings (the scholars' paintings) are of any use or not I cannot yet tell. no doubt some useful features may be found in them too.

*A film produced in Shanghai.

** A Song Dynasty landscape painter (1051-1107).

It goes without saying that adoptions must not be like a display of miscellaneous fragments of antiques, but the old must be absorbed by the new. It is like eating beef or mutton: we set aside hooves and hide, keeping only the best to nourish and develop new organisms. Eating beef or mutton does not make us "virtually" oxen or sheep.

The examples just mentioned and all still to be seen today are consumers' art which, favoured by those in power, has survived in considerable bulk. Where there are consumers there must be producers, and therefore there must be producers' art alongside consumers' art. But because nobody cared for this ancient art, practically none of it is left apart from the illustrations in old romances. In the modern age we still have coloured New Year pictures in the markets and the picture-books mentioned by Mr Mengke*. Though these may not be genuine producers' art, undoubtedly they were opposed to the art of the leisured class. Even so, however, they were much influenced by consumers' art. Thus in literature the folk songs still kept to the traditional seven-word line; in art the themes illustrated were generally stories about the gentry, but processed into something more concise and clear. This transformation is usually known as "vulgarization." It could do no harm, I think, for artists who are concerned with the general public to pay attention to these things; but of course it goes without saying that they should be improved upon also.

These two kinds of art in China sometimes look alike when in fact they are different. For instance, the clouds and mist filling an entire Buddhist painting are nothing but a magnificent decoration, whereas when every inch of a New Year picture is utilized that is to economize on

* In an article "Adaptation and Imitation" published on April 19, 1934, in *Trends*.

paper. The beauties with slender waists and tapering fingers painted by Tang Yin* were desired by men of his sort; but although New Year pictures also have beauties like this, they are drawn merely as one social type, to increase our knowledge or to satisfy curiosity. Those artists who paint for the people need not avoid such subjects either.

As for the statement that picture-books are simply one form of pictorial art, just as literature includes poetry, drama, stories and other different forms, this is of course correct. The rise of different forms is none the less connected with social conditions, however, as is clear if we consider the fact that at one time poetry flourishes, at another many novels appear, while at others only short anecdotes are written. Thus we know that the rise of these forms is connected with their content. In present-day society picture-books are popular because the conditions for their popularity and the need for them exist. The true task of a progressive artist is to pay due heed to this trend and guide its direction, as well as try to make art intelligible to ordinary people. When old forms are adopted, certain things must be removed while others must be added, resulting in a new form, a change. And this work is by no means as easy as bystanders think.

But even after the establishment of new forms, these will not constitute art of the highest level. The progress of art requires the help of other kinds of cultural work, when one cultural organization calls on some single expert to raise the standard alone, this is unrealistic; and therefore to put the blame on a few individuals is just as biased as to attribute everything to circumstances.

May 2, 1934

* A famous artist of the Ming Dynasty.

LET US DO A LITTLE READING

Reading in a pedantic way may turn you into a book-worm or a bookcase, and has long been opposed. Indeed as time marches on, the opposition to reading is becoming more and more radical, till now we have someone against any reading at all. His authority is Schopenhauer's old statement that if we read other men's works we are simply letting the author gallop through our brain.

This is a hard knock on the head for pedantic readers. But it is a good rule for those men of genius who prefer to dance rather than study, who make a scene or wring their hands over nothing. We must remember, though, that a genius who bides strictly by this golden rule has let Schopenhauer gallop through his brain leaving it a jumble of hoof-prints.

Now the critics are complaining because there are no good books, and the authors are complaining because there is no correct criticism. Zhang says Li's works are symbolist, whereupon Li considers himself a symbolist, while his readers—it goes without saying—are convinced of it too. But what is symbolism? This has never been made clear, and we can only use Li's works as an example. Thus what is called symbolism in China is different from the symbolism of other countries, although we actually borrowed the term from them. But since Maeterlinck is said to be a symbolist, Li becomes the Maeterlinck of China. We also have our Chinese Anatole France, Babbitt, Kirpotin* and Gorky. . . . Yet

* A Soviet critic.

there are extremely few translations of Anatole France and the rest of them in China. Is that because we have our own local brand?

In the Chinese literary arena the life of some of our native writers is far too long, that of foreign writers all too short — we no sooner familiarize ourselves with an author's name than we hear he is out of date. It looked as if the complete works of Ibsen would be published, but so far only two volumes have appeared. And the selected works of Chekhov and Maupassant made a magnificent start only to tail off later. . . . Yet in the Japan we abominate there are complete translations of *Don Quixote* and *The Arabian Nights*. Shakespeare and Goethe . . . are there in their entirety. There are three Japanese versions of Tolstoy's works, two of Dostoyevsky.

To read books in a pedantic way is to injure yourself; when a pedant speaks he would injure others; but not to read at all may not be good either. At least if you mean to write a review of Tolstoy, you should read a few of his books. Of course, the country is in a state of crisis, and who has time to translate or read these books? But my advice is directed to those eminent citizens who do nothing but make scenes or complaints, not to those who are genuinely working to save the country or those heroes planning vengeance. For some men will spend their life in pleasure and will not try to save their country even if they don't read.

May 14, 1934

THE CASE OF MRS. QIN LIZHAI

The last few years have seen many accounts in the papers of suicides due to economic pressure or social taboos, but such cases are seldom discussed or written up. However, the recent suicide of Mrs. Qin Lizhai* and her two sons and daughter has given rise to not a little comment, and the subsequent suicide of a man who had an account of their death beside him** shows even better the scope of its influence. I fancy this was because of the number involved. A single suicide is not enough to excite general sympathy.

Although all the comments express some compassion for the principal suicide — Mrs. Qin — in the final analysis they still condemn her. For though the society is bad, say the commentators, man's first duty is to live and suicide means shirking this responsibility; man's second duty is to suffer, and suicide means taking the easy way out. Progressive commentators declare that human life is a battle and suicide desertion, for which death is not sufficient to atone. Although there is truth in this statement, it is rather too sweeping.

* The wife of a member of the staff of the *Shen Bao* who died on February 25, 1934, in Shanghai. Her father-in-law, in Wuxi, told her to come home, but she did not want to leave Shanghai where her children were in school. After receiving several harsh letters, she and her children took an overdose of veronal on May 5.

** On May 20, a clerk working for a Shanghai chemist committed suicide. A cutting of the report of Mrs. Qin's death was found beside him.

There are two schools of criminologists, the first of whom ascribe crime to the environment, the second to individual nature. At present the second is in the ascendant; for if we believed the first, to wipe out crime we must change the environment and that would be a troublesome, fearful business. Most of the critics of Mrs. Qin's suicide belong to the second school.

Quite clearly, her suicide shows weakness. But what made her weak? It is important for us to read the letters her worthy father-in-law wrote telling her to go home, in which he urged the good name of their two families and the wishes of the dead conveyed through a planchette. We should also look at the couplet her younger brother wrote for the funeral. "The wife followed her husband to the grave, the children their mother. . . ." Surely this was written for the admiration of posterity? How could a woman born and bred in such a family avoid being weak? We certainly can blame her for not putting up a struggle, but the all-devouring power of darkness is often too much for a single warrior and those critics of her suicide would not necessarily have helped her in her struggle, for while others are fighting, struggling, and being defeated, they all remain silent. There is no end to the orphans and widows, poor women, and destitute in the by-ways of the countryside or in our great cities and towns, who accept their fate and die, or who struggle against their fate yet eventually perish — but who tells their story, whose heart is touched by them? Truly, they may "strangle themselves in some ditch or drain, and no one hears of it."*

Men should indeed live — in order to make progress. They should not mind suffering either — in order to put an end to all future suffering. Still more should they fight, but only for reforms. Those who blame another for committing suicide should, at the same time as they blame

* A quotation from *The Analects*.

her, challenge and attack the circumstances which drove her to suicide. If they say not a word and loose not an arrow against the powers of darkness, but simply rail at the "weak," then no matter how fine-sounding their sentiments, I am forced to say — I can no longer keep silent — that they are simply accomplices of the murderers.

May 24, 1934

AN ILLUSTRATED PRIMER

Even in his middle age or old age, when a man has contact with children he will step over the boundaries of the long-forgotten world of his childhood to wonder how the moon keeps pace with men or how the sky comes to be studded with stars. But whereas a child in this world is like a fish in water, swimming wherever he pleases and losing himself completely in the present, a man is a human being dabbling in the water, aware of its fluidity and coolness, but forced to make serious efforts and eventually to go back to the dry land

As it is impossible to explain the moon and stars clearly all at once, if the family is not too poor it is best of course to give the child a so-called education, first teaching him to read. We have men of every land, bookshops of every land and children's books of every land in Shanghai. But being Chinese we want to read Chinese books and learn Chinese! There are such books. Though the paper, illustrations, colours, printing and binding are all much inferior to those of other countries, still such books exist. I went to the market and bought my son an *Illustrated Primer* printed in 1932, the "sixth edition since the national crisis."

What struck me first was the repulsive colouring, but I overlooked that. And the pictures were dead, but I overlooked that too. Though the book was printed in Shanghai, strangely enough the illustrations showed candles and paraffin lamps instead of electric light, and boots worn by Qing Dynasty officials and old-style slippers with cloud designs instead of leather shoes. Men

were firing guns on one knee or shooting arrows from a standing position, their shoulders so hunched that they could not possibly hit the mark. Worse still, not even the fishing rods, winnowing-fans and weaving looms were true to life

I sighed gently, remembering the *Common Characters* I read as a boy. That was a book to teach housewives and maids to keep accounts; and though the vocabulary was not too large and the pictures were very crude, they were lively and extremely realistic. This was because the artist knew what he was drawing. Since he had a clear mental picture of a turnip or a hen, of course he drew a good likeness. If we look at the life reproduced in the *Illustrated Primer* — washing, eating, reading — we know this was the life of the readers that artist had in mind as well as his own. The father rents a flat in the International Settlement and has moved the whole family in. They are neither rich nor desperately poor, but he has to work hard all day to support the family. He has to send the children to school, he has to wear a long gown, and he worries so much about keeping up appearances that he cannot afford to buy books, observe events or perfect his technique. And a line on the last page informs us: "First published in the seventh month of the *wu-shen* year." Looking up my chronological chart, I discovered that this was the thirty-fourth year of Emperor Guang Xu of the Qing Dynasty, or 1908 by the Western calendar. Though the book was reprinted the year before last, it was written twenty-seven years ago and is actually an old tome! This accounts for its deadly dullness.

Children are admirable. They keep wondering what it is like on the moon and stars or under the earth, what different flowers can be used for, how insects speak. They long to fly up to heaven, to crawl down an ant-hole . . . So we should be most careful what books we give our children, and should take great pains over

writing them. These two small volumes of the *Illustrated Primer* cover everything under the sun from astronomy, geography and history to the property of matter. In fact even a well-informed artist would find it difficult to cope successfully with these subjects ranging from the vast universe to tiny flies.

But having forgotten what it was like to be children, we consider them as fools and do not take them seriously. The pressure of circumstances forces us to give them a little so-called education, and we think if we give them a fool for a teacher that is enough. So when they grow up they become real fools, like us.

And fools that we are, we are doing our utmost to make even greater idiots of our children. You can see this by looking at the publications of the last few years, and the extraordinary number of magazines printed for "school children" and "little friends." Has China suddenly produced so many "children's writers"? I fancy not.

May 30, 1934

HUNG BY THE HEELS

Because kind-hearted Westerners hate seeing cruelty to animals, anyone who carries hens or ducks upside-down in the International Settlement is penalized. The penalty is merely a fine, and if you are willing to pay you can go on as before. Still, you have been penalized. This has roused the indignation of certain of our compatriots, who say the Westerners are kind to animals but cruel to Chinese, ranking us even lower than poultry.

But this is to misunderstand the Westerners. They despise us, true, but not as lower than beasts. Of course hens and ducks, come what may, end up in the kitchen to be dressed for the table; and even if you carry them the right way up that cannot make amends for their ultimate fate. But since they can neither speak nor resist, what does it profit us to treat them cruelly? The Westerners consider profit in everything. Our ancients were concerned over the suffering caused the people by "hanging them by the heels"* and — what's more — described this graphically, though they never realized how fowl dislike being carried upside-down. Attacks were written long ago, however, on the futile torture of "carving live donkeys" and "roasting live geese." Such views are common to both East and West.

But apparently views on men vary. Men can organize themselves and revolt. They can be slaves or masters. If

* A quotation from *Mencius*: "At the present time, in a country of ten thousand chariots, let benevolent government be put into practice, and the people will be delighted with it, as if they were relieved from hanging by the heels."

they refuse to exert themselves, they may remain coolies for ever, but if they liberate themselves, they may win equality. It is not necessarily their fate to end up in the kitchen to be dressed for the table. The lower they are, the more their masters pity them. Hence the foreigners' servants who beat dogs are reprimanded, while ordinary people are blamed for being rough with the servants of foreigners. There is no rule against cruelty to Chinese in the International Settlement precisely because we should be able to look after ourselves — we are not hens and ducks.

But we are so used to that twaddle in the classics about benevolent champions of justice who free the people from hanging by their heels that even today we keep hoping some little miracle may drop down from heaven or from some distant height. "Better a dog's life in time of peace than a man's in time of unrest." We would rather change into dogs than band together to better our condition. The complaints that we are worse off than poultry in the International Settlement smack strongly of this.

Once many men think this way, we shall all be hung by the heels. And even when we are being sent to the kitchen, no one will attempt to save us. That is because we are men after all, but men without guts, without backbone.

June 3, 1934

THE TAKE-OVER POLICY

China always followed a closed-door policy: she would not leave home herself nor let others in. Since having her front gate breached by cannon and knocking her head several times against a brick wall, she has now adopted a give-away policy in everything. Leaving other aspects aside, in the field of art alone she recently sent a pile of art treasures to Paris for exhibition, but "no one knows what became of them." And several "masters" have made tours of Europe, bearing paintings old and new and hanging them up wherever they went "to the greater glory of China." I hear that before long we shall be sending Dr. Mei Lanfang to the Soviet Union to promote "symbolism," after which he will go to Europe to lecture. It is not my intention here to discuss the relationship between Dr. Mei's art and symbolism. I merely want to point out that this is a manifest improvement, substituting live men for antiques.

But none of us, following the convention "Courtesies should be returned," have said, "Take that over!"

Of course to do nothing but give is not a bad thing. It reveals your wealth and generosity. Nietzsche boasted that he was the sun, possessing illimitable light and heat, endlessly giving without receiving from others. But Nietzsche was not the sun after all — he was simply crazy. China is not the sun either, though they do say that if we mined all our coal it would last the whole world for several centuries. But what after that? By the end of several centuries we shall have turned into spirits, of course, and either gone up to heaven or down

to hell; but our descendants will be here, and we should leave a few gifts for them. Otherwise at festivals and on great occasions they will have nothing to give and will have to kowtow to offer congratulations, receiving as their reward some left-over gruel and scraps of food.

Do not mistake this reward for something cast off — no, it is something cast *at* you. In more dignified terms it may be described as a “gift.” It is not my intention to cite examples here.*

It is not my intention either to speak of what we have “given away,” for that would be old-fashioned. I am just urging that we should be a little more parsimonious and take things over as well as giving them away. This is the “Take-Over” policy.

But we have been frightened by the things “given” us. First England’s opium and Germany’s cast-off cannon, then France’s face powder, America’s films and Japan’s knick-knacks stamped “Chinese Products.” The result is that even level-headed young people fight shy of foreign goods. In fact, this is because they are “given,” not “taken over.”

So we must use our brains, take a broader view, and bring things in ourselves.

Suppose one of our poor youths, thanks to the virtue of some ancestor (if I may be permitted to suppose such a thing), comes into possession of a large house — never mind whether obtained by trickery, force, lawful inheritance or marriage into a wealthy family. What then? That would be no time for nicety, I fancy. “Take it over!” But if he dislikes the previous owner and therefore hovers timidly outside for fear of being contaminated, he is a weakling. If he flies into a rage and sets fire to the place to preserve his integrity, he is a fool. If he admires the old master but accepts the situation

* Probably referring to America’s shipment of surplus cotton and wheat to China the previous year.

and marches cheerfully into the bedroom to smoke all the opium left, he is clearly even more worthless. This is not what I mean by the policy of "Take-Over!"

A man of this sort must exercise discrimination. If he sees shark's fins, he must not throw them down on the road to show his affinity to the man in the street. If they are nourishing, he can share them with his friends like turnips or cabbage, but he need not keep them for banquets. If he sees opium, he must not throw it publicly into a cesspool to show what an out-and-out revolutionary he is. He should send it to a pharmacy for use as medicine, not try to trick people by announcing a bogus clearance sale. If there are opium pipes and opium lamps, though they are different from those in India, Persia and Arabia and so distinctively Chinese that if taken round the world men would stare at them, it seems to me that apart from giving a few to some museums he might as well destroy the rest. And as for all the concubines, he might as well send them away. Otherwise the "Take-Over" policy might prove dangerous.

In brief, we must take things over. We must use them, put them by, or destroy them. Only so can the master be a new master and the house a new house. But we must first be serious, brave, discriminating and unselfish. Without taking things over, we cannot become new men. Without this, art and literature can have no renaissance.

June 4, 1934

TOYS

1934 is Children's Year* With this in mind, I often look at the toys produced for children.

The labels on the playthings hanging in the foreign goods emporium beside the road say "Made in France," but I have seen the same goods in Japanese toy shops, only cheaper. The pedlars and stall-holders are all selling balloons which you can blow up, stamped with the words "Entirely Chinese Product," showing that these are made in China. But the balloons with which Japanese children are playing have the same mark. Maybe those are some they made.

In the big stores there are toy weapons: officers' swords, machine-guns, tanks. . . . But we seldom see even rich children playing with these. In the parks the foreign children scoop up a cylinder of sand and stick two twigs into it parallel with the ground — quite obviously an armoured car with guns. But the Chinese children with their pale, thin faces skulk behind their parents to watch with timid, startled eyes, dressed in their extremely gentlemanly long gowns.

In China we have many playthings for grown-ups: concubines, opium pipes, mahjong sets, decadent songs, séances, Buddhist masses and so many others that we have no time to think about our children. So though this is Children's Year and though the year before last we went through fighting, we have made the children no

* In October 1933, the China Kindness to Children Society asked the Kuomintang municipal authorities in Shanghai to declare 1934 a Children's Year.

toys to remember that by — everything is still copied from abroad. It is easy to guess what things will be like next year, which is not Children's Year.

But the men from north of the river have a gift for making toys. They take two bits of bamboo of different lengths, paint them red and green, and fasten them together with a spring inside and a lever beside it, so that when you turn the lever it rattles. This is a machine-gun, the only new Chinese toy. I bought one on the edge of the International Settlement, and walked along with my son rattling it. Most of the cultured Westerners and conquering Japanese who saw us threw us a supercilious or pitying smile.

But we walked along rattling our toy, not in the least abashed, because this was a Chinese invention. Ever since the year before last, men from north of the river have been generally abused,* as if this were the only way to prove the speaker's own integrity. Now silence reigns, however. That integrity is dissipated, dispersed. And the men from north of the river have invented this crude machine-gun, to pit their strong self-confidence and simple talent against more civilized playthings. To my mind they are more commendable than those who buy the latest weapons from abroad. Though perhaps for this statement I shall receive more supercilious and pitying smiles.

June 11, 1934

* In 1932, when the Japanese occupied Zhabei in Shanghai, they made a band of Chinese spy and loot for them. The two chief traitors were from the northern part of Jiangsu Province

SNACKS

At present in the publishing world there are more periodicals than books, which worries the thoughtful; there is more chit-chat than long works, which also worries the thoughtful. Truly, those who are thoughtful must be bowed down by care.

This has long been so, actually, only now some slight changes have made it more apparent.

Shanghaianders have always been fond of snacks. If you listen carefully, you can always hear snack-vendors calling their wares in the street: cakes of cassia petals and sugar, gruel of lotus seeds, sugar and lard, dumplings stuffed with prawns and pork, bananas, mangoes, Siamese oranges, "King" melon seeds, candied fruit, olives and so on. Provided your appetite is good, you can eat from morning till midnight. If your appetite is not good, never mind, for these are not great dishes of fish or pork: each portion is very small. Snacks serve, it is said, not only for whiling away the time but for nourishment too, and besides they taste delicious.

Certain publications a few years ago were snacks "to nourish the soul," called "guides," "outlines" or the "ABC" of this or that. They were slender volumes anyway, and by an expenditure of a few dozen cents and half an hour you could understand a science, the whole of literature or some foreign language. The idea is: If you eat one packet of spiced melon seeds, it will nourish you and make you grow as well as five years of food. When this is tried for a few years and fails to work, it is very discouraging. Any experiment which

fails is discouraging. For instance, the fact that nowadays few men try to become immortals or discover the philosopher's stone, but instead bathe in hot springs or buy lottery tickets, is the result of unsuccessful experiments. Then less is said about "prolonging life" and more attention is paid to what is "delicious." Of course, snacks will always be snacks. Not till death will the Shanghailanders part with their snacks.

So chit-chat appears, but this is no novelty either. Even when Laojiuzhang* was doing good business, we had books like *The Compendium of Anecdotes and Tales*,** whole casefuls of snacks. Since Laojiuzhang has closed down, naturally these have also dwindled to almost nothing. But now that there is less in quantity, why is there such a to-do, such a stir all over the city? I suppose it is because the vendors have put up neon-light advertisements in ancient pictographs or romanized characters.

Though these are still snacks, however, the reactions of Shanghailanders seem sharper than ever, which accounts for all the to-do. But perhaps this is because they are suffering from nerves. If that is the case, the future of these snacks is problematic after all.

June 11, 1934

* Shanghai's oldest silk shop, established in 1860. In February 1934, business was so bad that the firm closed down.

** A selection made from writings from the Tang to the Qing Dynasty.

NOW IS THE TIME

“The pheasant is on the mountain· now is the time!”*
There is a time for all things.

The Bible and the Buddhist sutras have been jeered at for over ten years, but “I know that now I am right where before I was wrong,”** now is the time for their resuscitation. Lord Guan*** and General Yue† were gods repeatedly honoured with titles during the Qing Dynasty, but forgotten after the 1911 Revolution, they were remembered again towards the last years of Yuan Shikai, only to be buried together with Yuan Shikai; and now they are being remembered a second time.

Now is the time, of course, to respect the classical language, quote the classics, display your culture and read ancient books.

If a man comes from a poor family, even if storms rage outside he will push ahead and struggle hard, for since he has no comfortable nest to which to return he has to press forward. If he makes a fortune he may have a family genealogy written, a family temple built and put on airs like the son of an ancient house — but all that will happen later. If he comes from an ancient house, he may leave home to satisfy his ambition or curiosity, to be in the fashion or to make a living; but the least success or failure makes him shrink back at

* A quotation from *The Analects* of Confucius.

** A quotation from the poet Tao Yuanming.

*** Guan Yu, a famous general of the Three Kingdoms Period.

† Yue Fei, a famous Song Dynasty general.

once. Moreover he shrinks back so far that he returns home, and — worst of all — his home is an ancient, mouldering mansion.

There are old things in the storeroom of this mansion and dust in the corners, too much to be cleared in one day. If he has leisure to sit down and eat, he may look around, repair the old books, clean the antique vases, read the family record and recall his ancestors' virtue to while away the time. If he is desperately poor, he will feel even more compulsion to repair the old books, clean the antique vases, read the family record and recall his ancestors' virtue, even digging up rubbish at the foot of the wall and opening empty drawers in the hope of finding some treasure of which he knows nothing, to save himself from poverty against which he is powerless. These two types of men, the well-to-do and the poor, are different. Their leisure and desperation are different, their endings are different too. During this period, however, they are both living among antiques, hence their proposals and actions appear the same and they seem quite a mighty force.

So some young people are influenced into thinking that salvation can really be found amid antiques. Observing the leisure of the well-to-do and the single-mindedness of the desperate, they feel there must be something in this. It is natural that some people copy them. But time is utterly relentless, they achieve nothing in the end: the desperate hope against hope, while the well-to-do amuse themselves. If an advocate has no understanding or purpose, whether he says that antiques should be worshipped on the altar or thrown into the latrine, he is simply deceiving others and himself for a time. Earlier examples of this can be seen everywhere.

June 23, 1934

IMPRACTICAL ADVICE AND SCEPTICISM

China's simple souls — unlettered, low-class people — have always been afraid of attracting attention. If for no reason you inquire their age, views, number of brothers or family circumstances, after a mumbled reply they will make off. Learned personages take umbrage at this. But the trait is hard to change, being founded on experience.

If you attract attention, unless you take great care you are sure to get into trouble. Thus China has had its reforms, and children no longer learn how Meng Zong wept over the bamboo or Wang Xiang lay on ice.* But a brand-new Children's Year has cropped up suddenly,** and patriotic gentlemen are sparing no pains to instruct their "little friends" in print and by the spoken word. One urges them to work hard, and reminds them of the indomitable scholars of old who studied by the light of glow-worms or made a hole in the wall to borrow a neighbour's light. Another exhorts them to be patriotic, like the young hero in his teens who broke through a cordon to fetch reinforcements, or the boy of fourteen who slew an enemy. These stories are not bad for whil-

* Allusions to two 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.

** See footnote on p. 54 above

ing away the time, but anyone who believes them and acts accordingly will become a fledgeling Don Quixote. Think how difficult it is to catch enough glow-worms every day to be able to read small type! But this is simply difficult, whereas making a hole in the wall is much more serious. No matter where you are you will be scolded, and your parents will have to apologize at once and pay for the repairs.

Fetching reinforcements or slaying the enemy are even more serious matters, which are dealt with abroad by men in their thirties or forties. The chief business of children there is to eat, play, learn to read and master a little essential general knowledge. We have an exceptionally high opinion of our Chinese children, which of course is all to the good, but this being the case we often set them extremely difficult tasks like sword-throwing, which are only possible to those who have been up Mount Wudang* and found a teacher from whom to learn the Way. In the twentieth century the submarines and aeroplanes of which the ancients dreamed have been made on earth. But the examples given in old books like *Long Wen Bian Ying* and *You Xue Qiong Lin*** are still rather hard to copy. To my mind, even those who preach them don't believe in them.

And therefore those who hear them don't believe in them either. For over a thousand years we have been hearing of miraculous swordsmen, but last year three men only — a mere hundred millionth of our population — climbed Mount Wudang. So this is clear. There may have been more in ancient times, but now that we have experience and are sceptical few men act on such advice — or so I imagine.

When there is a great deal of irresponsible teaching which cannot be carried out, few have faith in it; when

* A centre of Taoist teaching in Hubei. It figures in many old novels as the place where skilled swordsmen were trained.

** Two collections of historical allusions compiled for children.

there is a great deal of harmful advice, even fewer have faith in it. "Don't you believe it!" is the moat dug by simple souls to guard against dangers from without. It is also the bane which makes them scatter like sand. But this trait is not confined to simple souls. There cannot be many even among the literati who believe in themselves and in their fellow men. Thus they honour Confucius and at the same time worship the Living Buddhas, like a man who buys many different stocks and shares or deposits his money in different banks, having no faith in any single one.

July 1, 1934

THE REAL NATURE OF THE “RADICALS”

Nowadays if you dub a man's views “lofty” he may object, but apparently it is quite safe to call them “radical” or “thoroughly progressive”

Now is the time when “radical, thoroughly progressive” views have ousted “lofty” ones.

Literature and art have their specific audience. Thus literature is written for those who can read, and as the standard of reading varies some works must be deeper than others. As for using ordinary language and clear modes of expression, this is naturally required of writers. But now a “radical” steps forward to say: Look at all the illiteracy in China — what are you going to do about that? This is a knock-out blow for men of letters. All they can do is keep silent.

But they can call up reinforcements to argue it out. As illiterates are beyond the influence of literature, we can ask artists, actors and script-writers to show them things outside the realm of literature. But this will not stop the mouth of the “radical.” Some illiterates are colour-blind and completely blind, he says. What about them? This is a knock-out blow for artists too. All they can do is keep silent again.

In a desperate rear-guard action we may say that as far as the blind are concerned, we can give them talks, sing to them or tell them stories. This sounds reasonable enough. But then the “radical” asks: Have you forgotten all the deaf in China?

Another knock-out blow Silence! We are all silenced
Then the "radical" reaches the conclusion: All modern
literature and art are useless A thoroughgoing revolu-
tion is needed!

After stating this conclusion he disappears. Who is
going to carry out the thoroughgoing revolution? The
writers and artists, of course But as most of them are
not so "radical," China will never have a "radically"
good literature and art suitable for illiterates, the colour-
blind, the blind and the deaf.

From time to time, however, the "radical" pops up to
criticize writers and artists again.

If the followers of the arts do not know how to tear
the mask from the faces of such eminent figures when
they meet them, instead of making progress our art and
literature can only dwindle until at last they die out.
Serious-minded writers and artists must recognize the
real nature of these "radicals."

July 8, 1934

THE WORLD OF CICADAS

Most Chinese scholars believe that all learning issues out of the mouths of sages or at any rate of scholars. The common people, they say, had nothing to do with the discovery and use of fire, and herbs, which are both attributed to the ancient sage kings, Sui Ren and Shen Nong. So it is not in the least amazing if someone thinks: "How amazing to have every kind of knowledge proceeding from the mouths of beasts!"*

Moreover in China this knowledge "from the mouths of beasts" is often not true knowledge. The weather is fearfully hot, all doors and windows are open, and the families who own wireless sets turn them towards the street "to share their pleasure with the people." They shriek and blare on and on. I know nothing of the situation in other countries, but from morning to night all Chinese broadcasting stations play opera — neighing and braying incessantly. Your ears need not rest for a single minute, if you like. At the same time electric fans are on, and ices are served. This not only is a far cry from the news that "the river is in flood" or "drought is a certainty," but it is a completely different world from that outside the window where men sweat and struggle all day to make a living.

In the middle of all the long-drawn, high-pitched blaring and shrieking, I suddenly remembered that famous fable by La Fontaine, "The Cicada and the Ant." On a blazing hot summer day just like this, an ant was toil-

* A criticism levelled by Wang Maozu, a middle-school master in Suzhou, against the use of fables in a school textbook.

ing as hard as it could on the ground while a cicada sang at the top of its voice on a branch, and sneered at the ant's vulgarity. Then the autumn wind came and each day became chillier than the last. The cicada who had no food or clothing became a little beggar, and was lectured by the ant who had made its preparations in good time. This was told me by my teacher when I was "receiving an education" in primary school. It must have made a deep impression on me, for even today I still remember it.

But although I remember it, the experience that "graduation means unemployment"* has made my view very different from that of the ant. Very soon the autumn wind will be here, and naturally it will grow colder day by day, but I suspect that the ones to go without food and clothing will be those who are sweating today. All round the Western-style houses will be still, but just because windows and doors will be tightly closed and the strains of the wireless will linger beside the warm stove. If we try to imagine the scene, no doubt it will still be the same shrieking and blaring music.

Is it not true that knowledge "from the mouth of beasts" is often inapplicable to China?

China has its own sages and scholars. "Those who work with their brain are rulers, those who work with their brawn are ruled. Those who are ruled feed others, and those who rule feed off others"*** — how simply and explicitly this is put! If the teacher had taught me this long ago, I could have avoided the sentiments outlined above and saved much paper and ink. This is another excellent proof of the need for Chinese to read the Chinese classics.

July 8, 1934

* The graduates from Chinese schools and colleges were finding it very hard to get jobs at the time.

** A quotation from *Mencius*.

IN MEMORY OF WEI SUYUAN

I have some memories, but fragmentary in the extreme. They remind me of the fish-scales scraped off by a knife, some of which stick to the fish while others fall into the water. When the water is stirred, a few scales may swirl up, glimmering, but they are streaked with blood, and even to me they seem likely to spoil the enjoyment of connoisseurs.

Now a few friends want to commemorate Wei Suyuan and have asked me to say a few words too. Yes, this is my duty. So I shall have to stir up the water around me to see what may float up.

One day, it must have been more than ten years ago when I was a lecturer in Beijing University, in the staff room I met a young man with fearfully long hair and a long beard—Li Jiye. I believe it was Li Jiye who introduced me to Wei Suyuan, but I can no longer remember the circumstances. All I recollect is that he was already sitting in a small hotel room planning publications.

That small room was the office of the Weiming Press.

In those days I was editing two pocket editions: The Wuhe Library which consisted of original writings only, and the Weiming Library which consisted of translations only. Both were printed by the Beixin Publishing House. Then, just as now, neither the publishers nor the readers liked translations; hence the second library was not doing so well. As it happened, Wei Suyuan and his friends were eager to introduce foreign literature to

China, and when they negotiated with Li Xiaofeng to make the Weiming Library independent of the publishing house to be run by a few of them, Li readily agreed. So this library broke away from Beixin Publishing House. We supplied the manuscripts ourselves, then funds for the printing were collected and the work got underway. As this library was called Weiming,* our press took the same name. It did not mean that we had no name, however, but simply that the name was not yet fixed, just as in the case of a boy who has not reached manhood.

The members of the Weiming Press had no high ambitions but shared the desire to do some honest work, bit by bit and step by step. And the key man was Suyuan.

So he took to sitting in this small ramshackle room which was the office of the Weiming Press. Of course, this was due in part to his poor health, which prevented him from attending college and naturally made him the one to hold the fort.

My earliest recollection of him is in this shabby fort, a short, thin, shrewd and serious-looking lad, with a few rows of dog-eared foreign books under the window, proving his devotion to literature despite his poverty. But at the same time he made a bad impression on me, and I felt it would be very difficult to make friends with him because he seldom smiled. This was a characteristic of all members of this press, but in Suyuan it was so marked that it struck you at once. Later I found out that I had misjudged him; it was not difficult to make friends with him. His reluctance to smile probably arose out of the difference in our age and was a sign of special respect for me — what a pity that I could not grow young again to prove that I was able to bridge the

* Literally "not named"

gap between us! I fancy Li Jiye and the others realized the truth

But by the time I realized my mistake, I had discovered his fatal weakness: he took life too seriously. Calm as he looked, he was very passionate. Can taking life seriously prove fatal? It could then, at least, and now. When a man is serious he easily grows passionate, and if this trend goes unchecked it may cost him his life, though if he remains quiet he will break his heart

Here is a small example — all we have are small examples

At that time I had already fled to Xiamen to escape persecution by Premier Duan Qirui and his stooges, but the bullies were still riding roughshod over Beijing. Lin Suyuan, one of Duan's clique and president of the Women's Normal College, used troops to seize the college, and after a display of military might accused several teachers who had stayed there of being "Communists." This epithet has always helped certain people to "do their job" and the method is an old one, nothing to occasion surprise. Yet Wei Suyuan seems to have grown heated. After this, for some time in his letters to me, he was too disgusted to use his own name* and changed it to Souyuan. At the same time there were clashes inside the press. Gao Changhong wrote from Shanghai accusing Suyuan of suppressing an article by Xiang Peiliang and urging me to interfere. I said nothing. Then Gao started printing abuse in the *Tempest*, first abusing Suyuan, then me. I thought it extremely funny that, when Suyuan suppressed Xiang's article in Beijing, Gao should express indignation in Shanghai and want me in Xiamen to take sides. Someone always starts trouble inside an organization, even though it is just a small

* Because the characters Suyuan is his name were the same as those in the name of Lin Suyuan, whom he detested.

literary one, when there is pressure from without this is nothing unusual either. Yet Suyuan took it very seriously, not only writing me a full explanation, but also writing to clear himself in some magazine. But who else had any say in the court presided over by those "geniuses"? I could not help sighing to think of Suyuan, only a man of letters and ill into the bargain, who yet strove so hard to cope with troubles from both within and without. How long could he stick it out? Of course, these were only minor troubles, yet grave enough for one so serious and passionate.

Before long, the Weiming Press was closed down and several of its members were arrested. Suyuan was not one of these — perhaps because he had already coughed blood and was in hospital. Later on those arrested were released, however, and the Weiming Press could open again. This game of sudden closing, sudden opening, sudden arrests and sudden releases, is one which even now still baffles me.

The next year when I went to Guangzhou — that was in the early autumn of 1927 — I continued to receive a few letters from him, letters written in bed in a sanatorium in the Western Hills because the doctors would not let him get up. He expressed himself more precisely and his ideas were clearer and wider in scope, but this made me worry more about his illness. One day I received a book out of the blue, a cloth-bound edition of his translation of Gogol's *The Greatcoat*. When I saw what it was, I shivered: he was obviously sending me a memento — did he already sense that his end was near?

I could hardly bear to read this book, yet read it I must.

And this made me remember how one day, when a good friend of his who was also coughing blood did this in his presence, Suyuan, in panic, charged him in a loving,

anxious voice, "Don't do that!" And then I remembered Ibsen's Brand who ordered the dead to rise again but, not having divine power, ended up by being buried under an avalanche . . .

I seemed to see Suyuan and Brand in the air, but I had nothing to say.

Towards the end of May 1929, most fortunately I was able to go to the sanatorium in the Western Hills and have a chat with Suyuan. His skin was bronzed by sun-bathing and he was in good spirits. His friends and I were pleased. But there was some sadness in my pleasure too, for suddenly I remembered that his fiancée had become engaged to another man with his consent. Suddenly I doubted whether he would even be able to carry out his modest wish to introduce more foreign literature to China. Then I wondered if he was lying there waiting to be cured or waiting to die. Then I asked myself why he had sent me that well-bound copy of his translation. . . .

On the wall hung a large portrait of Dostoyevsky. I respect and admire this author, but I hate the callousness of his writing. He prepares spiritual tortures and drags poor wretches in one by one for us to watch their agony. Now his gloomy eyes were fixed on Suyuan and his couch, as if to tell me: Here is another poor wretch for me to write about.

Of course, these were merely minor misfortunes, but for Suyuan they were fairly serious.

At half past five on the morning of August 1, 1932, Suyuan died in the Tongren Hospital in Beijing, and all his plans and hopes came to nothing. I am sorry that to avoid trouble I had burned his letters. My only memento of him is his translation, which is always by my side.

Two years have passed since his death, during which time nothing has been said about him in the literary world. This is not strange, for he was no genius or hero. In life he lived quietly, in death he naturally vanished quietly too. But for us he is a young man worth remembering, for he quietly supported the Weiming Press.

Now the Weiming Press has virtually disappeared, after what was also only a short existence. But while Suyuan was running it they introduced works by Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Andreyev, van Eeden, Ehrenburg's *The Tobacco Pouch* and Lavrenev's *The Forty-first*, besides publishing new writings including Wei Congwu's *Junshan*, Tai Jingnong's *Sons of the Earth* and *Builders of the Pagoda*, and my *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*. These were works relatively worth reading in those days. Meanwhile history has not spared those petty-minded cynics: though not many years have passed they have all disappeared, while the translations of the Weiming Press have not yet withered in our garden of literature.

True, but Suyuan was no genius or hero, much less the pinnacle of some high monument or the finest flower of some famous garden. Still, he was a stone under the monument, a clod of earth in the garden, and China first needs many more of his kind. He is beneath the notice of connoisseurs, but builders and gardeners would certainly not spurn him.

A writer's misfortune is not so much being attacked or ignored in his lifetime: what is really tragic is if, once he is dead, his words and actions forgotten, fools pretend to be his friends and say this and that to make a name or money for themselves, using a corpse as their ladder to profit and fame. Now I have written a few thousand words to commemorate Suyuan whom I knew well, and I trust I am without any selfish motive. This is all I have to say.

I do not know whether I shall have another occasion to commemorate him. Should this be the only time, then, Suyuan, farewell!

The night of July 16, 1934

SETTLING OLD SCORES

There are certain learned men whose faces light up whenever they speak of Qing Dynasty scholarship, which they affirm surpassed that of all earlier ages. And they certainly produce plenty of evidence. many great tomes of commentaries on the classics and advanced philological studies. Although there were no great historians, numerous scholars carried out historical research, while their textual criticism in particular has enabled us to understand old works which were closed books to scholars of the Song and Ming dynasties . . .

I rather hesitate to settle old scores after all this time, for fear these heroes may label me a Jew, which I am not. But whenever I hear learned men hold forth on Qing Dynasty scholarship, I cannot help thinking of the "Ten Days at Yangzhou" and the "Three Massacres of Jiading"*. Though these small matters are hardly worth mentioning, was the loss of the whole country and a full two hundred and fifty years of slavery a good or a bad exchange for a few glorious pages in the history of scholarship?

Unfortunately I am no mathematician, so I have never worked this out. My own feeling, however, is that we got the worst of the bargain and lost more than by using the "Boxer" Indemnity Fund to support a mere handful of scholars**

* Referring to the massacres of the people by the Qing troops in 1645.

** After the Yi He Tuan Movement of 1900, eight foreign powers banded together to invade China and forced the Qing

But no doubt this is simply the vulgar view. Learned men look beyond profit and loss. And yet, though this is so, they seem to make some difference between profit and loss, great and small. Nothing is greater than veneration for Confucius, nothing more vital than upholding Confucianism, it does not matter to what new dynasty you bow, as long as it venerates Confucius and upholds Confucianism. And for the new dynasty this is called: "Try to win the hearts of the Chinese people"*

And a really thorough job has been done on the hearts of some of the Chinese people. War, plague, flood and drought, typhoons and locusts are the price for the fine show put up by restoring the temples of Confucius, rebuilding the Leifeng Pagoda, forbidding men and women to walk side by side, and printing rare books of the Imperial Library**

I know, of course, that calamities are merely temporary, and if they are not recorded a year from now no one will so much as mention them, whereas our glorious tradition is immortal. But somehow or other, though I am not a Jew, I always like to weigh the profit and loss and wish others would work out the cost of this bill which is never mentioned. Indeed, this is the time for it

July 17, 1934

government to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels of silver. Later this sum was reduced and in 1930 part of it was set aside for the "Boxer" Indemnity Fund, used to send Chinese students to England for study.

* Referring to a remark made by Hu Shi

** In 1934, the Kuomintang allocated substantial funds for the restoration of Confucian temples in Shandong and Wuxing. At the same time a Buddhist society raised money to rebuild the Leifeng Pagoda. A commissioner in Guangzhou tried to forbid men and women from walking together in the street, and the Ministry of Education started reprinting certain rare books of the Imperial Library.

IN MEMORY OF LIU BANNONG*

Xiaofeng set me this subject.

There is nothing preposterous about this either I should mourn Bannong's death, because he was an old friend of mine. But that was over ten years ago — what he was recently it is hard to say.

I forget how I first met him, or how he came to Beijing. He probably came after contributing to *New Youth*, invited by Mr. Cai Yuanpei** or Mr. Chen Duxiu*** and later, of course, he was one of *New Youth's* warriors. He was high-spirited and bold, and fought a number of great battles. For instance, the answer to Wang Jingxuan's factitious letter† and the creation of the Chinese characters for "she" and "it"†† were his work. Naturally these things seem trivial today; but that was over ten years ago, when if you so much as advocated the new punctuation many people behaved "as if their parents had died" and longed "to eat your flesh and sleep on your

* 1891-1934

** (1867-1940), a scholar and revolutionary at the end of the Qing Dynasty, who held the posts of Minister of Education and President of Beijing University under the Republic.

*** (1879-1942), then professor of Beijing University and editor of *New Youth*

† In 1919, to launch a discussion on revolutionary literature Qian Xuantong, under the pen-name Wang Jingxuan, wrote a letter to *New Youth* attacking the vernacular literature and advocating the use of the classical language and forms. Liu Bannong refuted his arguments.

†† Classical Chinese had one character 他 for "he," "she" and "it." Liu proposed using 她 for the feminine gender and 它 for the neuter.

skin." So these were in fact great battles. Nowadays very few young folk of twenty or thereabouts know what happened thirty years ago and that you could be imprisoned or decapitated simply for cutting off your queue. But that was the truth.

Still Bannong's high spirits sometimes bordered on carelessness, and occasionally his boldness lacked direction. But when you wanted to plan an attack on the enemy, he was a good comrade-in-arms; and during the campaign he was always honest and never stabbed you in the back. If he failed, that was owing to miscalculation.

Before each number of *New Youth* came out there was an editorial meeting to discuss the contents. At that time I was most struck by Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi. If you compare strategy to an arsenal, Mr. Chen had a large banner outside his bearing the bold inscription: "Weapons inside! Look out!" But the gate was open, and you could see at a glance the number of guns and bayonets — there was no need for special vigilance. Mr. Hu kept his gate tightly closed and posted a small notice on it, saying, "No weapons here, I assure you!" Of course, that may have been true, but some people — those like myself, at least — sometimes could not help tilting our heads in thought. Because Bannong gave the impression of having no arsenal, whereas I respected Chen and Hu I felt drawn to Bannong.

By that I mean simply that I talked to him more, and more talk revealed his weaknesses. For a year at least he could not rid himself of the romantic notion, brought from Shanghai, that a talented scholar must have "a lovely girl with red sleeves to tend his incense while he reads at night." It was hard for us to scold him out of this. But apparently he talked wildly wherever he went, so that certain "scholars" raised their eyebrows. Sometimes even *New Youth* turned his manuscripts down. He was never afraid to write; yet if you look through back numbers of various journals, quite a few appeared with

nothing of his. The general criticism of him was: Shallow.

Quite right, Bannong was shallow. But he was shallow like a brook which is so limpid that you can see its bed. No amount of sediment or decaying grass can hide the transparency of the whole. If it were full of mud, you could not see its depth, and a muddy chasm is much worse than a shallow one.

But these covert criticisms must have wounded Bannong. I suspect they were largely responsible for his going to France to study. I am a poor correspondent, and from this time on we gradually drifted apart. It was not till he came back that I heard he had been copying old books abroad. When later he punctuated *He Dian*,* still thinking of him as an old friend, I made a few frank comments in my preface. I heard afterwards that he took offence, but "what's said can never be unsaid" — it was too late. On another occasion there was a little unpleasantness in connection with the *Tatler*** Five or six years ago, when we met at a banquet in Shanghai, we had virtually nothing left to say to each other.

During the last few years, Bannong rose by degrees in the world and by degrees I forgot him. But when I read in the papers that he had prohibited the use of "miss"*** and other such items of news, this irritated me immensely. What business had Bannong to waste time on such matters? Last year when I saw him constantly writing frivolous verse and dabbling in classical Chinese, and remembered our former friendship I often sighed.

* A satirical novel first published in 1878.

** In 1928, the *Tatler* published an article by Liu Bannong containing certain factual errors. A letter from a reader pointing out these mistakes was subsequently printed, to Liu's annoyance.

*** In 1930, when Liu was dean of a women's college, he forbade the students to call each other "miss." He denounced this as "slavish," and advised them to use Chinese forms of address.

I thought, if we were to meet, and I still treated him as an old friend instead of simply laughing and saying, "Nice weather . . ." we might even quarrel.

But I was still touched by Bannong's loyalty to his friends. The year before last I went to Beiping, and later someone told me that Bannong had meant to come and see me, only someone frightened him away. That made me thoroughly ashamed, because after reaching Beiping I had no intention of calling on Bannong.

Now he is dead, and my feeling for him is the same as during his lifetime. I love the Bannong of ten years ago and hate his last few years. This hatred is a friend's hatred, for I always wanted him to remain the Bannong of ten years ago. Even if he was a "shallow" warrior, so much the better for China. I wish I could light up his achievements in battle with the fire of my indignation, to prevent those goblins from dragging his past glory together with his corpse into their quagmire.

August 1, 1934

NOTES AFTER READING (I)

Gorky marvels at Balzac's skill in handling dialogue, for without any description of his characters' appearance he conjures them up before the readers by their conversation (See "My Literary Apprenticeship" in the August number of *Literature*.)

Novelists of this calibre have not yet appeared in China, though there are passages in *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *A Dream of Red Mansions* which enable readers to visualize the characters from their talk. Actually there is nothing miraculous about this, as anyone who rents one of those small apartments in a Shanghai side-street knows from his own experience. You may never have set eyes on your neighbours, but if you are separated by a flimsy partition only, you can hear practically everything they and their visitors say, especially if they talk loudly; and as time goes by you know who live there and have a fair idea of what they are like.

If you cut out all extraneous matter and simply select what is distinctive in each one's conversation, I am sure others could guess their character from their talk. I am not saying, mind you, that this would make you the Balzac of China.

When a writer builds up a character through dialogue, he almost certainly has his own mental picture of the man, which he passes on to his readers till they form a similar picture in their minds. But the readers' picture may not be the same as the author's. A thin, pale old man whom Balzac imagines with a small goatee may become a sturdy, heavily bearded fellow to Gorky. There

is bound to be a general similarity, however, in character, speech and behaviour, just as when a French work is translated into Russian. Otherwise literature would have no universal qualities.

But though literature has its universal qualities, it varies with the understanding of the readers; and if they lack understanding of the situations described, it loses its effectiveness. For instance if we read *A Dream of Red Mansions* and want to form a picture from the text of Lin Daiyu, we must first erase the impression made on us by the photograph of Dr Mei Lanfang in the opera *Lin Daiyu Buries the Flowers*. If we then imagine another Lin Daiyu, she will probably be a slim and solitary modern young woman with bobbed hair and a gown of Indian silk, or some other type — I cannot determine which. But she is bound to be quite different from the pictures published between thirty and forty years ago in *Illustrations for "A Dream of Red Mansions."* The heroine pictured there was the Lin Daiyu in the heart of readers at that time.

Literature has its limitations as well as its universal qualities. And some relatively lasting works change according to the readers' experience of life. The Eskimoes in the Polar regions and the Negroes in the heart of Africa cannot, I am certain, understand the "Lin Daiyu type." And the citizens of a healthy and rational society will not be able to understand her either. They will probably feel further removed from her in time than we do when we hear of the burning of the books by the First Emperor of Qin or Huang Chao's* massacres. Anything subject to change is not everlasting. Only dreamers, talking in their sleep, can claim that literature alone is immortal.

August 6, 1934

* Leader of a peasant revolt at the end of the ninth century. Massacres were wrongly attributed to him by official historians.

NOTES AFTER READING (2)

Even men of the same age and the same country do not always speak the same language.

Barbusse has written a most interesting story called *French and Foreign Languages*. The story tells of a rich family in France which entertains three soldiers who have risked death in the Great War. The young lady of the house comes out to greet them but finds nothing to say, and when by a great effort she makes a few remarks they have nothing to answer, in fact they are on tenterhooks sitting in this luxurious room. It is not till they slip back to their "pigsty" that they relax completely and can laugh and chat. And using sign language with some German prisoners of war, they find that these others talk the same language.

Because of this experience one soldier thinks hazily, "In this world there are two worlds. One is the world of war. The other is a world with doors that shut like safes, kitchens as clean as churches, and beautiful rooms. That is a completely different world. A different country. The people who live there are foreigners with strange ideas."

And the young lady later tells a gentleman, "One can't even talk to them. It's as if there were an impassable chasm between us."

Actually this is so not only with young ladies and soldiers. We — whether "feudal remnants," "compradors" or whatever you please* — often find nothing to

* Referring to remarks of bourgeois scholars in attacking Lu Xun.

say to others virtually the same as ourselves if we have any differences of opinion yet have to speak from the heart. We Chinese are a clever people, however, and some of our forbears long ago discovered a universal remedy, which is. "Today's weather . . . ha, ha, ha!" And during feasts we play finger-games to avoid starting any argument.

It therefore seems rather difficult for literature to be both universal and immortal. The remark "Today's weather . . . ha, ha, ha!" though quite universal, is by no means assured of immortality, and in any case it is not much like literature. So a superior writer has made a rule that all those who do not understand his "literature" must be excluded from "humanity" to ensure that his "literature" will remain universal. Since he is unwilling to disclose what other qualities literature should possess, he has to resort to this means. In such a case, however, though "literature" may live on, not much "humanity" is left.

So they say that the finer literature is, the less appreciated it is; when it reaches the peak of perfection its universality and immortality are embodied in its author alone. But then the writer becomes so cast down again that he spits blood, and this is too bad!

August 6, 1934

THOUGHTS ON A CHILD'S PHOTOGRAPHS

I was childless for so long that it was said this was retribution for my evil ways — my line would die out. When my landlady was annoyed with me she forbade her children to come to my room to play. "Leave him alone!" she ordered them. "Kill him with coldness!" But now I have a son, though whether or not we shall manage to bring him up remains to be seen. Still he can already talk a good deal and air his views. It was better, though, when he couldn't, for now that he talks I feel he is my enemy.

Sometimes he is most dissatisfied with me. He once told me to my face, "I shall be a better father than you. . . ." He even borders on the "reactionary," for on one occasion he reprimanded me sharply, "What sort of father are you!?"

I do not believe him. A son always claims that he will be a good father, but by the time he has a son himself he has forgotten his earlier resolution completely. Besides, I fancy I am not a bad father, for though I sometimes scold or even spank my son, I love him. That is why he is healthy, high-spirited and mischievous, and has not been crushed into a moron. If I were really hopeless as a father, would he dare make this reactionary declaration to my face?

Sometimes, however, his health and high spirits get him into trouble. Since the September 18th Incident,* certain compatriots have mistaken him for a Japanese child, sworn at him several times and once hit him — not hard to be sure. Here I must add a remark which is neither pleasant to make nor pleasant to hear. For the last year or more, nothing of the sort has occurred.

It is actually very difficult to distinguish Chinese from Japanese children if they both wear foreign clothes. But some people here have a quick, fallacious method of identifying them: The well-behaved, quiet children who keep rather still are Chinese; the sturdy, lively, fearless ones who leap about and shout are Japanese.

But oddly enough, when I had him photographed in a Japanese studio, his face wore a mischievous expression just like a Japanese boy. When I had him photographed in a Chinese studio, in much the same costume, he wore a smug, submissive expression — a genuine Chinese child.

That set me thinking.

The main reason for the difference was the photographers. The photographers of the two countries have different ways of posing their subject. Once he is standing or sitting ready, they watch intently to take a picture at what they think the best instant. The expression of a child in front of the camera is always changing: now lively, now mischievous, now submissive, now smug, now peevish, now nervous, now fearless, now tired . . . The picture of the Chinese child was taken in that instant of smug submission, the one looking like a Japanese in the instant of lively mischief.

Submission is not a bad quality. On the other hand to submit to everything is not good either, and may

* On September 18, 1931, the Japanese forces launched a surprise attack on Shenyang and later seized China's northeastern provinces.

show utter worthlessness. "Father" and the elder generation have to be obeyed, but their orders must be reasonable ones. Rather than a child who thinks himself inferior to others in every way and bows and cringes, or one whose face is wreathed in smiles when all the time he is planning to shoot you in the dark, give me the frank abuse. "Who the devil are *you*?" I hope he will be something of a devil himself.

But most Chinese seize the chance to develop towards submission — to become "quiet." Downcast eyes and prompt, respectful answers make a good child who is dubbed "sweet." High spirits, health, stubbornness, an expanded chest and head carried high — all that is "active" — are bound to make men shake their heads and perhaps even mutter about "foreign ways." Owing to long years of invasion, we hate all "foreign ways." More than that, we deliberately do the reverse ourselves. As the foreigners are active, we make a point of sitting still; as they are scientific, we go in for planchette writing; as they wear short jackets, we wear long gowns, as they pay attention to hygiene, we eat flies; as they are healthy, we keep falling ill. This is the only way to preserve China's ancient culture, show patriotism and avoid being slaves.

Yet as far as I can see these "foreign ways" include a number of virtues which the Chinese originally possessed, but which centuries of oppression have whittled down until we ourselves no longer understand them and have made them over altogether to the foreigners. We must take these back and restore them — naturally after careful selection.

Even if there are good qualities which China did not originally possess, we should learn them too. Even if the teacher is our enemy, we should learn from him. Here I want to speak of Japan, which no one likes to mention. The Japanese imitativeness and lack of inventiveness are despised by many Chinese commentators. But if we look

at Japanese publications or industrial products, which surpassed those of China long ago, we can see that imitative skill is not a weakness. We should learn this skill in imitation. Combined with inventiveness, it is surely even better? Otherwise we shall simply "die in bitterness."

Here let me add what may seem an uncalled-for statement. I am confident that my proposals are not "dictated by the imperialists" to tempt the Chinese into being slaves, whereas all that talk of patriotism and all that support of the national characteristics do not in fact hinder us from becoming slaves.

August 7, 1934

SETTING THE FASHION AND STICKING TO TRADITION

Since Liu Bannong's death not a few periodicals have made the same commotion as they did over the two writers Zhu Xiang and Lu Yin * How long this will go on we cannot say But his death seems to have made a much greater impression than those of the other two he is about to be deified as a sage who stuck to tradition, whose hallowed name can be used to attack those who "set the fashion "**

This attack is a powerful one because he was a celebrity who formerly threw in his lot with the moderns, and to attack the moderns with a modern is like combating poison with poison it is more effective than using rusty antiques But this is where the joke comes in What joke? Why, that Liu Bannong became a celebrity by setting the fashion

Young men of the last generation knew of Liu Bannong not as a phonologist or a writer of doggerel, but as the man who left the duck-and-drake-and-butterfly" school,** debunked Wang Jingxuan and fought in the ranks of the "literary revolution" Some voices were

* Zhu Xiang (1904-33), poet and head of the English Department of Anhui University, drowned himself owing to poverty
Lu Yin (1898-1934), a woman writer, died after a difficult labour

** A phrase used by Lin Yutang in July 1934 to jeer at progressives "Though setting the fashion is important, maintaining standards is equally important"

*** Referring to stories about Shanghai's new "talented scholars and beauties" written after the 1911 Revolution

raised at that time to condemn him for setting this fashion. But as time marches on it seems that progress is made, for by degrees this epithet was forgotten, and after climbing a little and compromising a little he ended as a perfectly respectable celebrity. But "Fame is as fatal to men as stoutness to pigs." Now he is being made up as a prescription to cure new outbreaks of this disease of setting the fashion.

Liu Bannong is by no means the only one to suffer this sad fate. he has many forerunners. There were numerous scholars in Guangzhou yet none attained Kang Youwei's fame, because he took the lead in sending a memorial to the throne and was the chief figure in the 1898 Reformation — he set the fashion. Men who studied in England were no rarity either, but Yan Fu's name is not yet forgotten because he made a serious attempt to translate not a few foreign books — he set the fashion. At the end of the Qing Dynasty Zhang Taiyan was not the only scholar to study the Confucian classics, yet his fame much surpassed that of Sun Yirang because he set the fashion by advocating a national revolution — not only setting the fashion, but even going so far as to "rebel." Later, after they had had their turn, these men became orthodox living sages. But ill luck dogged their steps. Kang Youwei* will be known for ever as the saint of the restoration of the monarchy, Yuan Shikai wanted Yan Fu** to support his ascension to the throne, and Marshal Sun Chuanfang asked Zhang Taiyan to revive the ancient ceremony of *tou hu****. Since they had proved stout fellows in pulling the cart forward with their

* In 1917, Kang Youwei collaborated with Zhang Xun, a Northern warlord, to restore the Qing Dynasty

** Yan Fu, the noted translator, sympathized with Yuan Shikai's monarchical aspirations

*** In 1926, Sun Chuanfang played the ancient game of *tou hu* — pitching arrows into a pot; and Zhang Taiyan was invited to attend.

sturdy arms and legs, they were now asked to pull the cart again, but backwards this time. All we can do is to use the classical lament "Alas, alas! May your spirit come to the sacrifice!"*

I am not jeering at Liu Bannong for setting the fashion, for I use the term in one of its popular senses, as "pioneering." Though he called himself a "decadent," he had once been a fighter, and I hope those who loved and respected him will dwell more on this instead of rushing to drag him into the mud or slime of their choice, using his name as an advertisement.

August 13, 1934

* The last sentence of the funeral address in sacrifices to the dead in the old days, used here to signify that these men were finished.

HOW TO FIND CONTENTMENT IN POVERTY

A man's children have to be taught by others, his illnesses cured by others, even if he is a teacher or doctor himself. But it seems to me the question of how to go through life is one each must decide for himself, for the various prescriptions others give you are often so much waste paper

Since ancient times urging men to find contentment in poverty has been one great way of preserving peace and order; but though many prescriptions have been made out, none is completely effective. Hence new prescriptions are constantly appearing and recently I have seen two, neither of which, however, seems too appropriate.

One is to make men interested in their work. Once you have an interest, no matter what your job, you will work gladly and never tire. Of course there is some truth in this — if the job is a relatively light one. Let us leave miners and dung-carriers on one side, and consider the workers in Shanghai factories who have at the very least a ten-hour day. They must be dead-beat by the evening, for that is the time when most of the accidents happen. We are taught to cultivate "a healthy mind in a healthy body." But if you have no time to look after your body, where is your interest to come from — unless you love interest more than life? If you ask the workers, I fancy they will tell you to shorten

the working day Not in their wildest dreams will they think of this method of cultivating interest

Then there is another, most thoroughgoing prescription In the blazing summer, they say, the rich are so busy with their social engagements that the sweat pours down their backs But the poor spread a tattered matting on the street, take off their clothes and cool themselves in the breeze — how utterly delightful! This is known as “winning the world like rolling up a mat” This is a rare and highly poetic prescription, but a melancholy scene ensues When autumn comes, if you walk along the streets, the men you see clutching their bellies and vomiting a brown fluid are those who enjoyed that heaven on earth and “won the world like rolling up a mat” I fancy few men are such fools as to see a chance of happiness and not take it If poverty were really so delightful, our rich men would be the first to sleep in the street, leaving no place for the poor to spread their mats

The best papers written by high school students during the recent examinations in Shanghai have now been published, and here is an extract from an essay entitled, “Clothes to Keep Out the Cold, Food Enough to Fill the Belly”

If a man cultivates virtue, though he is out at elbows and lacks three square meals a day, his good name will be passed down to posterity If his spiritual life is rich, why should he worry about poor material living? The true test of human life is the former, not the latter

(From the third number of the fortnightly *New Anecdotes*)

This goes further than the title, denying the need to fill the belly But the fine prescription made out by this high school student is not acceptable to university graduates, many of whom are now clamouring for employment

Facts are completely pitiless and will smash all empty talk to smithereens. Despite these illuminating illustrations, in my humble opinion it is high time to put an end to this pedantic twaddle — in any case it will never be of any use.

August 13, 1934

HOW EXTRAORDINARY!

Many things happen in this world which not even a genius could conceive if he did not see them down in black and white. A certain African tribe keeps men and women so strictly apart that a son-in-law must prostrate himself each time he meets his mother-in-law — not only so, he must bury his face in the ground. Though our land is the home of propriety not even our ancients, who would not let boys and girls sit on one mat after the age of seven,* could remotely compare with this.

So it seems our ancients were poor hands after all at segregating the sexes. And the fact that we today can do no better than our ancestors shows that we are even worse. The taboos on men and women bathing, walking, eating and making films together** are simply variations on the theme: "They may not sit on one mat." Worst of all, we have not yet woken up to the fact that men and women breathe the same air — the breath exhaled by a man is inhaled by a woman to the utter confusion of the Male and Female Principles. This is more serious than sea water which merely contaminates the

* *The Book of Rites* says, "At seven, boys and girls may not sit on one mat."

** In 1934, men and women were forbidden to go swimming together in Guangdong. At the same time five rules were proposed for the segregation of the sexes: 1. Men and women must not travel in the same vehicle. 2. They must not eat together in taverns and tea-houses. 3. They must not stay in the same hotel. 4. They must not walk together in the street. 5. They must not make films together, or frequent the same pleasure parks.

skin. Until this momentous problem is solved there can be no clear division between the sexes.

The only solution, I think, is to use "Western methods." Though Western methods are not Chinese, they may be of benefit to our national quintessence. Thus wireless programmes are a new-fangled invention, but it is not bad to hear a monk chanting sutras on the air in the morning. Motor cars are indubitably foreign, but if you go by car to a mahjong party you get there much quicker than by a sedan-chair and can play more games. Judging by these examples, to prevent men and women from breathing the same air we could use gas masks and get our oxygen from a tank on our backs. This would render it unnecessary for anyone to show his or her face, and at the same time would serve as air-raid practice. This is in accordance with using "Chinese learning as the basis, Western learning for utility." And the veils worn by Turkish women before General Kemal ruled the country are nothing to this.

If we had a modern Swift to write another satire like *Gulliver's Travels*, he could describe how in the twentieth century, in a civilized country, he saw some men burning incense and worshipping dragons, making incantations for rain,* admiring a "Fat Woman"**, and forbidding the killing of turtles;*** while others made a serious study of ancient dancing,† advocated the segregation of

* In time of drought the peasants used to burn incense to the Dragon King believed to control the clouds. During the great drought of 1934, this was done all over the country. In July, the Kuomintang government invited lamas in Nanjing to pray for rain.

** On August 1, 1934, a Shanghai department store engaged an American woman weighing over 55 stone to display herself.

*** In February 1934, the Society for the Protection of Animals in Shanghai asked the municipal government to forbid boatmen, some of whom lived by the sale of turtles, to catch them.

† In August 1934, there was a rehearsal of ancient dancing before the sacrifice to Confucius.

the sexes, and opposed the exposure of the female leg* Readers far away, or future generations, would probably imagine that the author had distorted the truth out of deliberate malice, in order to ridicule people whom he disliked

Yet such things actually happen. If they did not, I doubt whether any genius, no matter how savage a satirist, could make them up. Dreams can never depart too far from ordinary life. That is why when men see such happenings, they use the expression "How extraordinary!"

August 14, 1934

* On June 7, 1934, Chiang Kai-shek ordered the Jiangxi Provincial Government to issue regulations for "The Abolition of Aberrations in Female Dress". The seventh regulation in the second section was "Trousers must come at least four inches below the knee, and no part of the legs may be exposed". Similar measures were enforced in Beijing and Chongqing.

ON PARADING GODS AND BITING MEN

The newspaper reports that because of the drought the peasants in a certain village of Yuyao are parading images of the gods to ask for rain. If any of the spectators keeps his hat on, he is knifed or beaten.

This is a superstition, but there is authority for it. That Han Dynasty Confucian scholar, Mr. Dong Zhongshu, had a method of praying for rain, something to do with widows and closing the city gates * At all events his benighted inanities were every whit as odd as those of the Taoists; but our modern Confucians have not revised them yet. Even in large towns today the Taoist pope performs his magic rites, while high officials forbid the slaughter of cattle ** The tumult must have reached high heaven, yet no trouble has resulted. As for the attack on hats, that is because the peasants are afraid the gods may see there are still some men quite at their ease, so they would not help them; and they hate the wearers for not sharing their sufferings.

* He believed in the *yin* and the *yang*, the female and male principles of Chinese cosmology. The female principle was akin to water, the male to fire. The theory was that if the men stayed in hiding and the south gate of the city was closed to keep out the male principle, the women could attract rain.

** In September 1933, the sixty-third Taoist pope chanted incantations for rain. In July 1934, the Hubei Provincial Government prohibited the slaughter of cattle for a week — a common feudal practice in case of drought.

The peasants' aim in parading the gods is to escape death — unfortunately this is a superstition — but they do not know any better

The newspaper also reports the case of an old member of the Kuomintang, a man in his sixties, who urged the peasants not to parade the gods. The crowd beat him, and finally killed him by biting through his gullet

This is a delusion, but there is authority for it too. According to the *Popular Tales of General Yue Fei*, after Zhang Jun had killed the patriotic general he was bitten to death by a mob, whereat there was general rejoicing. Since then country folk have always maintained that if you bite a man to death the emperor will pardon you. [Because if you hate a man enough to bite him that shows how wicked the one bitten must be] I know nothing of the law, but I doubt whether the legal code before the Republic ever contained such a clause

The peasants' aim in biting men is to avoid being killed. Unfortunately this is a delusion — but they do not know any better.

Hoping to escape death or avoid being killed, they simply hasten their own destruction! Alas!

Since the Chinese empire turned into a republic there have been not a few changes in the upper class, but our unlettered peasants have not received a single new benefit. Duped by the same old superstitions and delusions, in their attempts to escape death and avoid being killed they are hastening their own destruction

Now they are being "punished by Heaven"* They are afraid, but not understanding the reason for this punishment they are indignant too. When their fear

* Referring to a quotation from *The Book of History* "Heaven punishes the guilty" Floods and droughts were due to the fact that the Kuomintang government had cut down forests and neglected water conservancy

and indignation are alike forgotten, there will remain nothing but delusions and superstition, and next time there is a flood or drought they will start parading the gods and biting men again.

When will this tragedy end?

August 19, 1934

Postscript

The sentence in brackets was deleted when this article was published. Whether it was the editor-in-chief or the censor who wielded the red pencil is not known; but the author, remembering the original, finds this most significant. The idea, no doubt, was that it would be better not to let everyone know the peasants' idea — delusion though it might be — for fear the evil practice might spread and many gullets be endangered.

August 22, 1934

NOTES AFTER READING (3)

Most writers hate critics for their carping tongues

I remember a poet once said A poet must write poems just as a plant must blossom — it has no alternative If you pluck it, eat it and find it poisonous, you have only yourself to blame

This is a beautiful simile and sounds fair enough on the face of it But if you think a little, it is wrong It is wrong because a poet is not a plant but a man living in society, and collections of poems are sold — you cannot just pick them up Once a thing is sold it is a commodity, and whoever buys it has the right to praise or condemn it

Even in the case of real flowers, provided they do not grow deep in the mountains far from the haunts of men, if they are poisonous it is up to gardeners to do something about it And real flowers are not the same as a poet's fancies

But now a new view is being expressed, for even those who are not writers have come to hate critics, and some of them say If you know so much, fine! Let us see, *you* write something!

This must surely send the critics scuttling like rats For very few critics have ever been writers too

To my mind, the relationship between writers and critics is very like that between a cook and the customers at a restaurant When a cook produces a dish, those who eat it will pronounce it good or bad If the cook thinks the judgement unfair he can consider whether the critic is mentally unbalanced, has a furred

tongue, is prejudiced or wants to get out of paying. He may be a native of Guangdong who wants to eat snake, or a native of Sichuan who wants hot food. Then the cook may explain or protest — or, of course, he may say nothing. But if he shouts at the customer, “Very well, *you* cook a dish and let me taste it!” he will look rather a fool.

It is true that four or five years ago everyone who could write imagined that a critic had a high place in the world of letters, and so there were many hasty and muddled criticisms, but to correct this trend a criticism of criticism is needed. It is no use simply smearing the critics with mud. Most readers, however, are all for peace and quiet. A battle of books makes them talk of “the hopelessness of the literary world” and “scholars’ scorn for each other.” Or without looking into the rights and wrongs of the case, they describe it as “a slanging match” and “utter bedlam.” And sure enough, nowadays no one is described as a critic. But the problems of the literary world remain the same, although no longer exposed.

Criticism is necessary to literature. If a criticism is incorrect we must oppose it with criticism. This is the only way to help literature and criticism to advance. If we hold our tongues and assume that all is well in the world of letters, the result will be just the reverse.

August 22, 1934

A LAYMAN'S REMARKS ON WRITING

1 PREAMBLE

They say this is the hottest summer in Shanghai for sixty years. Out all day with your nose to the grindstone, you shamble home in the evening to a room still hot and swarming with mosquitoes. By comparison it is heaven outside, for there is always a breeze from the sea and you do not need a fan. From nearby apartments and garrets also come neighbours whom you know by sight but seldom see. Among them are shop assistants, proof-readers in a publishing house, skilled engravers. All tired out and full of complaints, at least they are free at last and so they talk freely.

Their talk covers a wide range: droughts, prayers for rain, chasing women, the curious mummified three-inch mannikin, imported rice, bare female legs, the classical language, vernacular Chinese and a popular language. As I have written a few essays in vernacular Chinese, they are particularly interested in my views on the classical language and kindred subjects, and I talked at considerable length, for two or three nights. Then the subject was changed — we had exhausted it. But a few days later, to my surprise, one or two of them asked me to write down what I had said.

Some have faith in me because I have read various old books, some because I have read a few foreign books,

some for a combination of both reasons. But others have no faith in me precisely on this account, considering me a sort of bat.* When I talk of the classical language, they laugh and say, "You are not one of the Eight Masters** of the Tang and Song dynasties — how do you know?" When I mention a popular language, they laugh again and say, "You are not a worker — what's the use of talking about that?"

And this is true. When we were discussing drought, someone described a magistrate who went down to the country to investigate and said there were places where there need have been no drought — it was due to the laziness of the peasants, who refused to water the fields. Yet a newspaper reported the suicide of an old man of sixty who saw no way out, because though his son dropped dead of exhaustion in the fields the drought remained as bad as ever. So different are the views of a magistrate and a villager! That being so, all I said during those evenings was probably just the empty talk of a layman.

Since the typhoon the temperature has dropped. Still, I have carried out the wishes of those who asked me to write by putting all this down. Though much simpler than my remarks at the time, the main gist is unchanged, and it can be said to be written for others like us. At the time I relied entirely on my memory when quoting from the classics. As the spoken word brushes past your ear and is gone, small inaccuracies do not matter; but I hesitate to commit these to writing. Still, since I have no books to check with here, I shall

* The bat, supposed to belong neither to the bird nor to the animal kingdom, was repudiated by both.

** Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan of the Tang Dynasty and Ouyang Xiu, Su Xun, Su Shi, Su Zhe, Wang Anshi and Zeng Gong of the Song — eight great prose writers.

just have to ask readers to make the necessary corrections

Finished on the night of August 16, 1934

2 WHO INVENTED CHARACTERS?

Who invented characters? Accustomed as we are to hearing that everything was created by some sage or worthy of old, we are bound to ask this question about language. But an answer, origin unknown, is promptly given. Characters were created by Cang Jie.

This is the view of most scholars, and of course they have their grounds. I have seen a portrait of this Cang Jie, who looked like an old Buddhist priest with four eyes. Of course, to invent characters you would need to look rather special. We people with two eyes only are not merely too stupid, but not even good enough as appearances go.

But the author (I don't know who he was) of the *Book of Change* was more intelligent. He said, "In the earliest days they kept records with knots. A later sage used writing instead." He does not say Cang Jie, only "a later sage." And instead of invention he speaks of substitution — an admirable example of caution. Perhaps, unconsciously, he did not believe that one man in ancient times could have invented so many characters, hence this ambiguous statement.

But what sort of man would this be who substituted writing for knots? A man of letters? Undoubtedly this would be the first thought to occur to us when we remember that the sole aim of our modern "men of letters" is to show off their literary ability and that they can do nothing except flourish a pen. And undoubtedly they should make out the best case they can for their means of livelihood. But in fact this is not

true. Though prehistoric men sang at work as well as when they were counting they did not record these songs or keep the manuscripts, for they never dreamed of selling their poems or compiling their complete works. And since that society had no newspaper offices or bookshops, characters were quite useless. According to certain scholars, the men to work hard on characters were the historians.

In primitive society there were probably only shamans to begin with, but in the course of evolution matters became more complicated until gradually records had to be kept of such events as sacrifices, hunting expeditions and battles. . . . Then the shamans in addition to their function of "calling down spirits" had to learn to make records, and this was the start of "history." Moreover, "sending up to Heaven" became part of their function too. They burned records of their tribal chiefs and the chief events under their rule for the gods to read, and here again writing was necessary — though this was doubtless a later development. Later still, there came about a clearer division of labour and historians appeared who did nothing but record events. Since characters were their essential tools, the ancients said, "Cang Jie was the Yellow Emperor's annalist." Though this statement is highly dubious, the reference to the historians' connection with writing is most significant. As for the use made of writing by later "men of letters" to compose such beautiful lines as: "Ah, my darling, I am dying!" that is simply utilizing a ready-made tool — surely, no great feat!

3. HOW DID CHARACTERS COME INTO BEING?

The *Book of Change* says quite clearly that knots preceded writing. If the villagers in my part of the world

have something important to do and are afraid of forgetting it, they often say, "Tie a knot in your belt!" Then did our ancient sages also have long cords and tie a knot for each thing they wanted to remember? I doubt if that would be feasible. A few knots could be remembered, but not too many. Or they may have had something like Fu Xi's Eight Trigrams. Three cords made up one unit, and if they were not knotted that would be male, while if each was knotted in the middle that would be female. That hardly seems likely either. Eight diagrams might be possible, but sixty-four would prove hard to remember, to say nothing of five hundred and twelve. Peru is the only place where the quipus can still be seen. You take a horizontal cord, tie a number of vertical ones to it, then pull these about and knot them. The result looks something like a net, but apparently you can express a good many ideas that way. I suspect that our ancient system of knots was similar. But since it was ousted by writing and was not the ancestor of writing, we need not concern ourselves with it any more.

The *Gou Lou* stone inscription attributed to King Yu of the Xia Dynasty was faked by the Taoists. The most ancient writing that we can see today is on the oracle bones and bronzes of the Shang Dynasty, but this is already considerably developed with very few primitive forms. On a few bronzes only do we occasionally see something resembling a sketch — a deer, for instance, or an elephant — and these sketches reveal the links with characters. Chinese characters are founded on pictographs.

The bison painted in the Altamira caves in Spain are well-known relics of primitive man, and many art historians have called this "art for art's sake," drawn by primitive man for his own amusement. But this explanation is too "modern," for primitive men lacked the

leisure of nineteenth century artists. Each bison was drawn for a particular purpose, either to capture it, hunt it, or make a totem of it. Since spectators gape even today at the advertisements for cigarettes and films posted upon Shanghai walls, we can imagine the sensation caused by such extraordinary sights in that unsophisticated primitive society. By looking at them men would learn that bison could be drawn on a flat surface, and would probably recognize the drawing as a word meaning "bison." But while admiring the artists' talent no one would pay them to write their autobiography, and so their names are lost. There were more than one Cang Jie, however. Some carved pictures on the hilts of daggers, some drew on doors. When others remembered these pictographs and passed them on, more characters came into being, and by collecting these the historians were able to write their records. I fancy that, broadly speaking, this is how Chinese writing emerged.

Naturally, later additions must constantly have been made, but these the historians could make for themselves. The new characters introduced were also pictographs, the meaning of which could easily be guessed. Even today China is still producing new characters. But anyone bent on being a new Cang Jie is doomed to failure. Zhu Yu of the kingdom of Wu and Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty both coined some curious characters — but their efforts were wasted. Today the biggest innovators are Chinese chemists. Their names for many elements and chemical compounds are extraordinarily hard to recognize and to pronounce. Frankly speaking, the very sight of them gives me a headache. I think it would be much better to use the Latin names current in other countries. If you cannot master an alphabet of twenty-six letters — forgive my saying so — you will never make a chemist.

4 WRITING CHARACTERS IS DRAWING

The *Rites of Zhou* and the old lexicon *Shuo Wen* inform us that there are six ways of making characters, but we need not go into them all. Instead let me say something about pictographs.

Pictographs may be "based on man or on the world around." Draw an eye and you have 目 *mu* for "eye", draw a circle emitting rays and you have 日 *ri* for "sun." What could be clearer and simpler? Sometimes there are difficulties, though. For instance, how can you show the sharp edge of a knife? Since you cannot draw the sharp edge without drawing the blunt edge too, you have to use your ingenuity and add a dot to 刀 *dao* for "knife" to show the position of the blade. That gives you the word 刃 *ren*, (blade). This is troublesome enough, but certain things cannot be expressed through forms and in that case you have to express the idea: this is an ideograph. A hand on a tree 采 signifies "pluck." A heart between a roof and a rice bowl 寧 means "peace," because we are at peace when we have food and shelter. But to use this word in another sense, meaning "rather," you add a line under the rice bowl, indicating that you are just borrowing the sound of the word. Ideographs are much more involved than pictographs, for you must draw at least two things. Thus the character 寶 *bao* meaning "precious" includes a roof, a piece of jade, a pitcher and a cowrie shell once used as money — four things in all. If we break down the pictograph 缶 (pitcher) into its compound parts — 杵 (pestle) and 臼 (mortar), that means pictures of five objects. So simply writing "precious" involves a good deal of trouble.

Still this is not enough. For some things cannot be drawn and there are others which we would not know how to draw. For example, the pine and the cypress have different leaves and could therefore be differ-

entiated; but since after all we are writing, we cannot draw accurate pictures of both trees to show the differences. This problem is solved by indicating the sound, and this type of character has no relationship to the form of the object but simply records the sound. Some say this was a further development of the Chinese language, and I suppose it can be so described, but it is still based on pictographs. For example, 菜 *cai* (herb) is made of the pictographs 草 (grass), 爪 (claw), and 木 (tree). 海 *hai* (sea) is made of the pictographs 水 (river), 母 (woman), and 宀 (hat). Both comprise three objects. Thus no matter what you want to write, you must draw pictures.

But the ancients were no fools. They soon simplified these forms till they were quite different from the objects depicted. The ancient seal characters with their curved lines bear some resemblance to pictures, but the later characters are as different from what they represent as heaven from earth. Nevertheless the basis remained unchanged, though they became pictographs bearing no resemblance to pictures, easier to write but more difficult to remember — you have to memorize them one by one. Besides, some characters have still not been simplified. When you ask children to write words like 鸞 (phoenix) or 鑿 (chisel), they have to practise for months before they can fit such characters into a half-inch square in their copy-books.

Another complication is that some of the characters in which the radical gives the meaning and the other part the sound are no longer pronounced as they were, owing to changes in pronunciation since ancient times. Today who pronounces 滑 *hua* for “slippery” as *gu*, or 海 *hai* for “sea” as *mei*?

The language handed down to us by the ancients is an important heritage for which we should thank them. But now that pictographs no longer resemble pictures

and the phonograms are differently pronounced, one rather hesitates before offering thanks

5 WERE THE ANCIENT WRITTEN AND SPOKEN LANGUAGES THE SAME?

Now suppose we consider the problem of whether in ancient times the spoken and written languages were the same

Though modern scholars have not yet reached a definite conclusion on this point, the general consensus of opinion seems to be that they were the same the further back you go, the closer they are I rather doubt that, however For the easier a language is to write, the more likely it is to resemble the spoken language, but the Chinese pictographs are so hard to write that our forefathers always left out unimportant words

The *Book of History* is very difficult, which may be evidence that it was based on the spoken language But we have not yet made a study of the spoken language of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, which may not have been so concise Regarding the writings of the Zhou and Qin dynasties, though some writers use their local dialect, the language of different texts is more or less the same, thus even if it was close to the vernacular it was just a kind of standardized language, not the language of the masses at the time This is even more obvious by the Han Dynasty Though Sima Qian translated certain difficult expressions in the *Book of History* into terms of his period, he used colloquial expressions only under special circumstances, for example, when he describes how Chen She's old friend exclaimed in surprise on seeing Chen She king "Well, well! Chen She makes a terrific king!" I suspect that this was touched up by Sima Qian

Well, can we say that the nursery rhymes, proverbs and folk songs in ancient texts were in genuine colloquial language? I think this is debatable too. Chinese men of letters have always delighted in re-writing the works of others. An obvious example of this is the Han Dynasty folk song *The Prince of Huainan*, which appears differently in Ban Gu's *Former Han Dynasty History* and in Xun Yue's *Annals of the Former Han Dynasty*.

In the first we read:

*A foot of cloth can be spun,
A peck of grain can be hulled,
But these two brothers cannot abide each other.*

In the second we read:

*A foot of cloth will keep you warm,
A peck of grain will fill your belly,
But these two brothers cannot abide each other.*

Of the two versions, the second seems more likely to be the original, yet this may also be simply a résumé already edited to some extent. The scholars' anecdotes of the Song Dynasty, the story-tellers' scripts, and the dialogue in the Yuan Dynasty plays were all résumés too. Since they use common expressions and are not unduly abridged, they have been described as "clear as speech."

My theory is that the spoken and written languages in China have never been the same, largely because our characters are so hard to write that the written language had to be more concise. An epitome of their spoken language became the written language of the ancients. An epitome of the spoken language of ancient times became the classical written language of later times. So when we write classical Chinese we are epitomizing the spoken language of the ancients, using pictographs which no longer resemble pictures, and

phonograms which no longer resemble the ancient sounds to make statements which no modern man would say and which few can understand. Just think how hard this is!

6 HOW LITERATURE BECAME SOMETHING FOR THE ELITE

The written language, which originated among the people, was bound to become the monopoly of the privileged. Thus the author of the *Book of Change* guessed that in very ancient times they ruled with knotted strings, for even those tied knots belonged to the rulers. This was yet more marked when writing fell into the hands of shamans and historians, who served under the rulers but lorded it over the people. As society evolved, the number of those who learned to write increased, but still most of them belonged to the privileged class. The common people were illiterate not because they could not afford tuition fees but because they were considered unworthy. And they had no access to books. Before printing developed in China nearly all good books were hidden away in the imperial libraries so that not even the scholars knew their contents.

Since writing belonged to the privileged class, it became something sacred and mysterious too. Even today Chinese writing is held sacred. We often see walls hung with baskets bearing these words "Respect paper with writing on it." And charms to ward off evil and cure disease depend on the mysterious quality of writing. Since there is something sacred about writing, a man who can write becomes sacred by association. It is not good for existing dignitaries if too many new dignitaries keep appearing, while if too many can write the mysteriousness of writing will disappear. Taoist charms

are awe-inspiring because none but Taoist priests can read them. So they must keep writing to themselves.

In Europe in the Middle Ages all learning was in the monasteries. In Croatia up to the nineteenth century the monks alone were literate and the spoken language had deteriorated until it could barely express the old life. Thus when they had a reformation, they had to borrow many new words from abroad.

In the case of written Chinese, in addition to the social and economic restrictions there is another barrier which keeps it from the people: its difficulty. This barrier alone takes a good ten years to cross. Those who cross it become literati, and these literati do their best to make their language even more difficult for this will make their position particularly sacred, surpassing that of all ordinary scholars. This was the failing of Yang Xiong of the Han Dynasty who had a passion for strange words. When Liu Xin asked to borrow his manuscripts on local dialects, he refused by threatening to commit suicide. Fan Zongshi of the Tang Dynasty wrote in such a way that no one knew how to punctuate his work, while Li He wrote poems which no one else could understand. They all did this for the same reason. Another way is to write characters that no one knows, and a simple method is to pepper your essay with a few archaic terms from the dictionary. Yet another method is that of the Qing Dynasty scholar Qian Zhan, who copied out Liu Xi's *Words and Their Meaning* using the ancient seal script, just as recently Mr. Qian Xuantong copied out Zhang Taiyan's *Exposition of Ancient Philology* using the old-style script of the *Shuo Wen*.

Chinese characters and the Chinese literary language are already difficult enough. If on top of that the literati deliberately create further difficulties, how can we bring writing within reach of the masses? However, this is just what the literati want; for if writing is easy and everyone can use it, it will cease to be sacred and the

literati will cease to be sacred too. This accounts for the charges that modern Chinese is not so good as the classical language. This is also the reason why some of those discussing the popularization of the language say that it will be sufficient to teach the masses a thousand characters only.

7 ILLITERATE AUTHORS

The résumés of ancient speech written in such difficult characters used to be called *wen* 文, what we today call *wen-xue* 文学. This term comes not from *The Analects* of Confucius but from Japan, where it was a translation of the English word "literature." People who can write literature — and today you can write it in the modern language too — are "men of letters" or authors.

Since the prerequisite of literature is writing, there should not be men of letters among the unlettered multitude. But there are such authors. Don't laugh yet — let me explain. To my mind, even before there was a written language there were literary works, but unfortunately no one recorded them, for there was no way to record them. The primitive men who were our ancestors could not even speak at first, but to work together they had to convey their ideas, and so gradually they learned to utter complex sounds. Suppose they were carrying logs and found it hard work, but did not know how to express this, if one of them called out "Yo, heave, ho!" that was a literary creation. And if others, admiring him, took it up, this was a form of publication. If it were recorded by some method it would become literature, and of course such a man would be an author or writer of the Yo-heave-ho school. We need not laugh, for though such a work was very childish, the ancients were not up to us in many ways, this being one of them. Take for instance the Zhou Dynasty poem

*"Fair, fair," cry the ospreys
On the island in the river
Lovely is this noble lady,
Fit bride for our lord.*

Because this is the first poem in the *Book of Songs*, we are overawed by it and fall prostrate in admiration. But if no such poem had been written and a modern poet were to use the same idea in a modern poem, no matter what newspaper supplement he sent it to, it would most likely be thrown into the waste-paper basket by the editor. "A sweet, pretty girl is a good match for the gentleman!" Bah!"

Even the folk songs from various states in the *Book of Songs* include a fair number of works by illiterate, anonymous authors. These were handed down orally because they were good. The Zhou Dynasty officials chose and recorded those of use as reference material to the government, but many others must have disappeared. The two great epics of Homer, if such a man existed, were originally recited by minstrels, the present version being a record made by others. The "Songs of Ziye" and other songs of the Six Dynasties, as well as the "Bamboo Ballads" and "Willow Ballads" of the Tang Dynasty, are all anonymous works handed down after their selection and polishing by literary men. Though these polished versions have been preserved, it is a pity that so much of the original must have been lost. Today we still have folk songs, ballads, fishermen's chants and the like everywhere, which are also the work of illiterate poets. Then there are folk tales, which are stories by illiterate writers. So all these men are illiterate men of letters.

But when no records are made, these works are easily lost and cannot circulate widely or become well known. Men of letters who come across a little are often amazed and absorb this into their own writing as new nourishment. When an old literature is declining it can take a

new direction by borrowing from folk or foreign literature, as is frequently seen in histories of literature. Though the work of illiterate authors has less finish than that of men of letters, it is strong and fresh.

If we want such works to be shared by all, we must first teach the authors to write and all the readers to read and write. In short, we must make the language available to everyone.

8 HOW TO GIVE WRITING TO THE MASSES

By the end of the Qing Dynasty attempts had already been made to give writing to the masses.

*Beat no drum, beat no gong!
Hear me sing a merry song!*

This was a ditty issued by the imperial government for popular education. The literati published some bulletins in the vernacular too, but their aim was to get their meaning across to the masses, not to show them how to write. Then there was the *Common Man's One Thousand Words* which made writing seem not altogether impossible, but this limited vocabulary was enough only for writing accounts or letters, not to express ideas. It was like a prison which gives men a plot of land fenced about so that the prisoners are cooped up inside and cannot run outside the iron bars.

Lao Naixuan and Wang Zhao produced simplified characters which were most progressive, written according to the sound. In the early days of the Republic, the Ministry of Education was in favour of a phonetic script, and these two men were members of such a committee. Mr. Lao sent a representative, while Mr. Wang went in person. They had a great fight with Mr. Wu Zhihui over the abolition of the fourth tone, till Mr. Wu caved in and his trousers came down. But finally, after much discus-

sion, they produced some phonetic symbols. At the time, many people believed that these could take the place of Chinese characters, however, this is not possible, because they are simply square characters like the Japanese syllabary. They may be used in conjunction with Chinese characters or by the side of characters, but they cannot stand alone. In writing they are easily confused and hard to decipher. The committee members were well aware of these limitations when they called them "phonetic symbols." Similarly in Japan some proposed cutting down the number of Chinese characters, others proposed using latinization, but no one proposed using *kana* alone.

A slightly better way is romanization. Mr. Zhao Yuanren has made the best study of this subject, of which I know very little. It seems a good idea and very clear to write characters with the letters of an alphabet, the Latin alphabet used all over the world — even in Turkey. Yet this romanization strikes a layman like me as too complicated. Of course it must be complicated if we want the sounds to be exact, but that makes learning difficult and popularization impossible. It would be better to have something simpler and at the same time adequate.

Now let us consider the new latinization. *The Daily International Digest* has published a pamphlet called *Latinization of the Chinese Language*, while the joint sixth and seventh issue of Volume II of *La Mondo** has a supplement called *Lingva Scienco*. These documents deal with latinization and are so cheap that anyone interested may buy a copy. There are twenty-eight letters only in this alphabet, and the spelling is easy to learn. "Man" is *rhen*, "house" is *fangz*. "I eat fruit" is *Wo ch goz*. "He is a worker" is *Ta sh gungrhen*. This method has been tried out among overseas Chinese and found

* A monthly published by Chinese Esperantists in Shanghai.

fairly successful. Only the northern dialect is used, but after all I suppose a majority of Chinese speak the northern dialect — not the Beijing dialect — so if a popular written language evolves which can be used everywhere, no doubt it will be based mainly on the northern dialect. If minor modifications are made meanwhile to represent the different dialects, this method can be applied in the most remote parts of the country.

Then provided one learns twenty-eight letters and a little spelling and writing, anyone but a loafer or moron can read and write. And it has another advantage: one can write faster. In the United States they say, "Time is money." But I think time is life. To waste men's time for nothing is tantamount to murder. Of course, those like us who sit idly chatting in the cool of the evening are exceptions.

9 SPECIALIZATION OR POPULARIZATION?

Here we come to a big problem. Spoken Chinese varies considerably in different parts of the country, for there are roughly at least five main groups: the northern dialect, the Zhejiang and Jiangsu dialect, the Hunan, Hubei, Sichuan and Guizhou dialect, the Fujian dialect and the Guangdong dialect. Moreover within each group there are minor differences. Now if we write Chinese with a Latin script, shall we write according to the pronunciation of standard Chinese or the local dialects? If we use the standard language, not every one knows it. If we use a local dialect, those in different parts of the country will not understand it, and this will cut them off further from each other, falling short of the characters used all over China. This is a serious defect.

To my mind, just for a start each district should use its local dialect, regardless of whether the meaning is understood elsewhere or not. Before the introduction of

latinization our illiterates never used a written language to communicate their ideas in any case, hence there is no new evil here. There is, however, this new advantage: at least in that dialectal region men can use a written script to exchange ideas and absorb new knowledge. Of course we also need some books with good contents. The problem is whether we want the popular language of different districts to develop in the direction of specialization or popularization.

Local dialects contain some excellent idioms. In fact, one derives as much pleasure from them as from classical allusions in the literary language. Specialization would mean making the syntax and vocabulary of various dialects more concise and developing them further. This would be a very fine thing for literature, for such a language would be more interesting than one consisting of stereotyped expressions. There is danger too in specialization, however. I do not know what happens in the realm of philology; but in the natural world whatever specializes tends to perish. Many animals and plants before the evolution of man lost their adaptability through over-specialization, and died out when conditions changed. Since human beings are not yet unduly specialized animals, this need not worry us. The masses have literature and want literature, but they should not sacrifice themselves for its sake. That would be as stupid as those living saints who want to victimize eighty per cent of the Chinese population by keeping them illiterate in order to preserve the written language. For a start then I think we should use the dialects, gradually building up a common syntax and vocabulary. First use the popular form of an old established local dialect, and then add new elements to it to make it the popular form of the national language.

Of course, plans worked out by a few scholars in their studies are usually impracticable, but it is no good either just to let things drift and take their natural course.

Today in ports, offices and colleges you already find something approaching a common language. Men speak something which is neither the national language, mandarin nor a local dialect, but a language with local accents and tones, which, though difficult to use and jarring to the ear, is nevertheless capable of being enunciated and understood. If we help to develop this, it should become a part of the common language and may even constitute the main force. This is the source of the "new" elements which I said should be added to the local dialects. When this naturally evolved and artificially aided language becomes widespread, the written and spoken forms of the common language will on the whole be unified.

After this, undoubtedly, there will be more to do. As the years go by the language will become more unified and develop by degrees into something as concise as local idiom and more lively than classical allusions, while literature will benefit too. This cannot be achieved overnight. We must remember that it took the old characters which the die-hards prize so highly three or four thousand years to achieve such bizarre results.

As to the people who should tackle this job, it goes without saying that they should be those intellectuals conscious of the need. Someone has said, "Mass work must be done by the masses themselves." Of course, this is true in one sense. It depends on the speaker. It is right for the masses to say they will do their own work but wrong for them to refuse help. If an intellectual is speaking, that is another matter. He is using fine phrases to monopolize the language and retain his own privileged position.

10 THERE IS NO NEED FOR ALARM

Before any action is taken, however, mere talk of this has thrown some others into a panic.

First they call those who advocate a popular language "political propagandists in the realm of literature like Song Yang"* who are out to make trouble. Pinning a red label on them is the simplest way of dealing with them. Yet this also means that for the sake of their own peace of mind they want eight out of ten Chinese to remain illiterate, or deaf and dumb when it comes to verbal propaganda. But since this is outside the realm of language, I need not go into it here.

Of those concerned solely with literature, I have seen two types. One type fears that once the masses can read and write they will all become writers. This is just as naive as the man in the old fable who was afraid the sky would fall. I mentioned earlier that among the illiterate masses there have always been authors. I have not been to the country for a long time, but in the old days when the peasants had a little leisure — for example when they sat out on a summer evening — someone would tell a story. But this story-teller was usually a definite person with a relatively rich experience and a good delivery who could hold his hearers' interest to the end and was easily intelligible. He would be an author, and if you copied down what he said that would be a work of literature. If someone spoke in a dull way yet insisted on holding forth, the others would not listen but would say many unkind things about him — and that would be satire. We have tinkered with the classical language for thousands of years, and with the modern vernacular for more than ten years; but are all who can write authors? Even if we all become authors, this would not be like becoming warlords or bandits, for it would do no harm to the people. We should simply read each other's works.

Another type fears the standard of literature would be lowered. The masses have not studied the old literature, and compared with the fine touch of the literati

* Pen-name of Qu Qiubai, a well-known Communist writer.

their standards may appear "low" But they have not been contaminated by the evils of the old literature either, and therefore what they write is powerful and fresh As I mentioned earlier, anonymous works like the "Songs of Ziye" can give new strength to the old literature Now many folk-songs, folk-tales and popular dramas have been introduced to us too For instance, there is a speech by Wu Chang in the opera about Saint Maudgalyayana who rescued his mother from Hell,* which I quoted in *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* Because Wu Chang sympathized with another ghost and let the latter go back to earth for half a day, he was punished by the King of Hell so that he decided never to be lenient again

*Now I shall let no man off,
Not though he is behind a wall of bronze or
iron,
Not though he is a kinsman of the emperor!*

Can our writers produce literature so human, so conscience-stricken, so law-abiding and so resolute?

This is the genuine work of peasants and craftsmen who perform operas like this in their spare time, and run together various tales using the saint's travels as the central theme With the exception of the episode "A Young Nun Leaves the Mountain," all the rest differs from the printed version There is one scene called "Wu Song Kills the Tiger," played by one strong fellow and one weak one First the strong man takes the part of Wu Song,** the weak man that of the tiger, and when the latter complains of the beating he is getting, the strong man says, "You are a tiger If I don't beat you, you will kill me" Then the weak man changes roles, but when the strong man starts biting him hard he complains again

* See "Wu Chang or Life-Is-Transient" in Volume I, p 380.

** A popular hero in *Outlaws of the Marsh*.

The strong man retorts, "You are Wu Song! If I don't bite you, you will kill me" To my mind, this is no whit inferior to the Greek fables of Aesop or the Russian fables of Sologub.

If we were to make a search in every district in the country, we would surely find many such things. Naturally, they have their defects. They are cut off from modern thought by the old fetters of a difficult language and literature. So if we want Chinese civilization to go forward, we must advocate a popular language and popular literature and our writing must be latinized.

11. THE PEOPLE ARE NOT SUCH FOOLS AS SCHOLARS THINK

But this time, as soon as a popular language was mentioned, various doughty generals entered the lists against it. From different sides they all attack the vernacular, translations, Westernized syntax, new terms. They all fly the flag of "the masses" and say these things are not good because they cannot be understood by the masses. Some of them are a remnant of the classicists, who take this opportunity to attack the vernacular and translations according to the time-honoured tactics: "Befriend those far away, attack your neighbours." Others are loafers who have never studied seriously but want to debunk the vernacular before a popular language is achieved, so that they can show off in the empty arena. Actually these are good friends of the classicists — but no more of them. I want to speak here about those well-meaning but deluded individuals who either despise the masses or themselves, falling into the same mistakes as the old literati.

Intellectuals often despise others, thinking that they can understand new and difficult terms whereas the masses cannot, and therefore for the sake of the masses

we must get rid of those new and difficult terms. The simpler our speech and writing, the better. If they carry this further, they will unconsciously become new classicists. Sometimes, wanting the popular language to spread fast, they propose that everything should suit the popular taste and make an effort to "cater for the masses" by the deliberate use of dirty language. Of course their intentions are good, but this is turning them into new public clowns.

The term "masses" has a wide connotation, including all sorts and conditions of men, but to my mind even those illiterates who cannot read a word are not such fools as scholars think. They want knowledge, they want new knowledge. They want to study and they can absorb new things. Of course, if language consists of nothing but new terms and a new syntax they will not understand, but if what they need is given them gradually, they can take it. Perhaps their digestions are stronger than those of many scholars with more preconceived ideas. All newborn babes are illiterate, but by the time they are two years old they understand many words and can use various phrases, all of which are new terms and a new syntax to them. They do not look up these words in the *Ma Shi Wen Tong** or *Ci Yuan*** nor do teachers explain these things to them, but after hearing the same expression several times they recognize the meaning by association. In the same way the masses can pick up the new vocabulary and new syntax and go forward. So the proposals of these new classicists, though they seem to have the people's interests at heart, actually serve to pull them back. We must not adopt a laissez-faire attitude either, though, for some of the people's ideas are less enlightened than those of the intellectuals who are

* A Chinese grammar by Ma Jianzhong of the late Qing Dynasty

** A dictionary of terms compiled by the Commercial Press, Shanghai

conscious of the need. If no discrimination is exercised for them, they may select what is useless by mistake, or even what is harmful. So we are resolutely opposed to those new clowns who pander to popular taste.

History teaches us that all reforms are first tackled by those intellectuals conscious of the need. But those intellectuals must study, think hard, use their own judgment and have perseverance. They use different expedients too, but never deception. They sue various inducements, but never pander to the popular taste. Such men do not demean themselves by acting as clowns for the masses, nor do they look down on others and count them their minions. They are simply individuals in the community. It seems to me that this is the only way to do mass work.

12. CONCLUSION

I have said a good deal. But words alone are not enough. What we need is action. Many people must join in; masses and pioneers. All kinds of people must join in, educationalists, writers, philologists. . . . This is an urgent need today, even if it is like sailing against the current when you have to tow the boat from the bank. Of course, sailing with the current is pleasant, but even so a steersman is needed.

We can discuss the best methods of towing and steering, but our main teacher will be practice. Whatever use we make of the wind or current, there is one aim only: Go forward!

Everyone probably has his own views on this, and I had better stop now to hear yours.

August-September 1934

FORGETTING MEAT AND FORGETTING WATER

This year's worship of Confucius is the second great celebration that has been held since the establishment of the Republic,* and everything possible was done to make a fine display. Though the Chinese territory in Shanghai adjoins the foreign (barbarian) settlements, its residents too heard the Shao music** which in ancient times made Confucius "forget the taste of meat for three months"***. Thus the *Shen Bao* of August 30 tells us

On the twenty-seventh, different circles in Shanghai commemorated the birth of Confucius at the Confucian Temple. This ceremony was attended by more than a thousand representatives of the Kuomintang Party, government organizations and various walks of life. The Datong Music Society performed two movements of the ancient Shao music. In order to increase the volume of the music, all Chinese instruments both ancient and modern were used, totalling forty in all. The score was the traditional one, unchanged. The tempo, dignified and serene, quite out of the common, instilled into its hearers a sense of awe as if they were listening to the songs of the peaceful reign of the three

*The first great celebration was held in 1914, when Yuan Shikai, president of the Northern warlord government, ordered a sacrifice to Confucius to be made in ancient costumes.

** Associated with the legendary emperor Shun.

*** A quotation from *The Analects*.

early dynasties;* and this is evidence of our nation's ardent love of peace.

The use of all Chinese instruments, both ancient and modern, must have made this very different from the Shao music played in the Zhou Dynasty. But this was necessary "to increase the volume." Besides, this is quite consistent with modern Confucian worship. "Confucius was a sage who followed the fashion of the times."** In other words, "he was a modern." To make him forget the taste of such present-day delicacies as shark's fin and bird's nest, forty musical instruments would probably be needed. Moreover in his day, though China had foreign invaders, there were as yet no foreign settlements.

But this shows that things are rather different now. Although the "volume" was "increased," the music could not be heard in the countryside. On the same day the *Zhonghua Daily* reported an item of news which somewhat impaired the dignity of these "songs of the peaceful reign" and "the evidence of our nation's ardent love of peace." Unfortunately this incident also occurred on the twenty-seventh.

From our correspondent in Ningbo — All this summer Yuyao has been suffering from drought, the rivers have dried up and the local people have been sinking wells by the rivers to get water, often fighting for first place and coming into conflict. On the morning of the twenty-seventh, at Houfangwu in Langxia Township forty li from the city of Yuyao, Yang Houkun and Yao Shilian quarrelled over a well and came to blows. Yao struck Yang over the head with his pipe and, having felled him to the ground, proceeded to batter him with a club and stone till he killed him. By the time those

* The Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties during the period of slave society in China. The "Ya" and "Song" sections of the *Book of Songs* became known as songs of the "peaceful reign."

** This was said by Mencius.

near by heard the uproar and came to the rescue, Yang was already dead. Yao, realizing that he had committed a crime and could not escape the penalty, ran away.

Shao music belongs to one world, thirst to another. Meat-eaters who forget the taste of meat belong to one world, thirst and fight for water to another. Of course, we have here the great difference between gentlemen and the lower classes, but since "gentlemen need mean men to feed them," the latter must not be allowed to kill each other or to die of thirst.*

I hear that there are places in Arabia where water is so precious that blood must be spilt in exchange for it. Our nation with its "ardent love of peace" should not go to such extremes. *But this incident in Yuyao is rather shocking. So in addition to the Shao music which makes meat-eaters forget the taste of meat, we need another type of "Shao music" to make thirsty men no longer thirst for water.*

August 29, 1934

* The book *Mencius* says, "If there are no princely men, there will be no one to govern the mean men, if there are no mean men, there will be no one to feed the princely men."

HAVE THE CHINESE LOST THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE?

Judging by published writings it is a fact that two years ago we were constantly boasting of our "great territory and rich resources" It is also a fact that before long we stopped boasting, but set our hopes on the League of Nations And again it is a fact that today we neither boast about ourselves nor have faith in the League of Nations, but have taken to praying to the gods and worshipping Buddha or indulging in nostalgic reminiscences

So we find people lamenting: the Chinese have lost their self-confidence.

If we go by these few phenomena alone, we lost our self-confidence long ago Even when we had confidence first in "territory" and "resources," then in the "League of Nations," we had no confidence in "ourselves" If that counted as "confidence" of a kind, all we can say is that the Chinese once had "confidence in other things," but this has been lost since we were disappointed by the League of Nations

When a man loses confidence in other things, he has doubts; but he may come round to having faith in himself alone, and this would be a new path The pity is that we are growing more mystical. Confidence in "territory" and "resources" is something palpable; the League of Nations is more nebulous, but at least it does not take long to discover its unreliability. When a man starts praying to the gods and worshipping Buddha, this is so mystical that he cannot quickly discover whether it does

good or harm, hence this leads to a longer period of befuddlement

Now the Chinese are developing "self-deception"

"Self-deception" is nothing new either, only now it is daily becoming more evident and all-embracing. But under this cloak we still have Chinese who have not lost their self-confidence

Since ancient times we have had men who worked doggedly in silence, men who worked stubbornly at the risk of their lives, who strove to save others, who braved death to seek the truth. Even the standard dynastic histories, which are really family records of emperors, princes, ministers and generals, cannot conceal their glory. These men are the backbone of China

Even now there are many such men. They have firm convictions and do not deceive themselves. When one in front falls others behind fight on. It is only because they are trampled on, kept out of the news, smothered in darkness, that most people have no means of knowing of them. To say that some Chinese have lost their self-confidence is correct, but to say this of the whole nation is downright slander

In considering the Chinese people, we must not be deceived by the veneer of self-deception but must look at the sinews and backbone. Whether self-confidence exists or not cannot be seen from the writings of scholars and ministers — to find it we have to look underground.

September 25, 1934

ON "FACE"

The term "face" keeps cropping up in our conversation, and it seems such a simple expression that I doubt whether many people give it much thought.

Recently, however, we have heard this word on the lips of foreigners too, who seem to be studying it. They find it extremely hard to understand, but believe that "face" is the key to the Chinese spirit and that grasping it will be like grabbing a queue twenty-four years ago* — everything else will follow. Tradition has it that in the Qing Dynasty some foreigner went to the Zongli Yamen to make certain demands, and so frightened the mandarins by his threats that they agreed to everything; but when he left he was shown out through a side door. Denial to the main gate meant that he had lost face. If he lost face that meant that China gained face and came off the victor. Although I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, quite a few "Chinese and foreign gentlemen" have heard it.

So I strongly suspect that foreigners now just want to give us face.

But what is this thing called face? It is all very well if you don't stop to think, but the more you think the more confused you grow. There seem to be many kinds: each class in society has a different face. There are certain limits to face, and if you fall short of the limit you lose face, if you don't mind losing face you are shame-

* Before the establishment of the Republic in 1911, when wearing queues was compulsory

less, while if you rise above that limit you gain face. Different people lose face in different ways. For example, we think nothing of it if a rickshaw man sits by the roadside stripped to the waist to catch lice, whereas if a rich man's son-in-law sits by the roadside stripped to the waist to catch lice he loses face. It is not that a rickshaw man has no face, only that he does not lose it in this case, but if his wife kicks him and he lies down to howl, he loses face. These rules for face-losing apply to the upper classes too. And it might seem that the upper classes have more opportunities of losing face, but this is not necessarily so either. For instance, if a rickshaw man steals a purse and is caught he loses face, but if one of the upper class makes a fine haul of gold and valuables, apparently that does not lose face for him, to say nothing of that excellent method of saving face, "a tour of investigation abroad"*

Of course, we should consider it a good thing that everyone likes face, but this thing called face really is rather odd. The *Shen Bao* of September 30 gave us this item of news. Luo Lihong, a contractor for carpenter's work in West Shanghai, was making ready his mother's funeral and "asked Undertaker Wang Shubao and his wife for help. There were so many mourners that there was not enough mourning to go round. A certain Wang Daocai or 'Third Lucky Boy' who was present flew into a passion when he could not get hold of mourning, imagining that he had lost face. He rounded up several dozen followers armed with clubs — some said a number of them had pistols too — and they set upon the undertaker's family. In the fierce battle which ensued, blood was shed, heads were broken and many people were seriously injured . . ." Now the mourning was for

*The warlords and politicians of those days often used "a tour of investigation abroad" as a means of making a comeback after some military or political defeat. Some did not even go abroad, simply using this as a face-saving device.

relatives to wear, and since he could not get hold of any he was obviously not a relative, yet he considered it such a loss of face that he started a great fight. In this case, apparently, to be different from others meant having face, and the significance of wearing mourning evidently did not trouble him at all. Even upper-class breasts sometimes harbour similar feelings. Thus when Yuan Shikai was about to declare himself emperor, some gentlemen considered that they gained face by having their names listed among his supporters; when a certain country withdrew its troops from Qingdao, some gentlemen considered that they gained face by signing their names on the "presentation umbrella"*

So wanting face is not necessarily a good thing — not that I mean one should not care about face. Nowadays talking at all is dangerous. If you oppose filial piety, they accuse you of inciting sons to beat their parents, if you support equality between men and women, they accuse you of advocating promiscuity — one has to make things absolutely clear.

Besides, it is sometimes extremely difficult to distinguish between wanting face and not wanting face. I recall a joke about this. There was a rich and influential gentleman, whom we may as well call Fourth Master, with whom all thought it an honour to converse. Then a poor, boastful scavenger gleefully told people, "I've been talking to Fourth Master." "What did he say?" they asked. He answered, "I was standing in front of his gate when he came out and said, 'Clear off!'" Of course this is a joke to show how little he cared of face; yet to him this meant having face, and if there were many like him it would really become having face. For it is true that to many people Fourth Master did not even say so much as "Clear off!"

* Such an umbrella was given to a local official upon retirement as an expression of gratitude.

In Shanghai, though being kicked by a foreigner is not yet gaining face, it is not considered as losing much face either. Indeed, compared with being kicked by a low-class compatriot, it comes near to gaining face.

It is a good thing that the Chinese want face, the pity is that this face is so flexible, so constantly changing, that it becomes confused with not wanting face. Nyozeikan Hasegawa* said of the Robber's Spring, "Gentlemen of old, disgusted by the spring's name, would not drink from it, but the gentlemen of today have changed the spring's name and drink from it." This is the secret of the face of the "gentlemen of today."

October 4, 1934

* A modern Japanese critic

FATE

One day, sitting chatting in Uchiyama Bookshop* — there was a time when I was called a traitor by some of the pitiful “men of letters” hostile to me because I often went to Uchiyama Bookshop for a chat, but unfortunately now they have stopped — I learned that the Japanese women born in the *bing-wu* cyclic year, who are twenty-nine this year, are most unhappy creatures. It is generally believed that women born in that year will destroy their husbands, that if they remarry the same thing will happen again and may, indeed, be repeated five or six times; hence it is very hard for them to find husbands. Naturally, this is a superstition, but there is still a good deal of superstition in Japan.

I asked. Have they no way to avoid their evil fate? The answer was None.

That set me thinking of China

Many foreign sinologues say that the Chinese are fatalists, who believe that when a thing is predestined nothing can be done; and now even some Chinese pundits are saying the same. But judging by what I know, Chinese women have no such immutable fate. There are “evil” fates and “strong” fates, but there is always a way out by means of sacrifice or prayer; or a woman can marry a man who is not afraid of being destroyed, who will overcome the “evil” or “hardness” in her fate. If a woman is fated to destroy five or six husbands, a priest of some kind is always ready with a remarkable

* A Japanese bookshop in Shanghai

remedy he will have five or six men carved out of peach wood, draw magic charms on these and after "marrying" them to this woman will have them burned or buried, then the man who actually marries her, who counts as her seventh husband, is in no danger

The Chinese do believe in fate, but in a fate that can be averted. To say "there is no way out" is sometimes a method of trying another way out — a means of averting fate. When a man really believes that this is "fate" and there is "no way out," that is in fact the time when all means have failed or he is about to perish. For the Chinese, fate is not something determining events but an easy explanation to give after events have happened.

Naturally the Chinese have their superstitions as well as their "beliefs," but very few "firm convictions" apparently. Formerly we respected the emperor above all, but at the same time tried to control him. We respected queens too, but some of us tried to seduce them. We feared the gods, but burned paper money to bribe them. We admired heroes, but would not lay down our lives for them. Confucian scholars worship Buddha too, fighters who today believe in A tomorrow believe in B. China has had no war fought over religion, and though from the Northern Wei to the end of the Tang Dynasty Buddhism and Taoism prospered and declined in turn, it was all owing to the honeyed words of a few men who whispered in the emperor's ear. Geomancy, magic charms, prayers — however grave the fate, the expenditure of some money or a few kowtows would make it quite different from that predestined — in other words, it was not predestined.

Among our wise ancestors were some who knew that the uncertainty of "certain fate" could not suffice to give men a sense of certainty; they therefore said that the outcome of all the methods tried was the genuine "fate," and that the use of various methods to avert fate

was predestined too. But evidently ordinary people do not share this view.

It may not be a good thing for men to lack "firm convictions" and to vacillate, for this shows that they have "no will of their own." But to my mind it is a good thing that the Chinese who believe in fate also believe that fate can be averted. Only so far we have used superstition to counteract some other superstition, so that the final result is the same. If in future we use rational ideas and behaviour — science in place of superstition — the Chinese will discard their fatalistic outlook.

If such a day comes, indeed, the thrones of Buddhist monks, Taoist priests, witch-doctors, astrologers, geomancers and all that crew will be ceded to scientists, and we shall be able to dispense with all this mumbo jumbo the whole year round.

October 23, 1934

NAPOLEON AND JENNER*

I know a doctor who works hard yet is often attacked by his patients, and once he consoled himself by saying, "If a man wants praise, he had better take to killing. Just compare Napoleon with Jenner."

I believe he is right. What have Napoleon's military achievements to do with us? Yet we still admire him as a hero. Even though our own ancestors were enslaved by the Mongols, we still praise Genghis Khan. In the eyes of the Nazis today the yellow people are an inferior race, yet we still laud Hitler.

Because these three are scourges of mankind, delighting in killing men.

But if we look at our arms, most of us can find some scars left by vaccination which saves us from the ravages of smallpox. Since the practice of vaccination, countless children's lives have been saved throughout the world — though some when they grow up still have to serve as cannon-fodder for heroes — yet who remembers the name of Jenner, the discoverer?

The murderers are destroying the world, the saviours are restoring it, but all the gentlemen eligible to be cannon-fodder insist on praising the murderers.

If this view remains unchanged, I fancy the world will continue to be destroyed and men will continue to suffer.

November 6, 1934

* Edward Jenner (1749-1823), an English physician

A REPLY TO THE EDITOR OF *THE THEATRE*

Dear Mr Lu Xun,

The first act of *Ah Q** has now been published, and though the play cannot be staged immediately we must start preparing for its production. We hope you will give us your comments now that the first act has appeared. This will help us to prepare for a public performance, and when our plan for publication in book form is realized your views can be printed as a preface to the play. This request comes from the editor, the playwright, the readers and the actors.

Yours faithfully,
The Editor

November 14, 1934

Dear Sir,

I read the open letter addressed to me in *The Theatre* some time ago, after which I received a copy of the weekly by post, intended no doubt to expedite my reply. Since I have made no study of the drama, my safest answer would be silence. However, if you and your readers will bear in mind that these are the casual re-

* The play based on Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q" by Yuan Muzhi, editor of *The Theatre*, a supplement of the *Zhonghua Daily* published in Shanghai.

marks of an amateur, I can, of course, express some personal opinions

Not much of *Ah Q* was published in each of your numbers, and since there was always an interval of six days and I read the play off and on, by degrees I have forgotten it. Thinking back, all that I can recall is that characters from others of my stories were included to give a fuller picture of Weizhuang or Luzhen, and that is all to the good. But I could not understand many of the Shaoxing expressions used by *Ah Q*.

Now there are two points I want to make

First, where is Weizhuang? *Ah Q*'s playwright has decided. In Shaoxing. Since I come from Shaoxing and most of the background was drawn from Shaoxing, no doubt we shall all agree to this. But in very few of my stories are the settings clearly indicated. Nearly all Chinese like to defend their home-town and poke fun at other places, and *Ah Q* is no exception. I thought at the time that if I wrote a story of exposure and described events happening in a specific place, the people of that district would hate me with a deadly hatred, while those of other districts would look on unconcerned at troubles elsewhere, neither group relating the story to themselves, the first grinding their teeth in rage, the second remaining unruffled. Then not only would the story lose all significance and effectiveness, but there might even be futile complications involving every one in ridiculous quarrels. *Idle Talk on Yangzhou** is a recent example of this. A physician may prescribe ginseng to cure a disease, but if the patient does not take it properly he will grow bloated and have to take turnip seeds as an antidote till the swelling goes down, in which case the ginseng has been wasted and

* Anecdotes by Yi Junzuo published in March 1934. Citizens of Yangzhou were so indignant over his descriptions of Yangzhou life that the book was finally banned.

he has to spend money on turnip seeds as well. It is the same with names. Writers of literary gossip past and present nearly all believe that certain stories were written for personal vengeance, hence they go to great pains to discover the real individuals involved. In order to save such scholars trouble and to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, I used the first two characters in the *Hundred Names*,* Zhao and Qian; as for Ah Q's surname, no one is sure where that came from. Yet even so, rumours arose. Regarding position in the family, because I am the eldest son and have two younger brothers, to forestall the poisonous tongues of rumour-mongers the villains of my stories are always the eldest brother or the fourth or fifth.

I take these afore-mentioned precautions not because I am afraid of giving offence but to avoid ridiculous complications so that the impact of the work may be more concentrated and powerful. Gogol in *The Government Inspector* makes the actor say outright to the audience, "You are laughing at yourselves!" (Strange to say, in the Chinese translation this crucial sentence is omitted) But my method is to make the reader unable to tell who this character can be apart from himself, so that he cannot back away to become a bystander but is bound to suspect that this may be a portrait of himself if not of every man, and that may start him thinking. Not one of my critics has spotted this, however. This playwright's reckless fabrication of Shaoxing expressions for his chief character — Ah Q — makes me suspect that he too has been influenced by the vulgar taste.

It is just as well, though, to fix on Shaoxing as the setting. So we come to the second question.

What dialect should Ah Q speak? This seems an unnecessary question, for since all Ah Q's life is spent in

* A rhymed primer of surnames used in feudal China.

Shaoxing he should naturally speak the Shaoxing dialect. But that brings us to a third question.

What audience have we in mind for this play? If this is for Shaoxing audiences, Ah Q should naturally speak the Shaoxing dialect. In Shaoxing opera the tradition is that officials and scholars speak Mandarin, while waiters and jailers use the local dialect. That is to say, the heroes, heroines and warriors generally use Mandarin, while clowns use the local dialect. I think this is not merely to differentiate between the upper and lower classes, noble and vulgar, good and bad, another important reason is that since colloquial witticisms and sarcastic or funny remarks come mainly from the lips of the lower orders, the actors must use colloquial expressions to enable local audiences to understand them thoroughly. We can see the importance of this. Actually, if the play is staged for natives of Shaoxing, there is no reason why other characters should not speak in the Shaoxing dialect too. Though it is all one dialect, the upper-class language is different from the lower, having shorter sentences with fewer exclamations and interjections — a lower-class sentence with the same meaning may be twice the length. Still, if such a play is performed elsewhere, its effect must be weakened if not completely lost. I have made careful investigations and found that most men from other districts who pride themselves on their excellent knowledge of the Shaoxing dialect are like those eminent scholars now editing Ming Dynasty *belles-lettres* they don't know much really. As for northerners, natives of Fujian or Guangdong, to them the Shaoxing dialect is as incomprehensible as jokes in a foreign circus.

I suppose it is very important for literature to have universality, lasting value and comprehensiveness, but these may also prove nails in an author's coffin and his doom. For example, if in China today we want to

write a play that can be put on anywhere, we are setting ourselves an impossible task and must fail in the attempt. So I think the thing to do now is to write plays in which the dialogue is fairly easy to understand. Then when they are performed in schools, no alterations will be needed, when they are performed in other provinces or villages, the script can be used as a base but the language changed into the local dialect, while even the background and names can be changed to make them more familiar to the audience. For instance, if the play is performed in a place where there are no rivers and canals, the boats can be changed to carts, and a character named Sevenpounder can be renamed Little Pigtail.

These then are my views. In a word, the best thing is not to make the play too particularized but capable of rather free adaptation.

Last of all I want to add one small "tail" to my letter, not as interesting, of course, as the tail of those pugs-dogs.* I apologize for this, but speak I must. Several months ago, I remember, I replied to some questions from a friend about the popular language; this letter was published in the *Social Monthly* and followed by an article by Mr. Yang Cunren.** Then a Mr. Shaobo*** said in the *Torch* that I had patched up my previous quarrel with Mr. Yang, commenting at length on the Chinese love of compromise. I suppose this letter will be published too. I remember though that *The Theatre* has already published articles by Mr. Zeng Jinke and Mr. Ye Lingfeng;† and since Mr. Ye even drew a portrait of

* Probably referring to those bourgeois critics who attacked Lu Xun.

** A reactionary writer with whom Lu Xun had some arguments.

*** Pen-name of Tian Han.

† Both these men were reactionary writers in Shanghai at that time.

Ah Q, I presume he can hardly have finished the whole of that volume of *Call to Arms* in the lavatory* — he must either have been constipated for years or bought another copy! If I had been overwhelmed by Mr Shaobo's verdict, I should not have dared write this, but I did not feel I need remain silent. Provided that I state here that I have no authority to prevent my letters from being published and no way of knowing in advance what other articles there will be, I am not compromising with any other writer in the same number. On the other hand, if someone from the same camp assumes a disguise to stab me in the back, I detest and despise such a man even more than an open enemy.

This is not a personal matter, for the time has come when Mr Shaobo can try his old tricks again, and unless I make a statement, what I have said will be considered as evidence of a comprador mentality or eclecticism, and what is the use of that?

Yours faithfully,
Lu Xun

* Ye Lingfeng had said that Lu Xun's *Call to Arms* was good for nothing but toilet paper.

TO THE EDITOR OF *THE THEATRE*

November 18, 1934

Dear Sir,

Today I read in the "Monologue" of the fourteenth number of *The Theatre* that you "regret" not having received any reply from me, but I remember posting you my letter the day before yesterday, and since I wrote it while I was ill I thought I was being most obliging. I mention this specially here to show good will.

In your weekly I have seen several pictures of Ah Q, all of which strike me as too unusual and odd-looking. To my mind, Ah Q should be about thirty, quite ordinary-looking, with a peasant's simplicity and stupidity, but also a touch of roguish cunning. You can probably find shades of him among Shanghai rickshaw men and carters, but he is no tough, no scavenger. When you put a round skull-cap on his head he ceases to be Ah Q; I remember making him wear a felt cap. That is a black, semi-circular object, the front edge of which is turned up over an inch when worn, and there should be caps like this worn in the countryside near Shanghai too.

You say in your paper that you want illustrations. I have ten woodcuts here by Mr. Chen Tiegeng which I am enclosing. If you do not want them, please return them. He is a native of Guangdong and some of the backgrounds he uses are probably based on Guangdong. Numbers 2, 3B, 5 and 7 are the best; though 3A is not consistent with the text, while 9 is even further from the facts — how could there be cars in those days for Ah

Q to ride in? It ought to be a cart, the sort called in some parts a waggon, a four-wheeled cart drawn by horses, which usually carries goods. But Shaoxing had not even carts of that kind. It was the Beijing of those days I had in mind, for the fact is that I have never seen such a display in Shaoxing.

Again, in your *True Story of Ah Q*, you say, "Young D is probably Little Dong." Actually he is not. His name is Little Tong,* and when he grows up he will be just like Ah Q.

Yours faithfully,
Lu Xun

* "Tong" means "same" in Chinese.

SPOOKS AND SPECTRES IN THE CHINESE WORLD OF LETTERS

1

After the Kuomintang switched from co-operating with the Communists to destroying them, it was said that the Kuomintang had merely been utilizing them before, having planned all along to destroy them when the Northern Expedition was nearing completion. I do not believe this, though. Not a few influential members of the Kuomintang were in favour of communism, the proof being their eagerness to send their children to study in the Soviet Union; for Chinese parents prize their children above all else and would never send them to be trained for destruction. But these influential persons seem to have made a mistake. They imagined that if China turned communist their own power could only increase along with their property and concubines, or at least they could be no worse off than before.

One of our old legends has it that above two thousand years ago a Mr Liu by dint of much perseverance attained immortality and could have flown up to heaven with his wife. But she refused to go. For she could not bear to part with their old house, their poultry and dog. So Mr. Liu had to beg the gods to transport their old house, poultry and dog as well, after which they became immortals. So that stupendous change was in fact no change at all. If in a communist state these men could retain all their old pomp or even lead a still more ex-

travagant life, they would certainly like it. When later events, however, proved that communism is not as accommodating as the gods, they made up their minds to destroy the Communists. Though of course they prize their children above all else, they prize their own lives even more.

And so young people everywhere, Communists and those suspected of communism, Leftists and those suspected of Leftism, as well as friends of the suspects, have to wash clean with blood their own errors and those of the mighty. Since the mighty fell into error because they were led astray by the young, the mighty must wash themselves clean with the young people's blood. But many other young people, unaware of this, having completed their studies in the Soviet Union come riding happily back from Mongolia on camels. I remember a foreign tourist who was grieved by this sight. They did not even realize, she said, that the gallows were awaiting them in their own country.

Yes, there are gallows. But gallows are not so bad. Simply to have a noose put round your neck is preferential treatment. Moreover not every one ends up on the gallows, for some find a way out by pulling hard on the legs of those friends being hanged. This gives concrete evidence of their true repentance, and those who can repent are noble souls.

2

Since then all Communists in China unwilling to repent have become criminals who deserve death. And these criminals provide others with endless opportunities: they have become commodities which can be sold, supplying men with a new profession. During troubles in schools or rivalry in love, when one side is labelled a Communist — in other words a criminal — a solution

can be found with the greatest of ease. If you start an argument with a wealthy poet, his conclusion is: "The Communists oppose the bourgeoisie. Since I have money he opposes me. Therefore he is a Communist." Then the muse returns in triumph on a golden chariot.

But the blood of young revolutionaries has watered the shoots of revolutionary literature, making it more revolutionary than before. Since the government has quite a few young men who have studied abroad or acquired much knowledge in China, they are naturally aware of this. First they used the common methods of banning publications, persecuting authors and finally butchering them — five young Leftist writers were killed to set an example.* This was not openly announced, however, for they know that such things may be done but not talked about. As the ancients said long ago, "You can win an empire on horseback, but you cannot govern it on horseback." To destroy revolutionary literature they had to use literary weapons.

The weapon that appeared was "nationalist literature"**. Its writers, after studying the colour of different peoples, decided that those of the same colour should take concerted action. The yellow-skinned proletariat ought not to fight the yellow-skinned bourgeoisie but the white proletariat instead. And they took Genghis Khan as their model, describing how his grandson Batu Khan led yellow hordes into Russia to destroy its civilization, enslaving its nobles and common people alike.

Following a Mongol khan to fight hardly reflects credit on the Chinese race, yet in order to wipe out Russia this had to be done, for now our mighty ones know that the old Russia has turned into the modern Soviet

* On January 17, 1931 five young members of the League of Left-wing Writers were arrested by the Kuomintang authorities. On February 7, they were secretly murdered in Shanghai.

** A slogan hatched by the Kuomintang to cover up its non-resistance policy to Japanese aggression against China.

Union whose principles can never increase their might, wealth or concubines. But who is the Batu Khan of the present day?

In September 1931, the Japanese occupation of our three northeastern provinces in fact prepared the way for Chinese to follow others to destroy the Soviet Union, and our writers of "nationalist literature" should have been satisfied. But to the average citizen the loss of the three northeastern provinces mattered more than the future destruction of the Soviet Union, and he grew heated. Then the writers of "nationalist literature" had to trim their sails by wailing and lamenting. Many young enthusiasts went to Nanjing to demonstrate and demand armed resistance. They had to undergo hard trials, though. They were not allowed on trains to Nanjing till they had camped in the open for several days, and many had to go on foot. Moreover at Nanjing they were met by a large body of previously trained "civilians" armed with clubs, whips and pistols, who beat them black and blue till they slunk home. Some of them disappeared, and some were drowned. According to the newspapers, they fell into the river themselves.

Then the wailing of the writers of "nationalist literature" stopped and they vanished without a trace, having done their job as mourners at the funeral. This was just like the funeral processions in Shanghai. They set out with a motley crew of musicians and people who wail as if they were singing, but whose job it is to bury the sorrow so that it may be forgotten. Once this is achieved every one scatters, and no procession is left.

3

But instead of faltering, the revolutionary literature grew and developed and the readers' confidence in it increased.

Then the other side produced the so-called "third category." These men were definitely not Left-wing but neither did they seem Right-wing — they held aloof. To them, literature was eternal while political phenomena were temporary; hence literature could not be linked with politics. If it were, it would lose its lasting value and China would have no more immortal works. Yet these men of the "third category" who were so loyal to literature could not write immortal works either. Why? Because deluded Left-wing critics with no understanding of literature made harsh and incorrect criticisms of their masterpieces till they were unable to write. These Left-wing critics are the butchers of Chinese literature.

The gentlemen of the "third category" made no comment on the government's ban on certain publications and murder of writers, for that was a political question. To speak of it would destroy the lasting value of their works. Besides, those who persecuted and killed "the butchers of Chinese literature" protected the great and immortal works of the "third category."

Though their feeble, twittering complaints were a kind of weapon, they were naturally too weak to defeat revolutionary literature. So when "nationalist literature" had died a natural death and the "third category" had caved in too, the authorities had to resort once more to real weapons.

In November 1933, the Yihua Film Company in Shanghai was suddenly attacked by a band of men and left an utter shambles. The attackers were well organized. When a whistle blew, they set to work; when another whistle blew, they stopped and scattered. They also left pamphlets attributing this punitive expedition to the fact that this company had been used by the Communist Party. In fact, their punitive expedition was not restricted to one film company but extended to bookshops as well. In some cases a whole band rushed in to smash everything, in others stones were thrown at win-

dows breaking panes of plate glass worth two hundred dollars apiece. Of course, the reason again was that the bookshop had been used by the Communists. The vulnerability of these expensive window-panes made the managers most distressed. A few days later some "writers" arrived to sell their "great works," and though the publishers knew that no one would read them they had to accept these manuscripts. For they cost no more than a window-pane and would avert another stoning as well as the trouble of repairing the windows.

4

So the persecution of bookshops became the best tactics.

A few stones were not enough, though. The Central Propaganda Committee also drew up a long list of forbidden books, one hundred and forty-nine of them. Practically all the books with a large circulation were included. It goes without saying that most of the works of Chinese Left-wing writers were banned, and translations were involved too. Some examples are Gorky, Lunacharsky, Fedin, Fadeyev, Serafimovich and Upton Sinclair, even including Maeterlinck, Sologub and Strindberg.

This certainly put publishers in a difficult position. Some of them surrendered those books at once to be burned. Others tried to save the situation, negotiated with the officials and eventually procured a pardon for a few. To lessen the difficulty of publication in future, the officials and the publishers had a conference, and in the capacity of magazine editors, to safeguard good works and the publishers' capital, several of the "third category" proposed adopting the Japanese way. Before publication manuscripts should be censored so that other writers need not find their works banned on account of

Left-wing writers and the publishers need not lose money on publications banned after they were in print. This proposal which pleased all parties was adopted, though it was not the old way of glorious Batu Khan.

And at once this was put into practice. This July a Committee to Censor Books and Periodicals was set up in Shanghai, saving many "men of letters" from unemployment, while many of the censors' chairs are occupied by revolutionary writers who have recanted and members of the "third category" who oppose any connection between literature and politics. These men are thoroughly familiar with the world of letters, less muddle-headed than mere bureaucrats, better able to understand the implication of any satirical thrust or ironic remark. In any case, polishing is less difficult for a writer than creative work, and we hear the results are excellent.

They were wrong, though, to quote Japan as an example. It is true that in Japan talk of class struggle is forbidden, but they do not go so far as to deny that there is class struggle in the world. In China, on the other hand, they deny the existence of class struggle, calling this a fabrication of Karl Marx and claiming that a ban on such talk safeguards the truth. It is true that in Japan they censor books and periodicals too, but the passages cut are left blank so that readers can see at once that a cut has been made. In China, on the other hand, no blank spaces are allowed, the text must run straight on. So readers think an article is complete, only the writer is talking nonsense. Nor have Friche, Lunacharsky and the rest escaped this fate of being made to talk nonsense to Chinese readers today.

So now the publishers' capital is safe and the banner of the "third category" has disappeared, for they are secretly pulling hard at the legs of other writers on the gallows. And there is no writing to represent them, for they are busy wielding the censor's pen and power.

of life and death All the readers can see is that periodicals are going downhill and articles are deteriorating, while hitherto celebrated progressive writers of other lands have suddenly turned into fools

But in fact the division on the literary front is sharper than ever before No deception can last very long What is to come is another sanguinary battle

November 21, 1934

RIVAL SCHOOLS OF READING

In Chinese medical works, I remember, there are many references to foods which "quarrel" with each other. In other words, if you eat them together they will have an unpleasant effect and may even kill you. Garlic and honey are examples, as well as crabs and persimmons, peanuts and cucumber . . . But whether this is true or not I have no means of knowing, as I have never met anyone who tried.

There are books, too, which "quarrel" with each other, though in a slightly different way. Thus one kind of book cannot be read at the same time as another, or one is bound to be killed by the other, or at the least send the reader into a rage. Take the belles-lettres by Ming Dynasty scholars which are so fashionable now — some of them are certainly clever. They are excellent for bedside or bathroom reading, or to kill time on a train or a boat. But the reader's mind has first to be a blank, or a clutter of confused ideas. If he has read *Historical Anecdotes of the Late Ming Dynasty*, *Anecdotes of Misery** or any works by the patriots at the end of the Ming Dynasty who refused to take office under the Manchus, that will be a different story. The two types of books will quarrel until one has killed the other. Hence I sympathize thoroughly with those who hate these Ming Dynasty belles-lettres.

* Collections of historical anecdotes dating from the end of the Ming Dynasty.

A few days ago I happened to see a collection of Qu Dajun's* prose works, including an essay written in 1669, the seventh year of Kang Xi, "Journey from North Shanxi to the Capital" His style is not inferior to that of Yuan Hongdao,** and in many places he writes very powerfully Let me quote a short passage

They followed the river, sometimes crossing it Often I saw Mongolian yurts with their rounded tops of different heights like mounds Men and women alike were speaking Mongolian Some sold butter, sheep and horses, or yak-skins They slept between two camels, rode in Mongolian carts or bareback in twos and threes They had crimson and yellow cloaks over their shoulders, small iron prayer-wheels in their hands, and were reciting Buddhist incantations All the women with willow crates filled with horse dung or charcoal on their heads were Han people They had their hair coiled round their heads and went barefoot They had unwashed faces and wore fur capes Men and cattle slept together, and the stench carried scores of li away

It seems to me, if a man has read a description like this, imagined scenes like this and not forgotten them completely, then not even Yuan Hongdao's essays after the style of *Zhuang Zi* or *On Flower Vases* will be able to dispel his pent-up rage, but will rather add fuel to the fire Because these read even worse today than when Yuan Hongdao and the rest were pushing their belles-lettres and patting each other on the back — they had not then been through the "Ten Days at Yangzhou" or the "Three Massacres at Jiading"***

* A scholar at the end of the Ming Dynasty, who became a monk rather than serve under the Qing Dynasty

** A famous Ming Dynasty writer of belles-lettres

*** See footnote on p 74 above

These Ming belles-lettres are all very well, their anecdotes are not bad either. But I think *Historical Anecdotes of the Late Ming Dynasty* and similar works by Ming patriots are better. The time has come to edit and reprint them, to make readers today sober up.

November 25, 1934

AH JIN

Recently Ah Jin has got on my nerves

She is a maid-servant, what Shanghaianders call *nangyi* and foreigners an amah. In fact her employer was a foreigner.

She had many women friends who came one after another as soon as it was dark to her window and shouted "Ah Jin! Ah Jin!" This went on till midnight. She seemed to have quite a few men friends too. Once at the back door she announced her views "Why come to Shanghai if you don't have boy-friends?"

That was no concern of mine. But unfortunately her master's back door was almost opposite my front door, so that when shouts of "Ah Jin! Ah Jin!" resounded I was affected. Sometimes it interrupted my writing, sometimes I even wrote the word "Jin" on my manuscript. Worst of all, I had to pass her balcony when I went out, and apparently she was averse to using stairs, so bamboo poles, planks of wood and other things often came crashing down. Thus when I walked past I had to be on my guard and see whether Ah Jin was up there or not. If she was, I must make a detour. Naturally this was largely the fault of my timidity and the undue value I set on my life; but remember that her master was a foreigner. If blood flowed from my broken crown, of course that would not matter. Even if I were killed it would be useless to call a meeting of fellow provincials or send off telegrams in protest. Besides, I may not rate a meeting.

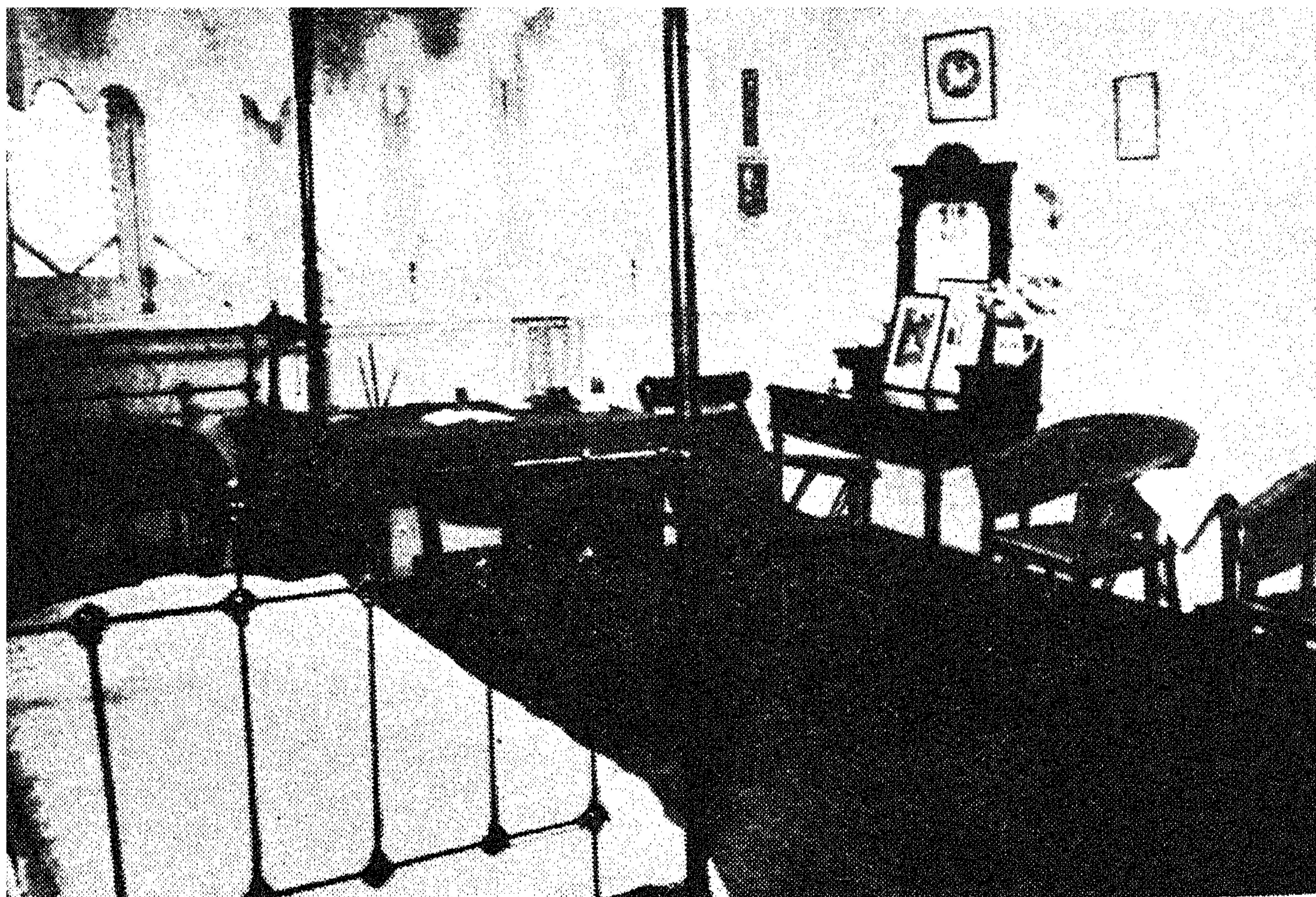
After midnight the world changes and you can no longer retain your daytime mood. At half past three one morning I was sitting up over a translation when I heard a low call from the street. Though I could not hear too clearly, the name called was not Ah Jin and neither, of course, was it mine. I wondered: Who can be calling so late? Getting up, I opened the window to look out and saw a man standing there staring at the window of Ah Jin's chamber. The man did not see me. Repenting my inquisitiveness, I was just about to close my window and retire when Ah Jin's upper half appeared at the small casement opposite. That same instant she caught sight of me and said something to the man, pointing at me and waving him away. Then the fellow bounded off. I felt so conscience-stricken that I could not go on translating. I decided: In future I must mind my own business. I must steel myself to a point where I shall not change colour though Mount Tai crash before me, nor move away though a bomb fall by my side.

Ah Jin, however, seemed totally unaffected, for she laughed as loudly as ever. But since I did not reach this conclusion till the next evening, I had her on my conscience for half a night and nearly one whole day. Then, much as I appreciated her tolerance, her loud meetings and noisy laughter got on my nerves again. Ever since Ah Jin's arrival the atmosphere around her had been disturbed: such was her power. Against this disturbance any remonstrance of mine was completely useless — they did not even look my way. Once a foreigner in the neighbourhood said a few words in some foreign tongue, and they paid no attention either. But when the foreigner charged and kicked out in all directions they scattered and fled, their meeting adjourned. The effect of this kicking lasted for five or six nights.

Afterwards they raised the same racket as before, while the disturbance spread. Ah Jin started a fight with the old woman in the grocery across the road, and various men joined in. Her voice, always clear and carrying, carried further than ever. People twenty houses away must surely have heard. Very soon a large crowd had gathered. Towards the end of this wordy contest mention was naturally made of certain aspects of Ah Jin's amorous adventures. I did not catch exactly what the old woman said, but Ah Jin's reply was

"No one wants an old b—like you! They *do* want me!"

This was doubtless the truth, the spectators seemed to sympathize with her, and the unwanted "old b—" was defeated. Along came a foreign policeman at this point, with his hands behind his back. He watched for a while, then drove away the spectators. Ah Jin hurried forward and spoke to him in his foreign tongue. Having listened with attention, the policeman said with a grin, "Seems to me you're doing all right." He did not arrest the "old b—" but sauntered past with his hands behind his back. And so this street fight ended. However, troubles in the world of men are not so easily solved. That old b— had backing too. Early the next morning a boy working for another foreigner not far away came flying towards Ah Jin's place. There were three toughs at his heels and his shirt was torn. Probably they had lured him outside the house, then blocked the back gate so that he could not retreat and was forced to run to his sweetheart for sanctuary. There is nothing wrong in taking shelter under your sweetheart's wing. Peer Gynt, the hero of one of Ibsen's plays, hid behind his sweetheart's petticoats to listen to lullabies after his defeat. But apparently Ah Jin lacked the affection or courage of the Norwegian girl. She was very quick, however. Just as the boy reached her door she slammed it shut. And he, reaching a dead end,



Lu Xun's study in his Shanghai lodging

stopped. Evidently this took the toughs by surprise as well, for they hesitated before finally raising their fists. Then two of them dealt him three blows on his back and chest, which did not appear very serious; the third punched his face and left a red mark on it. As this street fight was swiftly executed and took place early in the morning, there were not many spectators. Then winners and losers went their respective ways and for a space the world was at peace again. I still felt uneasy, though, for I have heard men say. Peace is only a pause between hostilities.

But after a few days Ah Jin was seen no more. I suspect that her master dismissed her. Her place was taken by a plump amah, a comfortable body with an air of refinement. More than twenty days have passed but still it is fairly quiet, all she has done is hire two street-singers to render some rousing ballad like *Eighteen Places to Touch*.* She was simply having a bit of fun after her honest work, and no one should blame her for that. Unfortunately that attracted another crowd of men and women, including Ah Jin's lover. This may lead to another street fight at any time. But this gave me an opportunity to hear a good baritone song. I found it eminently natural and infinitely superior to such jazz hits as *Light Drizzle* which sounds like a cat being strangled.

Ah Jin was as plain as could be. By plain, I mean that she looked so ordinary that her features are hard to remember. Indeed in less than a month I have forgotten what she looked like. Yet the mere sound of her name still gets on my nerves. Of course I can hardly hate her for raising a racket near by, but I resent her because within a few days she shook convictions and theories which I have held for thirty years.

* A bawdy song popular at the time.

I never used to believe that Wang Zhaojun saved the Han Dynasty by going to the Huns or that Hua Mulan safeguarded the Sui Dynasty by joining the army. Nor did I believe those old tales about Daji bringing about the fall of the Shang Dynasty, Xishi ruining the Kingdom of Wu, and Lady Yang causing a rebellion in the Tang Dynasty. It seemed to me that in a patriarchal society women could not have so much power, and whether a state prospered or declined depended on the men. If male writers usually laid the blame for any disaster on women, this just showed how despicable such men were. Yet now Ah Jin, an ordinary-looking maid with no special talent, had contrived in less than a month to cause a disturbance extending for a quarter of a li. Had she been a queen or empress dowager, imagine the havoc she would have caused! Undoubtedly there would have been great trouble.

Formerly Confucius "understood the Way of Heaven at fifty," but now I have started to doubt the way of men just because of a woman like Ah Jin. Although an ordinary man is not to be compared with a sage, this nevertheless shows the power of Ah Jin and my own helplessness. I do not want to attribute the deterioration in my essays to Ah Jin's shouting, though all I have said seems to be shifting the blame, but it is true that recently Ah Jin has got on my nerves and seemed to be blocking my path.

I hope Ah Jin is never taken as a model for Chinese womanhood.

December 21, 1934

THE VULGAR SHOULD KEEP OUT OF GENTLEMEN'S WAY

This struck me after reading some magazines

This vulgar world has few "gentlemen of refinement" and few acts done in 'good taste' Till the world becomes completely vulgar, however, "gentlemen of refinement" will not disappear altogether, only the prevalence of those who "offend good taste" means that they cannot be completely refined either.

Confucian scholars preach humanity and tolerance, but if they meet inhumane and intolerant people they cannot remain humane and tolerant themselves. So though Zhu Xi was a great Confucian worthy, during his period of office he had to bastinado a helpless sing-song girl* Although the writers of the Crescent Moon Society detest vicious abuse, when they are abused by others they must perforce resort to abuse themselves. Although Mr Lin Yutang admires "fair play," when he was enjoying the chrysanthemums in Hangzhou and came across young people "with Soviet cigarettes in their mouths and translations of books by some —sky in their hands," he had to "put on a listless and worried look, as if concerned for the fate of the country." (See *The Analects*,** No. 55) This was quite out of character

* While on a tour of inspection, to show disapproval of the Magistrate of Tiantai he had the latter's favourite singsong girl beaten.

** See footnote on p. 24 above.

Sometimes worthy persons need to be contrasted with others of a different type the upper class with the lower, the good with the bad, the cultured with the vulgar, the petty-minded with the magnanimous and so forth Without a foil their virtues are not so apparent This is what is meant by the "unity of opposites" But the foil must try to help, or at least show understanding, if he can't lend a hand, at least he mustn't spoil the show, forcing gentlemen to behave in an ungentlemanly way For example, Cao Cao* had a liberal outlook, but when Mi Heng** went day after day to swear at him, he could not but lose his temper and have Mi Heng sent to Huang Zu "to be killed by another's hand" And really, Mi Heng had only himself to blame

Naturally, "gentlemen of refinement" can't be refined all the time Though they sleep on gauze-curtained beds and feed on fragrant rice, in the basic matter of sleeping and eating they do not differ greatly from the vulgar, they cannot refrain entirely from turning over in their minds how best to make money or secure their positions Where they differ from the common herd is in their sudden occasional displays of refinement But to give away their secret would spoil the show None but the vulgar would do such a thing, and by so doing drag down the gentleman, making it impossible for him to go on behaving in a gentlemanly way — forcing him to "stoop to the level of the vulgar" If not for the vulgar type this would not happen So the vulgar one should take the blame

Let us take the case of two magistrates, both of whom, of course, must transact official business and deal with lawsuits all day If one of them goes out

* (A D 155-220), famous statesman and general in the Three Kingdoms Period

** A scholar at the end of the Han Dynasty

occasionally to look at the plum blossom, he should be considered as a cultured official and praised, for only so can this world have men of refinement and affairs in good taste. To refrain from praise is not so bad, but to raise your eyebrows is vulgar, while making fun of the matter is spoiling a fine show. There are vulgar, impertinent wretches like this, however. I remember in some collection of old Chinese humour a verse by a certain "wag" about a magistrate who went to look at the plum blossom during his leisure.

*Runners in red caps and black caps raised a shout.
Our cultured prefect has come out to enjoy the
plum.*

*The blossoms lower their heads and say to him:
"Your humble servants await Your Honour's pleasure."*

This is a vile joke, ruining this elegant occasion completely. And the words put into the mouths of the plum blossom are most unseemly too, for they should have kept quiet in order not to spoil the atmosphere of refinement, forcing His Honour to set refinement aside and bastinado them in a vulgar way, or at least charge him with some crime. Why? Because his refinement can no longer exist side by side with your vulgarity.

A prudent man who happens to meet great-hearted gentlemen or cultured scholars, if he can't lend a helping hand or add to the fun should get as far away as possible, the further the better. For otherwise he will receive looks and reprisals quite counter to their professions. If he is unlucky he may be involved in that old talk about "roubles" and have serious trouble. Just being accused of having a Soviet cigarette in your mouth and a translated work by some —sky in your hand is not so bad — but it is a narrow escape.

We all know the saying, "A wise man keeps away from the world"* To my mind, nowadays the vulgar should keep out of gentlemen's way For this, too, is one means of self-preservation

December 26, 1934

* From *The Analects* of Confucius

1935

HERMITS

“Hermit” has always been a respectable title, though occasionally it is also used to poke fun. This is most clearly the case in the poem, still quoted today, satirizing Chen Jiyu.*

*A fluttering crane appears in the clouds,
Flying to and fro round the prime minister's yamen.*

I believe there was a misconception here. Because Chen had too high an opinion of himself, others made exaggerated demands on him. Both sides forgot what he was and failed to understand each other, yet could not refrain from talk. That naturally caused trouble.

Hermits, as conceived by those who are not hermits, are men whose talents go unrecognized, who live in retreat in the hills or woods. But the world could not know of such men. By the time they have hung out the trade sign “hermit,” even if they do not “fly to and fro” they cannot avoid some self-advertisement, or perhaps their hangers-on may beat gongs and shout. Yes, hermits have hangers-on too, paradoxical as this may sound. Once their trade sign is good for a meal, hangers-on appear straight away — this is what is known as “living on the edge of the trade sign.” This is much criticized by those who are not hermits, who imagine hermits must be extremely prosperous if they are such a money-making proposition. But this exaggerated estimate is another misconception, similar to that of

* Chen Jiyu (1558-1639) was a Ming Dynasty scholar.

imagining that all famous hermits die of old age in the forest. Any hermit already famous enjoys "a carefree life all the year round." Failing this, he must cut firewood at dawn, till the fields all day, water his vegetables at dusk and plait straw sandals at night — with no time to smoke, sip tea, chant poems or write essays. Mr Tao Yuanming is one of the most celebrated hermits China has had, known as "the idyllic poet." Naturally he never became the editor of a magazine, and he lived too early to be a Boxer Indemnity scholar, but he owned slaves. The slaves during the Han and Jin dynasties not only waited on their masters but farmed and traded for them: they were genuine instruments of production. So even Mr Tao had his slender means of livelihood. Otherwise the old gentleman would have had no food, let alone wine, and would soon have starved to death by his "eastern fence."

So if we want to observe the behaviour of hermits, this is the only type to observe. We have no way of seeing genuine hermits. Whole cartloads and housefuls of books have been written since ancient times, but can we find any by wood-cutters or fishermen? Their work is cutting wood and catching fish. As for men of letters who describe themselves as wood-cutters and anglers, they are pretty well all gentlemen of leisure who have never handled a rod or an axe in their life. Anyone fool enough to try to learn the joys of a hermit's life from them has only himself to blame.

Taking office is one way of filling your rice bowl, becoming a hermit is another. If you cannot fill your bowl, you cannot hope to be a hermit. This "flying to and fro" is in order to become a hermit — in other words to get a rice bowl. Once the trade sign "hermit" is hung up in some "sequestered spot in the city," you are a genuine "hermit" and your rice bowl is assured. Your hangers-on beat gongs and shout because they are not up to being hermits themselves and can only hope

to make a little out of you — this is also a question of the rice bowl. Since the Han and Tang dynasties no disgrace has attached to officialdom and no special glory to a hermit's life, which is not a poor one either. It is only when a scholar tries to become a hermit and fails that we know he is in a bad way. Zuo Yan, a poet at the end of the Tang Dynasty, wrote, "I failed to become either hermit or official." This lets us into the secret of so-called "hermits."

Failure to become a hermit is a defeat. This shows the connection between hermits and comfort: at least one does not have to struggle for existence, and one has plenty of time. Yet singing the praise of idleness and extolling tobacco and tea are one form of struggle, simply a more veiled form. Since even a "hermit" still requires a rice bowl, the trade sign needs to be kept freshly varnished and intact. This is why hermits turn deaf ears and unseeing eyes when Mount Tai crumbles or the Yellow River floods; but if any comment is made on the hermit brotherhood, be it a thousand li away and no more than half a sentence, their perceptions are strangely acute and they rise up as if the matter were of greater moment than the destruction of the world. Yet it may be something completely inconsequential.

Once we understand this, we need not be shocked by hermits. We can understand them without making any comment, and that will save both sides trouble.

January 25, 1935

ON SATIRE

It is hard to be completely free from prejudice. When we see a satire, we cannot consider it genuine literature because we were brought up to believe that satire is not a good thing. But go to any social gathering place and you will observe scenes like this. Two fat gentlemen bow from the waist to each other with clasped hands, and with glistening faces embark on an exchange of courtesies.

“Your distinguished name?”

“My unworthy name is Qian.”

“Yes, indeed! I have long looked forward to meeting you! I have not yet inquired your honourable style.”

“My humble style is Kuoting.”

“Admirable! Admirable! And your distinguished native town?”

“Shanghai.”

“Indeed! Excellent! Certainly.”

No one finds this in the least strange. But if you were to put this into a story men would judge otherwise, and it would almost certainly be called a satire. Thus many writers who describe nothing but the truth have been officially dubbed “satirists” — it is hard to say whether this is praise or blame. We see this in China in *Jin Ping Mei** when Censor Cai flatters Ximen Qing by saying, “I am not up to Wang Anshi, but you, sir, have all the fine qualities of Wang Xizhi!”

* A Ming Dynasty novel of exposure.

And in *The Scholars*⁶ we find Fan Jin refusing to use ivory chopsticks because he is in mourning, yet “he extracted a large shrimp ball from the dish of bird’s nests, and popped it into his mouth.” Similar happenings are still to be met with today. As for foreign works, Chinese readers have lately been taking an interest in Gogol’s works, and then there are officials, great and small, in Gogol’s *The Overcoat* (translated by Wei Suyuan and published by the Weiming Library), and country gentlemen, doctors and wastrels in his *The Nose* (translated by Xu Xia⁷ and published in *World Literature*) Types like these can be found in China even today. They are obviously real people and common types, yet we all call this satire.

Most men hanker after fame. During their lives they write autobiographies, and they hope that after they die others will write obituary notices or eulogies for them, or even “order the National Historical Bureau to compile their biography.” By no means all men are blind to their own foibles, but they do not want to change these and simply hope they will vanish without a trace, leaving only virtues behind—the congee-kitchens they have opened for the starving. But not all their behaviour is of a piece with this. They know of course that “Admirable! Admirable!” is rather gushing. But they also believe that these words once spoken are forgotten and will never figure in their biographies; they therefore have no scruple in uttering them. And they are extremely annoyed if someone records this instead of obliterating it. After hard thought they hit back to conceal the truth about themselves, smearing the writer with mud by declaring that this is a “satire.” And instead of stopping to think, the rest of us agree: “This is a satire!” We are really pretty badly taken in

* A Qing Dynasty novel by Wu Jingzi, debunking the examination system

** Lu Xun’s pen-name.

The same is true of what is known as "calling names" If you see a prostitute accosting men on Fourth Avenue in Shanghai, and say, "The whore is grabbing customers," she will abuse you for "calling names" "Calling names" is a bad thing And since you are adjudged bad, the other side must be good As a matter of fact it was true that "the whore was grabbing customers" However, this is something you may know but must not say If forced to, just remark, "The young lady is busily plying her trade" In the same way, you should describe those men who bow from the waist with clasped hands as "modest and unassuming in all their dealings" Only so do you avoid calling people names and being satirical

As a matter of fact, most so-called modern satires are truthful Unless you write the truth it cannot be "satire" Untruthful satire — if such a thing exists — is simply rumour and slander.

March 16, 1935

“SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER” (I)

One grows tired of using the same expression all the time. In the so-called world of letters the year before last there was that heated discussion on “men of letters have no morals.” Last year there was an uproar about “the Beijing type and the Shanghai type.” And this year we have a new slogan: “Scholars scorn each other.”

Those who use this slogan take great exception to this tendency. According to them, “Truth weeps.” So they raise a fierce outcry and pour scorn on all “scholars.” They detest “scorn,” but since scholars’ scorn of each other upsets the harmonious world which is their ideal, they have to show scorn themselves. Of course, this is “doing unto others as they do unto you,” the excellent device of our ancient sages. But scorn is a bad habit very hard to break.

If we search our ancient literature for phrases, we can probably find “scholars scorn each other” a not inelegant expression. But as Mr. Cao Juren pointed out in *Free Talk* (April 9-11), when Cao Pi* used the phrase he meant: “Since there are many styles in literature and one writer seldom embodies the merits of all, scholars tend to scorn those who fall short where they excel.” In other words, such strictures were confined to literary composition. They did not include at-

* Son of the famous statesman Cao Cao and first emperor of the Wei Dynasty.

tacks on a man's appearance or birth-place, nor slander and rumour-mongering, nor such arguments as Mr Shi Zhecun's "He is just as bad himself," or Mr Wei Jinzhi's "His relative is like that too" If we embrace all these in Cao Pi's comment we are mixing up black and white, and though "Truth weeps" this increases the chaos in the world of letters

Again if we look for phrases in *Zhuang Zi*, we can probably find this inestimable precept "There is truth in this and also truth in that" This charm so handy to bear in mind in case of emergency is not inelegant either But this can be used on certain occasions only, not the whole of the time And those who like to quote this axiom today are as far removed in spirit from *Zhuang Zi* as a pug-dog from *Lao Zi* — we need not waste time on them here Yet even *Zhuang Zi* in his account of different schools of thought enumerated the shortcomings of each, and because he believed there was no absolute truth, he scorned them for seeking to establish truth If not for this, there would have been no *Zhuang Zi* He could simply have written, "It's a fine day today ha, ha, ha!"

Since we are not living in the age of the Three Kingdoms, however, we need not copy the scholars of that period who scorned others who fell short where they excelled When critics comment on writers or writers comment on each other, of course they can point out shortcomings and mention good points, they can also gloss over shortcomings and praise good points But the writer must have some good points and the critic must have a clear sense of right and wrong, strong likes and dislikes If we let this woolly slogan "scholars scorn each other" frighten us into putting up with all sorts of young dandies posing as fine writers, hooligans pretending to be cultured, or pimps hawking pornography — if we simply bow humbly to all of them, not daring or not

liking to say a word — what sort of critic or writer are we? Such a man should naturally be the first to be "scorned"!

April 14, 1935

STREET VENDORS PAST AND PRESENT

"Cream of pearl-barley, almonds and lotus-seeds!"

"Sugared rose cakes!"

"Noodles with shrimp and pork *hun tun*!"*

"Spiced eggs boiled in tea!"

These were the street-cries four or five years ago in the Zhabei district of Shanghai. Anyone keeping a record from morning till night could probably collect two or three dozen of them. Folk certainly seemed willing to spend money on snacks in those days and frequently patronized the street vendors, for the frequent interruptions in the vendors' cries meant that they were attending to customers. Those slogans of theirs were certainly mellifluous too. I don't know whether their fine phrases were culled from late Ming belles-lettres or late Ming essays, but they set your mouth watering if you were a rustic new to Shanghai like myself. Pearl-barley and almonds *plus* lotus-seed — this was more piquant than I could ever have dreamed. But it had one bad effect on those who lived by the pen, for unless you had achieved the perfect serenity of one whose "heart is like a stagnant well," you would be so distracted by these cries all day and all night that you could not write a thing.

Now all that has changed. The small eating-houses beside the road once occupied at noon and dusk by

* A kind of dumpling

gentlemen in long gowns now seem "sunk in quiet melancholy,"¹ their old customers having gone to the smaller eating-places which were formerly the haunts of rickshaw men. As for the rickshaw men, of course they have had to withdraw to the roadside hungry, with a bite of unleavened bread perhaps if they are lucky. Strange to say, the street-cries have changed completely too. Vendors still sell snacks, but only olives or *hun tun*. Seldom indeed do you come across the old "artistic" confections. The shouting continues unabated, that goes without saying. As long as Shanghailanders exist, so long will there be shouting. But the cries have become considerably more matter-of-fact: sesame oil, beancurd, pomade, bamboo poles for hanging washing and so forth. The salesmanship has improved too. Sometimes one man selling socks will sing the praise of their durability, or two men selling cloth will chant a duet extolling their material's cheapness. But they usually sing all the way down the lane and all the way back again — seldom do they stop to do business.

Occasionally there are also high-class wares such as fruit and flowers. But since these are not intended for Chinese, the vendors use foreign cries. "Ringo!^{**} Banana, Appulu-u, Appulu-u-u," "Hana,^{***} ah, Hana-a-a! Ha-a-na-a-a!" But there are not too many foreign customers either.

Sometimes blind fortune-tellers or mendicant monks come into these back streets. Their special targets are the maids, and their business is comparatively good, telling a woman's fortune here, selling a charm on yellow paper there. This year, however, their business has fallen off too, which accounts for the appearance the other day of an elaborate show. First I heard the sound

* Quotation from an essay by Lin Yutang.

** Japanese for "apple"

*** Japanese for "flower."

of drum, cymbals and iron chains I had been on the point of composing a surrealist poem in the vernacular style, but this drove all poetic fancies out of my head, and searching for the source of the din I spotted a monk with an iron hook on his chest trailing a chain more than ten feet long into our alley. Two other monks were beating the drum and clashing cymbals. But all the maids shut their gates and vanished from sight. Not a single copper did that lofty ascetic get.

Later I asked the maids why they had run. Their answer was "By the looks of him, it would take more than twenty cents to get rid of him."

So you cannot make much money now in Shanghai by solo-singing, duets, spectacular shows or even self-torture. On the one hand this proves "the lack of moral standards" in the foreign concessions, but on the other it proves that our only course now is to "rehabilitate the countryside"* Alas!

April 23, 1935

* In 1933, for propaganda purposes, the Kuomintang set up a committee for the rehabilitation of the countryside.

CONFUCIUS IN MODERN CHINA

Recently, according to the Shanghai papers, the completion of a temple to Confucius in Yushima,* Japan, has induced General He Jian, governor of Hunan Province, to donate it a portrait of the sage from his treasured collection of paintings. Frankly, ordinary people in China have practically no idea what Confucius looked like, for although since ancient times every county has invariably had a temple to the sage, these usually contained no portrait of him. It is the general rule to make portraits or statues of worthies larger than life; but in the case of the very worthiest, a sage such as Confucius, any portrayal at all appears sacrilegious and therefore it is better to have none. This is not unreasonable. Since Confucius left no photograph we naturally cannot tell what he actually looked like, while the few written descriptions we happen to have may be nonsense for all we know. The only way for a sculptor to make a fresh image is by relying on his own imagination, and this is even more risky. Hence the Confucians finally had to adopt Brand's** attitude: "All or nothing"

And yet one does occasionally come across portraits of Confucius. I have seen three of these: one, an illustration to the *Anecdotes of Confucius*,*** one, the frontispiece of *Qing Yi Bao*, a periodical published in Yokohama by

* Name of a street in Tokyo.

** A character in one of Ibsen's dramas.

*** This record of the sayings and deeds of Confucius is attributed to Wang Su of the third century A.D.

Liang Qichao' when he was a fugitive in Japan, then brought from Japan to China, and one, a stone relief on a Han Dynasty tomb showing Confucius meeting Lao Zi. The impression of Confucius gained from these was that of a very lean old gentleman in a long, wide-sleeved gown with either a sword at his waist or a staff tucked under his arm, who never smiled but looked thoroughly awe-inspiring. Anyone sitting beside him would have to hold himself so stiff and straight that after a couple of hours his joints would be aching, and any normal person would most probably have to beat a hasty retreat.

Later I made a trip to Shandong. While suffering from the roughness of the roads, I suddenly remembered our Confucius. It tickled me to think of that forbidding-looking sage jolting along in a rickety cart as he hurried about his business here in the old days. Of course this was a reprehensible notion verging, in fact, on irreverence, which no disciple of Confucius would entertain. But many young people at that time held unseemly views like mine.

I was born at the end of the Qing Dynasty when Confucius had the awe-inspiring title "Most Perfect, Most Sage King of Culture"*** and when, it goes without saying, the Sage's Way held sway throughout the country. The government made scholars read specified works, the Four Books and the Five Classics, abide by specified commentaries, write a specified form of essay, the *bagu* essay,** and express specified opinions. But these stereotyped

* Liang Qichao (1873-1929), a bourgeois reformist at the end of the Qing Dynasty.

** From the Tang to the Qing Dynasty, the ruling class of each dynasty conferred exalted titles like this on Confucius.

*** The form of essay used in the official examinations from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Each essay comprised eight sections and the last four, which summed up the main theme, were divided into two parts, hence the name *bagu*, literally "eight-legged."

Confucian scholars, all knowing quite well that the earth was square, were at such a loss on this round globe of ours that when they fought France and England,¹ lands not to be found in the Four Books, they were defeated. Then, whether thinking it more expedient to save their skins than to worship Confucius and perish, or whether for some other reason, at all events the government and officials began for the first time to waver in their fanatical worship of Confucius, and government funds were spent on large-scale translation of books by foreign devils. In second-hand bookshops today may still be found relics of that period: scientific classics such as J. F. W. Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, C. Lyell's *Elements of Geology* and J. D. Dana's *System of Mineralogy* **

But a reaction was inevitable. So there appeared Grand Secretary Xu Tong,*** known as the flower of Confucian scholarship at the end of the Qing Dynasty. He not only scoffed at mathematics as a study belonging to the foreign devils but, although conceding the existence of such countries as France and England, utterly refused to believe in that of Spain and Portugal. According to him, these were names cooked up at random by France and England, due to their own embarrassment at the number of demands they were making on China. He was also the instigator behind the scenes as well as the director of the famous Yi He Tuan Uprising of 1900. But the Yi He Tuan failed

* Referring to the Opium Wars of 1840-42 and 1856-60 and the Sino-French War of 1884-85. These wars of aggression launched by Britain and France ended with the defeat of the Qing forces.

** J. F. W. Herschel (1792-1871) was an English astronomer. C. Lyell (1797-1875) was an English geologist. J. D. Dana (1813-95) was an American geologist.

*** Xu Tong (1819-1900), a die-hard official towards the end of the Qing Dynasty, proposed besieging the foreign legations in Beijing with the Yi He Tuan forces, but he was not the leader of this uprising.

completely, and Grand Secretary Xu committed suicide. Then once again the government decided there was much to be learned from foreign politics, law, scholarship and technology. This, moreover, was the time when I was so eager to go to Japan to study. I gained my object, entering Kobun College founded by Mr Kano in Tokyo, where Professor Rikitaro Misawa taught me that water is compounded of hydrogen and oxygen, and Professor Shigeo Yamanouchi taught me that inside its shell a mollusc has a "mantle." One day Dean Okubo summoned us all and announced, "Since you are all disciples of Confucius, go and pay your respects today in the Confucian Temple at Ochanomizu."* I was amazed. I remember thinking, "I came to Japan just because I had lost faith in Confucius and his disciples. Do I still have to worship him here?" I was astounded. And I am pretty sure I was not the only one to react in this way.

It is not only in the twentieth century, however, that Confucius has begun to be slighted in his own country. Mencius criticized him for being "a sage who followed the fashion of the times." In modern terms we should have to call him "a sage in vogue." Of course this was not a dangerous title for him, but neither was it altogether gratifying. In any case, it may not have fitted the facts. Confucius was not to become a "sage in vogue" till after his death. During his lifetime he had plenty of trouble. He rushed this way and that, and though he once held the exalted position of Minister of Justice in the state of Lu he promptly fell from favour and lost his job. Moreover, he was despised by powerful ministers, jeered at by country bumpkins and even mobbed by hooligans, he was gaunt with hunger; and although he collected about three thousand disciples only seventy-two of these were any good, while there was only one he could really trust. One day

* A district in Tokyo

Confucius said indignantly, "Since my Way is making no headway, I shall get upon a raft and float out to sea. I am sure You will come with me." This pessimistic estimate gives the show away. Yet even this You later, in a fight with the enemy, had the strap of his cap cut. But because he really was a faithful disciple, at this juncture he did not forget his master's instruction, "A gentleman will not die without his cap," and he went on tying on the strap while the enemy made mincemeat of him. Naturally Confucius was most upset by the loss of his sole trustworthy disciple. It was recorded that when he heard this news he gave orders for the mincemeat in his kitchen to be thrown away.

We may say that the sage's luck took a turn for the better after his death. Because he could no longer pontificate, various authorities started whitewashing him in various ways till he was raised to awe-inspiring heights. And yet, compared with the later imported Sakyamuni Buddha, he cut rather a poor figure. True, every county had a Confucian Temple, but this was always a lonely, neglected place where the common folk never worshipped. If they wanted to worship they looked for a Buddhist temple or a shrine to some deity. If you ask ordinary people who Confucius was, of course they will answer, "A sage," but this is simply echoing the authorities. They also respect and preserve waste paper with writing on it; but only because of the superstitious belief that unless they do this a thunderbolt will strike them dead. The Confucian Temple in Nanjing is certainly popular, but this is because of all the extraneous amusements and teashops there. Though it is said that the *Spring and Autumn Annals** edited by Confucius dismayed all treacherous ministers and bad sons, hardly anybody now-

* A historical record starting with the year 722 B C and ending with the year 481 B C

adays knows the name of a single one of those wicked men subdued by his pen. When anyone mentions treacherous ministers, people usually think of Cao Cao, and this they learned not from Confucius but from anonymous novelists and playwrights.

In a word, it was those in authority who boosted Confucius in China, making him the sage of those in power or those anxious to take power, a sage having nothing to do with the common people. And as for the Confucian temples, those in power soon lose their enthusiasm for these. Since there are ulterior motives behind their cult of Confucius, once their aim is attained this paraphernalia becomes superfluous, and even more superfluous if they fail. Thirty or forty years ago when all who wanted power, that is, hoped to become officials, used to study the Four Books and the Five Classics and write *bagu* essays, others dubbed these books and essays "bricks to knock on doors." In other words, once the examinations were passed these things would be forgotten, just as a brick is dropped once the door is opened. This fellow Confucius has, in fact, been used since his death as a "brick to knock on doors."

A glance at some recent cases makes this still clearer. Since the start of the twentieth century Confucius has had a run of very bad luck, but by the time of Yuan Shikai he was once more remembered, not only were his sacrifices restored but bizarre new costumes were designed for those offering sacrifice. This was followed by the attempt to restore the monarchy. That door did not open, however, and Yuan Shikai died outside it. That left the Northern warlords who, once they felt their end approaching, also used Confucius as a brick to knock at other doors of happiness. General Sun Chuanfang, who

* Cao Cao (A. D. 155-220), famous statesman and general in the Three Kingdoms Period, brought the prolonged wars among the various warlords and unified north China.

controlled Jiangsu and Zhejiang and mowed down innocent people at will on the road, revived the Confucian ceremony of *tou hu*.^{*} General Zhang Zongchang who wormed his way into Shandong and had more money, soldiers and concubines than he could count, reprinted the Thirteen Classics and, thinking the Sage's Way something contagious like syphilis, chose a descendant of Confucius to be his son-in-law. Yet neither of these generals succeeded in opening the door to happiness.

These three men used Confucius as a brick to open a door, but since times had changed they all failed utterly. Apart from failing themselves, they involved Confucius, making his position still more lamentable. Being barely literate, they caused amusement by insisting on holding forth about the Thirteen Classics; by preaching one thing but practising another they disgusted people further. Those who dislike monks also hate monkish vestments, and now men's clearer perception of the way Confucius was being used as a tool for a specific purpose intensified their longing to overthrow him. Hence lauding Confucius to the skies inevitably gave rise to articles and other works pointing out his failings. Even Confucius must have had his faults, which normally would have attracted no attention, for a sage is only human after all and human frailty is excusable. But if the sage's disciples come out and rant, making this and that claim for their master and insisting that others do likewise, people cannot help roaring with laughter. Five or six years ago, quite a stir was

* Sun Chuanfang (1884-1935), a warlord who suppressed Shanghai workers, was defeated in 1926 by the revolutionary forces. The game of *tou hu*, or pitching arrows into a pot, had been played in feasts in ancient times. In 1926 Sun revived it in Nanjing.

** Zhang Zongchang (1882-1932) was the chief warlord in Shandong in 1925 when he reintroduced the worship of Confucius and ordered people to kowtow at the sacrifice to the "sage." The Thirteen Classics are Confucian canons.

caused by the performance of *Confucius and Nan Zi** Confucius in that play may seem somewhat irresponsible and thick-headed for a sage, but considered as a man he is quite a sympathetic character. However, the sage's descendants were so incensed that they took the matter to court. For it so happened that the performance took place in Confucius' home town where his descendants have multiplied exceedingly, becoming a privileged class the like of which Buddha and Socrates must both envy. But, again, this may be precisely the reason why those young people who were not the sage's descendants decided to stage *Confucius and Nan Zi* there.

The ordinary people of China, especially those known as the ignorant mob, though they call Confucius sage, have never really looked upon him as such. They accord him respect but have no feeling for him. Yet I fancy no other people in the world know Confucius as well as the so-called ignorant mob in China. Admittedly, Confucius devised outstanding methods of governing the state, but these were thought up to rule the people for the sake of those in authority, there was nothing of any value to the people. This is what is meant by the saying "Rites do not extend to the common people." That Confucius became the sage of those in authority and ended up as a brick to open doors was after all no more than he deserved. We cannot say he had nothing to do with the people, but I fear the politest thing we can say is that he had absolutely no feeling for them. To have no feeling for a sage who had absolutely no feeling for them is only natural. Try any time you like going in rags and barefoot to the

* A play describing how Confucius paid his respects to Nan Zi, concubine of Duke Ling of Wei. In 1926, students of a Shandong school put on this play in Qufu, the home town of Confucius. The local feudal forces, highly incensed, accused the students of insulting their ancestor. The Kuomintang educational authorities then made an investigation and dismissed the principal of that school.

sacrificial hall in the Confucian Temple in Qufu to look round, and you will probably be thrown out as fast as when you blunder into a high-class cinema or a first-class tram carriage in Shanghai. For these, as everyone knows, are for bigwigs and gentlemen even the ignorant mob is not so ignorant as not to understand that.

April 29, 1935

WHAT IS SATIRE?

A Reply to the Society of Literature

I believe that when a writer uses concise or even rather exaggerated language — of course this must be done artistically — to tell the truth about certain aspects of some group of people, those written about call the work a "satire"

Truth is the life of satire not necessarily true happenings that have occurred, but at least things that could happen. So satire is neither "fabrications" nor "slander," neither "revealing secrets" nor simply recording "sensational news" and "strange phenomena." The events described take place publicly and frequently, but since they are usually considered quite commonplace they are naturally passed over. Yet these events are irrational, ridiculous, disgusting or even detestable. It is only because they have gone on till men are accustomed to them that even in public and among the masses they occasion no surprise, yet specially pointed out they create a sensation. For example, it is very common for a young man in a Western suit to worship Buddha and even more common for a moralist to lose his temper. These things require a few minutes only and are over without a trace. But if Satire takes photographs at this juncture of the young man kowtowing with his bottom in the air and the moralist scowling, these not only offend the eyes of those who see them but their own eyes as well, and such pictures when circulated are detrimental to their lofty schemes to advocate science or Confucian morality. It is no use saying

these photographs are not genuine, for every one can recognize them and is convinced that such things really happened; but the men concerned will not admit this, for that would make them lose face. So resorting to cunning, they describe these works as "satire." In other words, writing which is worthless since it concerns itself deliberately with such matters.

But it is the art of satire to concern itself deliberately with such matters, bringing out their essence, even with exaggeration. The same incident carelessly and unartistically recorded would not be satire, nor would anyone be affected by it. For example, I remember two news items this year. One concerned a young man who passed himself off as an army officer to go about cheating people, when exposed he wrote a confession, saying that he had done this solely as a means of livelihood and for no other reason. The second concerned a thief who took in pupils and taught them how to steal; when the parents discovered this and locked their sons up, the thief went to threaten them. The papers often publish special comments on matters of relative significance, but no comments have been made so far on these incidents: apparently they are considered too commonplace to merit attention. Yet if such material fell into the hands of Swift or Gogol, I am sure it would become an excellent satire. In certain societies the more common an incident, the more prevalent, the more suited it is for satire.

Although the satirist is generally hated by those whom he satirizes, his intentions are often good, he writes hoping that these men will change for the better, not to push some group under water. By the time a satirist appears in a group, however, that group is already doomed. Certainly writing cannot save it. Hence his efforts are generally vain or may even have an opposite effect, for while he merely exposes shortcomings or iniquities, this is utilized by another group hostile to his. I fancy this other group must look on matters rather differently

from those satirized, regarding this as "exposure" instead of "satire"

If a work looks satirical but lacks a positive aim and genuine passion, simply convincing its readers that there is nothing good in the world, nothing worth doing, this is not satire but "cynicism"

May 3, 1935

GOSSIP IS A FEARFUL THING

“Gossip is a fearful thing” — this pronouncement was found in a letter left by the film actress Ruan Lingyu when she committed suicide. After some idle talk this incident which caused such a stir is gradually losing its interest. Indeed, once *Death of a Film Star*^{*} stops being staged it will sink into utter oblivion like the suicide of Ai Xia^{**} last year. Their deaths serve only to add a few grains of salt to the boundless human ocean, and though gossip-mongers may smack their lips before long the affair once more becomes as dull as ditch-water.

This pronouncement caused quite a commotion at first. Some commentators claimed that the newspapers were partly to blame for her suicide by giving such publicity to her lawsuit. But one journalist publicly retorted that the power of the press today and the weight of public opinion are too small for them to control anyone's fate; moreover most such reports are based on official sources and not trumped-up stories, as can be verified by looking up back numbers. Hence newspapers had nothing to do with the death of Ruan Lingyu.

All this is true. But — it is not the whole truth.

It is true that newspapers today are not what they should be. It is also true that commentators cannot talk

* A play based on Ruan Lingyu's suicide and staged in Shanghai.

** Another film actress who committed suicide in February 1934.

freely and have no prestige. Thus no one in his senses would blame newspapermen unduly. Nevertheless the power of the press has not disappeared completely, though it cannot injure some it can still damage others. Weak in the face of the strong, it seems strong enough to those weaker than itself, so although sometimes it has to suffer in silence, at others it still shows its might. And those like Ruan Lingyu make good copy for a display of power, because although a celebrity she was helpless. Your small townfolk love to listen to scandals, especially scandals about someone they know. When the old women of Shanghai's highways and byways hear that a strange man has been going to Second Sister's house, they prattle to their hearts' content, whereas they are not interested if you tell them some woman in Gansu is having an affair or another in Sinjiang is marrying again. Since everyone knew Ruan Lingyu from the films, she was good copy for papers wanting sensational news and could at least increase their sales. Readers seeing items about her would think, "Though I am not so beautiful as Ruan Lingyu, I have higher standards." Or, "Though I am not so able as Ruan Lingyu, I come from a more respectable family." Even after her suicide people might think, "Though I am not so talented, I am braver — I have not committed suicide." It is certainly worth spending a few coppers to discover your own superiority. But once the public has these opinions of a professional artist, that is the end for her. So if instead of talking loftily about social systems or strength of character which we hardly understand ourselves, we put ourselves in her place, we can see that Ruan Lingyu was telling the truth when she said "Gossip is a fearful thing." And those who thought the newspaper reports had something to do with her suicide were telling the truth too.

But the journalist's contention that these were facts

taken from official sources is also true. Most of the social news in newspapers neither too large nor too small in Shanghai concerns cases already dealt with by the Shanghai Municipal Council or the Police Station. Reporters have the bad habit, however, of inserting descriptive passages, especially when women are concerned. Since such cases never involve powerful public figures, they can insert these with impunity. The age and appearance of the men in each case are usually given quite simply, but when it comes to women the reporters must display their literary talent. Either she is "a rose full-blown yet still attractive," or a "sweet charming young maid." If a girl runs away, before it is known whether she has eloped or been seduced, the brilliant writer passes verdict: "Lonely, she longed for a lover to share her couch." How do you know? Again, it is very common in poor country districts for a woman to marry several times, but the brilliant writer dashes off a big headline. "More Concupiscent than Wu Zetian"* How do you know the extent of her sexual appetite? I suppose these derogatory epithets can do little damage to a country woman, for she will be illiterate and those around her will not read the papers either. But in the case of an educated woman, especially one who is a social figure, they do great damage, even more so, of course, when exaggerated, highly coloured language is deliberately used. But in China such phrases flow unsought at the flourish of a pen. The writer neither stops to consider that this is unfair to women nor that he is the voice of the people. No epithet whatever matters to those in power, for they have only to write a note and immediately an apology or correction will be printed. But a helpless

* The Tang Dynasty empress described in popular romances as having many lovers.

woman like Ruan Lingyu is made to suffer, smeared with mud she cannot wipe clean. Should she fight back? Not owning a newspaper, she cannot. There is no one with whom to argue, to whom to appeal. If we put ourselves in her place, we can see that she was telling the truth when she said that gossip is a fearful thing. And those who thought the newspapers had something to do with her suicide were telling the truth too.

But as I have said, it is also true that nowadays the press has little power, although I do not think it has yet reached a stage of complete worthlessness or complete exoneration from responsibility, as the reporter so modestly claimed. For the press still has power to determine the fate of those who are even weaker, like Ruan Lingyu. That is to say, it can do harm and of course it can also do good. A serious, responsible journalist should not use such stock phrases as "We simply record what we hear" or "We are powerless," for in fact this is not so. The newspapers can select news and do exert influence.

As for Ruan Lingyu's suicide, I have no intention of defending it. I do not approve of suicide, nor do I intend to make away with myself. But the reason I do not intend to make away with myself is not because I deem it wrong but because I cannot. All suicides are rebuked by strong-minded critics, and naturally Ruan Lingyu is no exception. But to my mind committing suicide is not so easy, it is not as simple as those who condemn it think. If you think it easy, just try and see.

Naturally there are doubtless many brave men who would make the attempt if they had not such great responsibilities to society. That, of course, is an excellent thing. But I hope all these gentlemen will keep a notebook and write down the great deeds they have

achieved, taking out the notebook when they have great-grandsons to reckon up their achievement and think it over again.

May 5, 1935

“SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER” (2)

This year the saying “Scholars scorn each other” is not only a slogan to confuse black and white and conceal the darkness of the world of letters, but enables certain individuals to “hang out a sheep’s head when what they are selling is dogs’ flesh”

How many can in fact “on the strength of their merits despise the defects of others”? In recent years we have seen them rather “use their own defects to sneer at those of others” For instance, some writing in the vernacular is ungrammatical and difficult to read and this is undoubtedly a “defect” Thereupon certain critics cite Song or Ming Dynasty anecdotes and belles-lettres to make an open attack on modern writing, but before long they reveal their own shortcomings by disclosing that they are often unable to punctuate correctly the type of literature which they are boosting — no small “defect” either * In certain cases they even “use their own defects to sneer at the merits of others.” Thus those who despise modern essays not only use the essay form themselves but write essays infinitely worse than those they run down ** All their high-faluting talk, as Chekhov has pointed out, is merely looking down upon everything from the height of shamelessness, and since those whom they despise cannot aspire to compare with them, how can they “scorn each other”? They make this claim to reciprocity solely

* Referring to Lin Yutang, who attacked writing in the vernacular but published classical works incorrectly punctuated

** Referring to Lin Xijun, a writer in Shanghai.

in order to enhance their prestige, so that they may count as "writers" too. But where are their "merits"?

Furthermore, the disputes in the world of letters today are not in fact concerned with literary style. Since the study of literature cannot transform men into wood or stone a writer is still a human being, which means that he must have a sense of right and wrong, must love and hate. Indeed, because he is a writer his sense of right and wrong should be especially acute, he should love and hate more intensely. No writer in this world can respect all men from saints to cheats and murderers, or love everything from beautiful women and sweet-smelling flowers down to leprosy. When a writer finds something he approves and loves, he embraces it, when he finds something he disapproves and hates, he turns against it. If a third party disagrees, he can point out that what the writer disapproves of is actually right, what he hates is actually lovely; but just using an empty phrase like "scholars scorn each other" cannot dispose of the matter. There is no such easy bargain in the world. So long as there are writers there must be disputes, but in the end it will be made quite clear who is right and who is wrong, what must perish and what has come to stay; for there are after all readers with a clearer sense of right and wrong, of love and hate than those accommodating critics.

But then they threaten us: "Aren't you afraid?" In ancient times when Ji Kang was forging iron under a willow and Zhong Hui came to see him, he asked rudely, "What did you hear to make you come? And what have you seen?" So he offended Zhong Hui and later lost his life because of what the latter said to Sima Yi.* So no matter whom you meet, make haste to bow with clasped

* Ji Kang was a poet at the beginning of the Jin Dynasty, who offended many people by his pride. He married a daughter of the royal house of Wei. Sima Yi is a mistake here for Sima Zhao, the first emperor of the Jin Dynasty who deposed the last Wei emperor.

hands, offer him a seat and tea and greet him politely. No doubt this method has its advantages, yet a writer who behaves in this way is surely rather like a prostitute. Besides, this cautionary tale is not quite correct. Ji Kang died not only because he was a proud scholar but largely because he married the daughter of the Cao family. Even if Zhong Hui had not slandered him, others would certainly have done so. This is what is meant by "When a high reward is offered, brave fellows are bound to come forward."

I am not proposing here, however, that a man of letters should be proud or that he may be, simply that a writer should not compromise. In any case, a writer does not know how to compromise; only those accommodating souls do. But not compromising does not mean avoiding the issue by simply saying what you think is right and praising what you love, regardless of what you disapprove or hate. A writer should attack what he dislikes just as fervently as he praises what he approves. Even more fervently than he embraces what he loves he should embrace what he hates, just as Hercules clasped tight the giant Antaeus in order to break his ribs.

May 5, 1935

FROM HELP TO TWADDLE

“The writing of protégés” used to be considered vicious term of abuse — but that is a misconception.

The *Book of Songs* eventually became a Confucian classic, although in the Spring and Autumn Period some of the songs were used during drinking in feasts. Qu Yuan is the father of the Chu poetry, although his *Li Sao* simply voiced discontent because he could not help his sovereign. His pupil Song Yu, judging by the works that have come down to us, felt no discontent but was a protégé pure and simple. However, the *Book of Songs* is not only a classic but a great work of literature, while both Qu Yuan and Song Yu are important figures in the history of Chinese literature. And the reason? Well, they were brilliant writers.

Those able sovereigns in ancient China who founded dynasties separated those who “helped” them from those who “amused” them. The former had a hand in state affairs as important ministers: the latter simply presented poems and were treated as jesters or clowns. Sima Xiangru, dissatisfied with the latter status, often stayed at home on the pretext of illness instead of going to entertain Emperor Wu, quietly writing about the imperial sacrificial rites to show that he had the ability to plan great affairs — to “help.” Unfortunately by the time this was discovered he was dead. Though he never took part in imperial sacrifices, however, he is a most important figure in the history of literature. And the reason? Well, he was a brilliant writer.

But during the reign of weak, cultivated sovereigns, the two groups were confused and the so-called pillars of the state were often effeminate poets, as we see in some of the later reigns of the Southern Dynasties. Yet though these sovereigns were weak, they were not uncultured, hence their protégés at least had literary talent and some of their work has lived on till the present day.

So who says "the writing of protégés" is a vicious term of abuse?

Even the protégés of officials had to be good at chess, calligraphy or painting, to have some knowledge of antiques, to be able to play drinking games, crack jokes or make witty remarks only so did they qualify as protégés. In other words, a protégé must have a certain ability. Though a proud scholar might not stoop to this, at least it was more than mere charlatans could manage. Take, for instance, Li Yu's* *Miscellaneous Works* or Yuan Mei's** *Notes on Poetry* — these could not have been written by any ordinary protégé. Only a man with the will to be a protégé and the ability needed by a protégé could become a genuine one. If you have just the will without the ability, bungling the punctuation of ancient books, simply copying old jokes, fawning on famous scholars and telling funny stories, yet preening yourself on being a splendid fellow and losing all sense of shame, of course some may find it amusing, but the fact is this is simply twaddle.

Protégés in their heyday could help their lords, but in a period of decline all they are good for is twaddle.

June 6, 1935

* An early Qing Dynasty dramatist and critic

** A Qing Dynasty poet

FAMOUS MEN AND FAMOUS SAYINGS

Number 7, Volume II, of *The Morning Star* has an article by Mr Nanshan entitled "The Third Argument of the Champions of Classical Chinese." The first argument quoted is. "Men write in the vernacular because they cannot write the classical language" The second is. "To write the vernacular well, you must first master the classical language." Only ten years later, has Mr. Zhang Taiyan produced this third argument:

According to him you may consider the classical language difficult, but the modern language is much more difficult. For many of our modern colloquialisms come from ancient sources, and unless you have studied philology you will not know how modern words were pronounced and written in the old days; hence you will make mistakes.

Mr. Zhang Taiyan is absolutely right. Our present vernacular did not descend overnight from the sky: naturally there are many old expressions in it, most of which naturally have appeared in ancient books. If those writing in the vernacular have to trace the origin of every word in the Han Dynasty lexicon, *Shuo Wen*, that is certainly many times more difficult than just writing the classical language without tracing its origin. But not one of the advocates of the vernacular, since the vernacular was advocated, has regarded its purpose as being to trace the etymology of characters: we simply

use the forms sanctioned by popular usage True, as Mr Zhang Taiyan says, "When we meet a friend and greet him, 'Hao-ya'" (How are you?), this *ya* is the equivalent of the ancient particle *hu*, and when he answers 'Shi-ai' (All right), the final *ai* stands for the classical *ye*" But even if we know this, we do not write *hao-hu* or *shi-ye*, because the vernacular is written for men today, not for ghosts of the Shang or Zhou dynasties Even if the ancients were to come back from the shades and find our language incomprehensible, that would not worry us in the least So Mr Zhang's third argument is wide of the mark This is because he applied his expert knowledge of philology outside his own field

Since our knowledge is limited, we are all eager to be instructed by famous men, but the problem is Which is better — to listen to men with wide knowledge or to experts? The answer seems simple enough To both Naturally both are good But after being instructed many times by both types, I feel we must take what they say with a grain of salt For those with wide knowledge are usually superficial, while experts are usually wrong.

It is easy to see why those with wide knowledge are usually superficial, but perhaps a word of explanation is needed as to why experts are usually wrong They are not wrong about their own subjects, but they are when, relying on their fame as experts, they discuss matters outside their field. Society worships these famous men, assuming that all they say must be famous sayings, forgetting for what branch of study or work they won fame Adulation goes to their heads till by degrees, forgetting themselves for what branch of study or work they won fame, they fancy themselves omniscient in every field and hold forth on every subject — this is where they go wrong. The fact is that, outside their special field, these experts are often behind those with wide knowledge or common sense Mr. Zhang Taiyan is a forerunner in the

revolution, an authority on philology; if he speaks of ancient documents or philology, of course he is well worth listening to, but when he attacks the modern vernacular he misses the point completely. Another example is Dr Jiang Kanghu who won fame as a sociologist. What he is like as a sociologist I do not know, but this year he so far forgot himself as to start talking about philology. He says the ancient form of 德 *de* for "virtue" is made up of 直 *zhi* for "straight" and 心 *xin* for "mind," which together mean "intuitively." He couldn't be more wrong, of course, for the upper part of the character is not 直 at all. Interpretations of this sort should be left to Mr Zhang Taiyan.

But in our society we tend to think that all the sayings of a famous man must be famous sayings: a famous man must have mastered and understood everything. So when a history of Europe is translated, a famous man who speaks good English is asked to review it; when a book on economics is compiled, a good classical scholar is asked to write the title; a famous educationalist introduces a doctor as "the Yellow Emperor of the art of healing," while a famous industrialist acclaims an artist as "a master of the Six Laws of Painting." . . .

This is a common failing nowadays. The German pathologist Virchow* was a medical authority known throughout his country, with an important place in the history of medicine; but because he did not believe in evolution the lectures he gave at the instigation of the Catholics had a bad influence on the people, according to Haeckel. His knowledge was so profound, his fame so great, that he thought extremely highly of himself, imagining that if he could not understand a thing, then neither could anyone else. And since he had made no study of the theory of evolution, he simply attributed everything to God. The famous

* (1821-1902), author of *Cellular Pathology*.

French entomologist Fabre, now being so widely introduced into China, shows the same tendency. His work has two other faults: he scoffs at anatomy, and he applies human ethics to the insect world. But without dissection there could not have been such accurate observation as his, for anatomy is the basis of observation. The agronomists divide insects into two categories according to whether they benefit or injure mankind: this is reasonable enough. It is rather futile, however, to classify insects as good or bad according to the moral laws of a particular age. So it is not without reason that some serious scientists criticized Fabre on this score. But provided we are on our guard against these two things, his great ten-volume work on insects is a most interesting and useful book.

The baleful influence of famous men is worse in China, however — one aftermath, this, of the imperial examination system. In those days a scholar in some private school, deep in his study of the commentaries of the classics, had nothing to do with the affairs of the country. But once he passed the examination “his fame spread throughout the empire in one day,” he could become a compiler of history, an authority on literature, a civil officer, a pacifier of floods, while by the end of the Qing Dynasty he could also run schools, open coal-mines, train a modern army, build a fleet, suggest political reforms or go abroad on a tour of investigation. What the result was I need not say.

This failing is not yet overcome. Once a man is famous he is sought after on all sides. I think in future we should distinguish between famous men and famous sayings, for not all the sayings of famous men are famous sayings. In fact many famous sayings issue from the lips of simple souls in the country. That is to say we should see in what particular fields these famous men won fame, and take their comments on other matters with a grain of salt. The Suzhou students showed their intelligence when they

asked Mr Zhang Taiyan to lecture on the classics, not on accountancy or military drill — it is a pity men will not think a little more deeply.

I am sorry to have made all these references to Mr. Zhang Taiyan. But “Once in a blue moon a wise man must make a mistake,” so this should not sully his illustrious name. And as for my views, I think “Once in a blue moon a fool has a good idea” is an infallible saying too.

July 1, 1935

“TRUST TO HEAVEN FOR FOOD”

“Trust to Heaven for food” is a good old Chinese maxim. In the middle of the Qing Dynasty, a picture entitled “Trust to Heaven” was engraved on a stone tablet. And in the early days of our republic Mr. Lu Runxiang, who had come first in the palace examination, drew a picture of a big character “Heaven” with an old man leaning against it, eating from a rice bowl. Reprints were made of this, and those who believe in Heaven or love the bizarre may still possess copies.

And all of us are putting this theory into practice, the only difference from the picture being that we have no rice bowls. At all events, half this theory is being carried out.

Last month we heard the clamour. “Drought is inevitable this year.” Now the rainy season has started and there has been steady rain for more than ten days, as indeed there is every year, but although there have been no great storms, there are floods on all sides. The few trees we planted on the tree-planting festival are not enough to win back the favour of Heaven. Gone are the good old days of Yao and Shun when “every five days a strong wind blew, every ten days it rained.” So we trust to Heaven but have nothing to eat, which probably never occurred to the believers. After all, the popular primer *You Xue Qiong Lin* is right when it says, “Things light and pure float upwards to become heaven.” If heaven is light, pure and floating, how can we lean on it?

Some words that were true in ancient times seem now to have become lies. I fancy it was a Westerner who

said that the poor of this world possess nothing but sunshine, air and water. Yet this does not apply to those who live in Shanghai: those who toil with hand and brain are shut up all day where they have neither sunshine nor fresh air, while those who cannot afford to have tap water laid on cannot drink pure water either. The papers often say, “Recently the weather has been abnormal and epidemics have broken out.” This is not because the weather has been abnormal. Heaven has no voice and must suffer calumny in silence.

But if we go on trusting to “Heaven” we shall not survive as “Men.” Dwellers in the desert fight more fiercely over a pool of water than our young men over a sweetheart. They fight to the death, not content with merely writing a poem of lament. Didn’t that Westerner Dr. Aurel Stein unearth many antiques from the sands of Dunhuang? That was once a flourishing city, but as a result of trusting to Heaven it was swallowed up by sand. Of course, trusting to Heaven is a good way to manufacture relics for the future. But for purposes of living it is not too good.

This leads up to the subject of conquering Nature, but this problem is too remote to be touched on as yet.

July 1, 1935

TRAGEDIES ALMOST DEVOID OF INCIDENT

The name of Nikolai Gogol is little by little becoming known to Chinese readers, while half of the first part of his masterpiece *Dead Souls* has appeared in translation. Though the translation is unsatisfactory, at least it shows us five different types of landowner between chapter 2 and chapter 6, and despite a rich vein of satire, each, with the exception of one old woman and the miser Plushkin, has some sympathetic trait. His serfs, on the other hand, have nothing to recommend them. Even when they are sincerely trying to help the gentry, they do no good, but harm. Gogol himself was a landlord.

Still, the gentry of the time were incensed and launched their usual attacks, alleging that Gogol was the model of most of the types in the novel and that he knew nothing about the landlords of Russia. This is possible, for the author was a Ukrainian, and judging by his letters home he held views very similar to those of the landlords in the book. But even if he did not understand the landlords of Greater Russia, the characters he created are extraordinarily lifelike. Even today, in a different age and country, they still make us feel as if we are meeting old acquaintances. I shall not speak here of Gogol's brilliant use of satire, but simply of his distinctive method of utilizing ordinary incidents and ordinary conversation to bring out in a most penetrating way the futile existence of the landlords of his time. For example, Nozdrev in chapter 4 is a rascally landlord who is out for pleasure, gambles,

tells lies, and demands flattery — but he can take a beating too. Meeting Chichikov in an inn he boasts of his puppy and, having made Chichikov feel its ears, urges him to feel its nose too.

To humour him, Chichikov did as he requested, remarking. "Yes, he should turn out a fine dog."

"And feel how cold his nose is! Just take it in your hand!"

Not wanting to offend him, Chichikov felt the puppy's nose and said, "This isn't an ordinary nose"

Even today these boisterous, boastful hosts and smooth-tongued, worldly guests can be met with everywhere. Some men even make these their life-long tactics in social intercourse. "Not an ordinary nose" — what sort of nose is it then? That is hard to say, but the hearer is satisfied with such an answer. Later Chichikov goes with Nozdrev to his estate and is shown all his land and possessions.

Next they looked at a Crimean bitch, already blind and according to Nozdrev fast approaching her end. Two years ago she had been a magnificent dog. The party examined the bitch, and it seemed she really was blind.

Nozdrev is not lying. He boasts of his blind bitch, and it seems she really is blind. Of what possible interest could this be to others? Yet there are people who shout, sing praises, and boast of similar things, doing their utmost to prove them. And so they spend their whole lives, and pass for busy and honest men.

These extremely commonplace tragedies, some of them almost entirely devoid of incident, like speech without words, are hard to detect unless described by poets. Yet few men perish in heroic, remarkable tragedies, whereas many fritter their lives away in extremely commonplace tragedies almost entirely devoid of incident.

I hear that in Gogol's country what he called "tearful smiles" are no longer of any use, their place having been

taken by healthy laughter. In other lands, however, they still come in useful, for they reflect the existence of many living men. Besides, even healthy laughter is depressing from the viewpoint of those being laughed at. So Gogol's "tearful smiles" on the faces of readers whose position is different from his become healthy laughter too. Herein lies the greatness of *Dead Souls* and also the author's distress.

July 14, 1935

“SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER” (3)

The eighth issue of *Sprouts* has an article by Mr Wei Jinzhi entitled “A Clear Sense of Right and Wrong, Strong Likes and Dislikes” This was written in answer to my essay “‘Scholars Scorn Each Other’ (2)” published in the *Literary Forum*. First of all, he agreed to nearly everything in principle, saying:

It is true that a man must have a sense of right and wrong, must love and hate. It is also true that a writer should have an even clearer sense of right and wrong and stronger likes and dislikes.

The middle of his article may appear to contain some criticism when he says:

When a man is in difficulties . . . if he can consort with noble storks or monkeys, well and good; but if he has to keep company with low stags or pigs, that does not matter either. While even if he is at the end of his tether and has to sleep in a ruined temple with lepers, provided he has enough natural resistance to escape death by leprosy that is still preferable to being lured in and butchered by cheats and murderers.

All this means, however, is that he hates cheats and murderers much more than storks and monkeys, more even than leprosy. Hence this is still consistent with the view expressed in the *Literary Forum*:

No writer in this world can respect all men from saints to cheats and murderers, or love everything from beautiful women and sweet-smelling flowers down to leprosy.

As for his contention that "Strictly speaking, it is not true to say that there are no fixed concepts of right and wrong," that is really a remarkable statement, quite outstanding for a disciple of Zhuang Zi

However, this was not the main point of Mr Wei's article. What he wanted to make clear was. Since it is hard to say what is right and what is wrong, it is hard to decide what to like or to dislike. For "Suppose a man believes there is no genuine right or wrong. what he considers right may in fact be wrong." Then "Those who are in the wrong may have more right on their side than those seemingly in the right, for at least they are loyal to their friends and avoid cliques." At this point our writer begins to choke and to shed crocodile tears. But suppose a man has seen the truth and knows that what seems right is actually wrong, isn't that quite simple? All he need do is to express strong dislike. But the affairs of this world are not so simple. He has to defend the right on the wrong side. Besides, there are those who seem wrong but are actually right, and wrong things in those who are right, so he cannot just regard the major issues and pay no attention to the minor. After all, there exists no such thing as darkness, for according to physical science any darkness on earth always contains a fraction of light. Therefore in reading articles we should look for that fraction of words — it is not for us to judge what is light and what dark.

This is not an unfair comparison. Mr Wei has reached the conclusion that right and wrong do not exist. He ends.

To sum up, when scholars scorn each other it is only with respect to the merits or otherwise of some work, the rightness or otherwise of some idea. But since no one can say whether a work is good or bad, whether an idea is right or wrong, what is the use of arguing about it? Unfortunately these poor writers have no weapons in their hands."

No man is perfect, no idea is entirely valid. First he simply argues that what is right in those in the wrong is better than what seems right but is actually wrong, but then he jumps to the conclusion that we cannot say whether a work is good or bad or whether an idea is right or wrong. Writing is the weapon of men of letters, and how can Mr. Wei, who is attacking vigorously with his articles, claim that writers have no weapons in their hands? This shows how difficult it really is to try to defend what is right in those in the wrong, but he will not say this in so many words. Thus, although in his impressive article he enumerates various "attacks" made by opponents, using such epithets as "shameless boasting" and "selling out friends," and although his article is not censored, he still feels that he has no weapon in his hands and finally falls into the quagmire of denying the existence of right and wrong, making "friends" — I will not speak of a "clique" — with those followers of Zhuang Zi whom he first condemned.

Besides, if we cannot say whether a work is good or bad or an idea right or wrong, Mr. Wei, judging by his own logic, need not have written this article. Yet judging by the result, this article, though superfluous according to his way of thinking, has still played its part in the battle. Certain writers in China are so modest that they sometimes lie down on the ground and say, "If you want to judge who is right and who is wrong, just blame those stout fellows who are fighting. Small fry like us are not to blame." Though they have obviously joined in the battle, they call themselves "small fry" and disclaim all responsibility, trying to disappear from sight completely. That the debate on scholars' scorn for each other should come to this is really deplorable!

July 15, 1935

not always embody fine qualities As the old poet said
with such feeling

*With casual turn of the hand bringing clouds or rain,
The inconstant are too many to count;
Friends of old were loyal through thick and thin;
But today this rule has been kicked aside like mud*

This is even more true of Shanghai today with its foreign influence. Recently the supplement of the *Da Wan Bao* (*Great Evening News*) carried an article informing us that the only way to get on in Shanghai and avoid trouble is to speak smartly. When greeting anyone you should ask, "Hi! What's your name, pal?" At this particular juncture the word "pal" need not signify any special interest, but later definite like or dislike will be shown according to whether the man can help you in any funny business or whether you can use him as a "sucker." It is true that one ancient said, "Friends come together through belief in a common principle." But another ancient said, "A common principle means a common profit." Alas!

Walking down a lonely road you may sometimes come across men squatting on the ground and gambling. The bank loses every time, while the men placing bets always win. Actually these men belong to a gang: they are the bank's "screen" and each other's "pals." Their purpose is to tempt someone gullible to try his luck so that they can empty his pockets. If you stop to watch and they feel you are not gullible, only curious and unlikely to be cheated, they will say, "Scram, pal. There's nothing to see here." For the sort of "pal" they mean will not interfere with their swindling. Then there are open-air conjurors who change a stone into a white pigeon or put a child in a jug, whose tricks are usually so second-rate that a clever man can easily see through them. But from time to time they bow and cry, "When at home, we are supported by

* Lines written by Du Fu.

our parents. When on tour, we need the support of friends!" They say this not to make you toss them a coin, but so that you will not show them up. For the sort of "friend" they mean does not give the game away. After getting rid of those "friends" who understand, they can set about emptying the pockets of the gullible, or spear in hand can drive away stupid fools who have come near to find out their secret, swearing at them, "Blast your eyes!"

Children are exposed to even greater dangers. In many articles today they are addressed affectionately as "young friends." This is because they are the masters of the future and every kind of responsibility is laid on their shoulders. At the very least they should buy children's pictorials, magazines and books, or they will be considered "backward."

In the literary forum occupied by grown-up writers, of course, there are no such obvious jokes. Still, this is Shanghai. It is not impossible that there may be those who address you as "friend" at the same time that they levy a secret charge of five dollars for your "allotment" before you are privileged to publish your articles.

August 13, 1935

“SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER” (5)

“Scholars scorn each other” is said by those outside the dispute or those who pretend to be outside the dispute. Anyone who is a party to it must either scorn another or be scorned himself, and would hardly speak of reciprocity. When driven to desperation, though, he may hide behind this phrase. But this means of escape is also a fighting strategy which explains why this catchword is still so highly prized in certain quarters.

This is a later development, however. What comes first, naturally, is “scorn.”

The tactics of “scorn” are many. Roughly speaking, there are three main ones. One is to grovel yourself, to lie down in garbage and pull your opponent down too by saying, “I am a low beast, but I call you my father. The father of a low beast must be a beast too.” This is obviously somewhat exaggerated, but more cultured examples are not uncommon in the world of letters. Then there are “ambush” tactics. The works of A and B are clearly different — or even diametrically opposed — in content and style, yet B insists that his style is directly modelled on that of A. Another means of saving the situation is when B, whose failings have been pointed out by A, claims that these occur in the works of A and that is where, in fact, he picked them up. Or again, one writer may damn the work of another but conclude by stating modestly that he is no critic and therefore all he has said may be so much hot air. This belongs to the same category.

The most normal way is by boosting yourself. You label all criticisms levelled against you as "wild ravings," while doing your utmost to sing your own praises and show how superior you are to all others. This method is rather troublesome, though, because apart from "refuting rumours" it does not look too good to boast too much. So you have to use a pen-name for these articles, or get some good "friends" to help out. If you are not careful, though, those "friends" may become their master's bodyguards or chair-bearers, in which case the "master" has to be a young dandy with some money, and wherever they carry him he cannot hide his true identity — after a few months he will have no new tricks left. Besides, those bodyguards and chair-bearers all have to eat, so unless their master has a well-lined purse he cannot keep this up for long. It would be easier if one could employ dead chair-bearers like Yuan Hongdao of the Ming Dynasty or the "Twenty Famous Writers of the Late Ming Dynasty,"* also getting some living celebrity to clear your way. And yet, judging by past achievements and results, this is not too successful either.

Another way in which your own name need not appear at all is to criticize your enemy under some fictitious name or through a "friend." The main thing is to give him some kind of label or nickname. For readers seldom have as much hatred for the writer as the critic, so that even if you print your title in big characters they may not be much impressed, whereas if you coin some apt nickname it is less likely to be forgotten. In the Chinese world of letters during the last ten years this method has often been used, although not too successfully.

And yet this method is most effective and deadly. Gogol has praised the Russians for their skill in inventing nicknames for others — he may have had in mind his own

*The belles-lettres of these writers and Yuan Hongdao were printed by Lin Yutang

skill — claiming that once a nickname was given it would follow you even if you fled to the ends of the earth, and you could never shake it off. This is like a good sketch which, without every detail and without a name, produces a speaking likeness in a few lines so that anyone who knows the subject recognizes it instantly. Indeed, the exaggeration of special features, whether good or bad, helps to bring out the likeness. Unfortunately we in China are not very skilled in this. We did have something of the sort in ancient times. From the end of the Han Dynasty to the Six Dynasties, it was the fashion to affix epithets to men like "Guo Ziheng the Upright" or "Jing Dachun the Learned." But these for the most part described good qualities. The hundred and eight heroes of Liangshan had nicknames of a similar type, although they referred mainly to physical features as in "Lu Zhishen the Tattooed Monk" and "Yang Zhi the Green-faced Beast" or to their abilities as in "Zhang Shun the Playboy of the Waves" and "Shi Qian the Flea on the Drum." These epithets could not really sum up a man's character. Later pettifoggers drawing up indictments would also add epithets to the name of the accused to indicate that he was a rogue or bully; but in very little time people saw through this trick, till even yamen clerks of no ability knew that these epithets were not worth notice. Our modern writers, apart from introducing a few new terms, have made no progress either. That is why most of their criticisms miss fire.

The cause of this failure is incongruity. To reach a conclusion in criticizing a man and to sum it up in a brief phrase, calls for keen judgement and the gift of expression, though a few words only are used. Only when an epithet is apt will it stick to the man criticized and follow him even to the ends of the earth. The general practice nowadays, however, is to seize at random on any opprobrious epithet which happens to be fashionable and hurl it at your opponent: "spawn of feudalism," "bourgeois,"

“proletarian,” “anarchist,” “egoist” and so on. And fearing that one will not be deadly enough, they string several together, like “anarchist spawn of feudalism” or “bourgeois-proletarian egoist.” Again, fearing one voice will not be loud enough, they invite friends to invent different names. Fearing one attack will be too little, they launch several, one after another during a single year, so that the epithets keep changing all the time. This constant shifting is due to imperfect observation which leads to inaccurate judgements. So though they nearly kill themselves in the attempt and cover themselves with sweat, all they write has no effect on their opponents, for even if stuck on with glue these epithets would soon peel off. A chauffeur in a temper may call a rickshaw boy “Swine!” or a mischievous child for fun may draw a turtle on the back of a pedlar of fried *gingko* nuts. But though such things may amuse simple minds, the rickshaw boy and pedlar will not go through life known as “swine” or “turtle.” This is obviously because the cap doesn’t fit.

During the May 4th Movement the terms “remnants of the Tongcheng School”^{*} and “sticklers for *Wen Xuan*”^{**} referred to those who insisted on imitating the Tongcheng style or based their vocabulary on *Wen Xuan*. And because some men really did this and the epithets were apt, they remained longer in use. But these, I am afraid, are all that have remained in the public mind. Even now, the only comparable epithets are probably “Playboy of Shanghai” and “Pedlar of Revolution,”^{***} the first of which was coined in ancient Beijing, the second in modern Shanghai.

* A Qing Dynasty school of classical prose founded by Fang Bao and Yao Nai.

** A collection of classical literature compiled during the sixth century.

*** Referring to Shi Zhecun and Yang Cunren, two reactionary writers who attacked Lu Xun.

To create something new is hard, even a nickname. If a man is able to coin nicknames that will last, he must be either a serious, competent critic or a profound, penetrating writer.

So even the fact that epithets and nicknames are inappropriately given is because "friends" like these are not "literary" enough. "They will have to be more clever!"

August 14, 1935.

THE WRITING-BRUSH AND OTHER MATTERS

Chinese goods have long been boosted, though the Chinese Goods Department Store in Shanghai is not prospering, the "National Products City"* closed some time ago, and shortly after its walls were torn down. Yet still the papers issue special supplements dealing with Chinese goods. Of course, the targets of their sermons and tirades are, as always, students, children and women.

A few days ago I saw an article about brushes and Chinese ink in which middle-school students were severely rated. Apparently nine out of ten of them use fountain-pens, which has affected the sale of Chinese brushes and ink. Naturally, these boys and girls are not branded as traitors, nevertheless, like women of fashion who use foreign cosmetics and scent, they are held partly responsible for the unfavourable balance of trade.

There is, of course, something in that. But to my mind, whether we use fountain-pens or not depends on how busy we are. In my old-fashioned primary school I used a brush, later on in a modern school I used a pen, on returning to the country I used a brush again. It seems to me that if we have space enough and time to clean the ink-stone, spread out the paper, grind the ink and write in a leisurely fashion, a fine Chinese brush and ink made of pine-soot are not bad. But if we are in a hurry and have much to write, they will not do. They cannot compete with the fountain-pen and modern ink. For instance, a student

* A section of the market marked off by a decorative arch

taking down lecture notes, even if he used an ink-case instead of grinding ink on the stone, would have to stop writing before very long because the Chinese ink would clog his brush. He would have to take water to wash the brush as well, and his small desk would be cluttered with the "Four Treasures"* of the study. Besides, the angle of contact between his brush and the paper, which makes strokes thick or thin, depends entirely on the wrist; hence he would soon tire and write more and more slowly. This is immaterial to someone with plenty of time, but anyone in a hurry will find a fountain-pen more convenient.

There are young people, of course, who stick fountain-pens in the pockets of their foreign suits as a kind of decoration; but they are a minority. Most people use fountain-pens because they are more convenient. Empty talk, whether in the form of admonitions, gibes or abuse, is certainly powerless to stop the use of instruments which are more convenient. If you doubt this, try to persuade those who ride in cars to change back to mule carts in North China and sedan-chairs with green felt covers in South China. If you think this suggestion ridiculous, what of your advice to students to use brushes? Nowadays young people have become "temple drums" — anyone is welcome to bash them. On the one hand they have a heavy curriculum and are urged to study the classics, on the other some educationalists loudly deplore their low standard and the fact that they are ignorant of world affairs because they do not read the newspapers.

But obviously it would not do to import everything, including fountain-pens, from abroad. In this respect, the Qing Dynasty officials were more astute: they set up a factory in Shanghai for the manufacture of something more important than fountain-pens, though nothing was ever produced owing to the "weight of tradition." The

* Brush, ink, paper and ink-stones.

Europeans are astute too. Cinchonas are indigenous to Africa, but the Europeans succeeded in stealing seeds at the cost of several lives and started growing cinchona trees themselves. Thus today if we contract malaria we can dose ourselves easily with quinine, and the pills are sugar-coated so that even the most squeamish young ladies can take them with pleasure. Getting hold of the method of making fountain-pens and modern ink is less dangerous than stealing cinchona seeds. Those who advise others not to use these pens would do much better to manufacture them themselves. But they must be well made and the genuine article. Otherwise we shall have wasted our time again.

No doubt, though, those who advocate the use of brushes will consider my proposal as empty talk, because making things is not easy. That is true. That is why pawnshops have asked for a ban on new fashions in clothes to avoid a constant fluctuation in price, and why shops selling brushes and Chinese ink have advocated the use of brushes and Chinese ink to avoid the destruction of our ancient culture. It is harder to reform yourself than to ban something else. But this method can have no good outcome. Either it will not work, or it will turn young people into old-style literati.

August 23, 1935

“SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER” (6)

— TWO EXPLOITATIONS

Some of the fighting tactics in literary circles this year are replicas of those used by the Sun Society five or six years ago, for age has once more become a crime. This is known as “exploiting seniority.”

In fact, the crime is not “seniority” but the “exploitation” of it. If an old man plays mahjong and reads Buddhist canons without writing a word, he is quite safe from attacks by young writers. If this theory is correct, there must be many other criminals in literary circles, for certain modern writers invariably offer some special attribute along with their writing. Some take advantage of their wealth to run down everything written by men who live by their pens; and if you point out that their inspiration comes from the size of their wives’ dowry, their friends call this a case of sour grapes — because you failed to find a wealthy wife. Others take advantage of poverty or ill health, claiming that their works deserve special consideration because they were written after three days without food or after ten attacks of pulmonary haemorrhage. Others take advantage of both wealth and poverty, claiming that their magazines are exceptional because they were banned by the literary big-wigs and had to be published at their own expense. Others take advantage of filial piety, saying that they write as they do so that their fathers may not suffer in future; and this is even

more impressive, rivalling the plea written by Li Mi. Others, with pipes in their mouths and foreign suits on, gaze at themselves in the mirror with a sigh, for ever recollecting their youthful looks, and since they are the opposite of those who "exploit seniority" we may say they "exploit youth and good looks."

It is true, though, that in China an extraordinary number of people do like to exploit their seniority. There is nothing unusual in a woman threading a needle, but when she reaches a hundred she can hold a big meeting to demonstrate her skill and take a collection.* If a school-child writes in a composition that "the Chinese should learn from dogs," he will be caned by his teacher, but if he is several dozen years older such a view will hit the headlines in all the papers. "Hoary-headed Wu Zhihui** Utters Rare Wisdom in Beijing." We read many articles asking for contributions to famine relief, but Mr Ma Xiangbo† is the only man to mention his age. "I am ninety-six this year." This sort of remark is not usually described as "exploiting seniority" but as "weighty."

But when a writer grows old, his age is a crime. This law has prevailed in the world of letters for many years, although hitherto he was described as "backward" or "grasping." His actual crime was not clearly pointed out. Now the young writers of Shanghai have revealed the main charge. "The exploitation of seniority."

Well, that should be easy to end. There are many venerable old names in different trades in China, but not in literary circles where after a few years writers become officials, take a new profession, turn teacher, abscond with

* A famous memorial to the throne by a Jin Dynasty scholar declining an official appointment

** A meeting organized by the Mayor of Guangzhou on February 15, 1934, when a woman of 106 demonstrated that she could still thread a needle

*** An old Kuomintang reactionary

† Former president of Beijing University.

public funds, go into business, plot rebellion or are killed . . . all vanish. Very few grow old as writers. In fact they are almost as rare as the old woman of a hundred at the gathering of the aged, whose feat in surviving aroused the interest of officials; besides which, the even more remarkable fact that she could thread a needle caused quite a stir in the streets. The interest was due to the official order, though. If a pretty girl of seventeen were to thread a needle on the stage there would be quite a few spectators too.

Are there men “exploiting their seniority”? They stand no chance against those who are “exploiting their youth”

But though the Chinese world of letters is childish and chaotic, things are not quite so simple. Though readers are being conditioned to “watch the fun,” not a few of them still have discrimination and the number of these is growing. So just to exploit seniority will not do, because after all the world of letters is not an old people’s home. Just to exploit youth and good looks will not do either, because after all the world of letters is not a brothel.

*Though both exploitings are wrong,
What’s false makes clear what’s true;
And only fools can condemn
Without discrimination the two.*

September 12, 1935

“SCHOLARS SCORN EACH OTHER” (7)

Since there is no end to so-called scholars' scorn for each other, certain other writers are shaking their heads and sighing over what they consider a disgrace to the world of letters. And of course they have reason. Mr Tao Yuanming's state of mind when he "picked chrysanthemums by the eastern fence" must have been peaceful and leisured, for only so could he "gaze in tranquillity at the southern hill." If men on both sides of the fence had been jumping and brawling, swearing and fighting, though the southern hill was there he could not have gazed at it in tranquillity, but must have "gazed in amazement." The present day is rather different from the end of the Jin Dynasty, since even ivory towers have been moved into the streets — apparently we are getting very close to the masses — but we still need leisure. Without leisure there can be no expression of deep feeling, and the world of letters must lose its gloss, thus the brawlers are guilty of a serious offence. This makes things difficult for scholars who scorn each other, if even in the streets they are not allowed to shout. They have really reached a dead end.

But what if they go on scorning each other? There was a rule in the Qing Dynasty that when a magistrate made a tour of inspection and came across two men fighting on the road, instead of investigating the case to see which was right and which wrong, he would simply give each five hundred strokes on the backside. Though scholars who do not scorn each other have placards saying "Silence!" "Keep off!" they have no bastinado and cannot

administer beatings. Instead they mete out punishment with the pen, condemning both parties. Here is an example by Mr. Jiongzhi* entitled "Shanghai Magazines":

Talk of these fights reminds us of the success in recent years of magazines like *The Morning Star*, *Literature*, *The Analects* and *The World of Man*. They have succeeded in turning all those who abuse others and those who are abused into clowns, puppets who wrestle or bash each other with their heads; but all this does for readers is to develop their taste for "watching the fun." When readers have been trained to prefer watching a spectacle to reading literature, the amount of gossip about the "world of letters" determines the circulation of a magazine. The fruitless dragging out of these fights is truly a great misfortune for Chinese readers. Is there no way to stop these private brawls from occupying so much space? If we take stock and find that clever invective is the only writing representative of this period, the world of letters is in a rather bad way (The *Tianjin Da Gong Bao* supplement "Little Park," August 18)

Mr. Jiongzhi's definition of such fights is: "Petty attacks on those who differ from you, combined with pitiless, uncontrolled invective. (Their term for this is 'struggle.')

So Mr. Jiongzhi, with pity in his heart and with his pen under control, passes judgement that both sides are clowns and that the world of letters is in a bad way; though it seems to us that in recent years such periodicals as *The Morning Star*, *Literature*, *The Analects*, and *The World of Man*, far from relying upon gossip about the world of letters to increase their circulation, have published practically no news of this kind. "Invective" there has been, and no doubt there are readers who enjoy

* Pen-name of the novelist Shen Congwen.

watching the fun. Suppose two men are fighting on the street, one is bound to be in the right and one in the wrong, but onlookers usually just watch the fun. Even when a man is dragged to the execution ground, instead of asking what the charge is, most people simply consider this a spectacle. Applying the analogy to the world of letters, it does seem as if we might as well swallow the insult and have done with it. But onlookers and readers are not actually so devoid of a sense of right and wrong as Mr Jiongzhī would have us believe. Some of them do form their own conclusions. When the classicists and romanticists hurled abuse at each other and even came to blows, they did not all become figures of fun. Zola was held up to violent derision by writers and cartoonists, but he did not become a figure of fun. Even Oscar Wilde, whose reputation was ruined during his lifetime, is not now a figure of fun.

Of course these men left writings. But in China we have writings too. Chinese writings may be "pathetic," but this is not just because the world of letters is pathetic. The age is pathetic too, and this applies equally to those critics and readers who "watch the fun." Pathetic works of literature always represent a pathetic age. Famous men of old extolled the doctrine of tolerance, but would not tolerate those who did not practise tolerance. The famous men of today extol the doctrine of patience, in spring critics use the saying "scholars scorn each other" to confuse the issue, while in autumn by making figures of fun of both those who abuse others and those abused they confound right and wrong. In this peaceful old tomb, cold as ice and dark as night, what breath of life can there be?

"Is there no way to stop these private brawls from occupying so much space?" asks Mr Jiongzhī. There is a way. Though he calls them "private brawls," the two parties are hardly likely to be even every time. One will have more right on its side, more reason in some of its

arguments. So those who want to pass judgement should stop "watching the fun" to analyse the situation and state clearly which side appears right and which side wrong

As for the writers themselves, they should not only attack those holding different views, but should fight the "preachers of death"* with passionate hatred. In our present "pathetic" age only those able to kill are able to give life, only those able to hate are able to love, and only those able to give life and love can write. Well did the Hungarian poet Petofi say:

*My love is no home of happiness and tranquillity,
No garden, with peace enclosed within its gates,
Where Happiness wanders benignly
Cherishing that sweet fairy Delight
My love is a desolate desert,
A brigand chief in whose heart Jealousy reigns;
His sword is the frenzy of despair,
Each thrust every manner of murder!*

September 12, 1935

* From Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

ABOUT DOSTOYEVSKY

Written for the Mikasa Bookshop's popular
Japanese edition of the *Works of Dostoyevsky*

The time has come when I must say a few words about Dostoyevsky. But what shall I say? He is too great, and I have never read his works very carefully.

Thinking back to my young days I remember reading works by two great writers whom I admired but could never love. One was Dante, for in the "Inferno" of his *Divine Comedy* there were heretics whom I loved. Some ghosts there pushed heavy boulders up a steep cliff. This was very hard work, yet the moment they slacked off they were crushed. Somehow I would feel very tired myself at this point. And so I stopped here and never reached Paradise.

The other writer was Dostoyevsky. When I read *Poor Folk*, written at the age of twenty-four, I was amazed by his sense of loneliness more reminiscent of old age. Later he appears in the dual character of a criminal guilty of great sins and a cruel judge. He places the men and women in his novels in intolerable circumstances to test them, and not only tears off their outer semblance of innocence to reveal the sins beneath, but also reveals the genuine innocence beneath their sins. Moreover, unwilling to despatch them quickly, he lets them go to live as long as possible. Meanwhile Dostoyevsky seems to share the same anguish as the criminal, the same satisfaction as the judge. This is beyond the power of an ordinary man; in short, this is due to his greatness. But personally I was often tempted to put the book down.

Medical men have several times explained Dostoyevsky's works in terms of a mental aberration. No doubt this interpretation in the style of Lombroso* is extremely convenient in most countries today and one which wins general approval. But if he was suffering from a nervous disorder, it was a disorder under tsarist despotism. A man suffering from the same grinding oppression should, according to the intensity of his own experience, be able to understand Dostoyevsky's truth mixed with exaggeration, his passion so white-hot that it seems ice-cold, his patience stretched to breaking point. And such a man should come to love him.

As a Chinese reader, however, I still cannot understand Dostoyevsky's patience — his genuine submission to a cruel and savage fate. China has not Russia's Christ. In China the tyrant is no divinity but "propriety." You may find rare cases of complete submission to fate in so-called chaste widows who remain loyal till the age of eighty to a fiancé who died before they could marry; but this is not general. A form of submission we do have, but I fear if you probe deeper in the style of Dostoyevsky it will be exposed as hypocrisy. For this hypocrisy which the oppressors count as one of the vices of the oppressed is a vice among the oppressed but a virtue when directed against the oppressors.

But Dostoyevsky's type of long-suffering does not end in mere preaching or protest. For it is too irresistible, too great. Men will have to break into Dante's Paradise bearing all their sins with them and there join in a chorus, cultivating heavenly virtue together. But I am afraid those who steer a middle course, though there is no danger of their falling into Inferno, will never enter Paradise either.

November 20, 1935

* An Italian neuropathist (1836-1909).

NOTES WITHOUT TITLES (7, 8, 9)

7

Another sure way of leading readers astray is by “extracts” These are often bits of frippery ripped off a garment, and after they have been praised and glorified, described as transcendental, pure and spotless, readers who have not read the whole are completely bewildered. An obvious case of this is Tao Yuanming’s line “I gaze in tranquillity at the southern hills,” if one forgets other poems of his like *On Wine* or *On Reading the “Book of Hills and Seas”*. Making the poet into a purely unworldly figure comes of lifting single lines out of context. Recently in the December issue of *School Students* I read an article by Professor Zhu Guangqian on two lines by the Tang Dynasty poet Qian Qi:

*The music ends, the player is lost to sight,
The peaks across the river are green*

He praises this couplet as the height of poetic beauty, but to my mind he too is guilty of finding beauty in lines out of context. Here is his appraisal:

I love these two lines, chiefly because to me they suggest a philosophical concept: the first line suggests transience, the second eternity. Though the enchanting music and the player have vanished, the green hills stand as sublimely as of old, for ever ready to receive our hearts. For men, after all, dread loneliness and long for companionship. The music has ceased, the

player has gone, the world in which we revelled but a moment ago has crumbled away without warning beneath our feet. We are left disconsolate. But in a flash we see the green peaks across the river and seem to have found another dear companion, another world and one eternally secure in which to roam. The hills and streams come to an end, there seems no road beyond; but dark with willows, bright with flowers, another village appears. The spirit here is much the same. And besides, have the music and the player really vanished? Surely that enchanting melody has aroused the mountain spirit. It has expressed the beauty and solemnity of the green hills, and become a part of this beauty and solemnity. At all events, the green hills and the song of the river have become linked together, and since the green hills will endure for ever, so must the music and the player.

This does indeed explain his appreciation of these lines. Nor is this all. Readers vary in their taste. Some enjoy Jin Dynasty descriptive poems like *The River* and *The Sea*, others prefer different types like *The Small Garden* or *The Withered Tree* of Northern Zhou. Those in the second category are writers who hover between life and death. Alarmed by the bustle and noise of life, they also dread leaving it; too indolent to seek life, they are not eager either to seek death, the reality is too cruel, but the void is too empty. They are tired and long to rest, but because rest is so lonely they hanker after comfort too. So apart from the couplets just quoted, they often praise lines like: "He is here on the hillside but deep clouds keep him from my sight" or "Fluting and singing recede to the courtyards, lanterns and torches descend from the towers." For these things are out of sight but present in the distance; if they were to disappear completely that would be too distressing. For the same reason the Taoist

priests chant, "With pious hearts we worship the Great Jade Emperor of Heaven!"

The sovereign cure for the weary in poetry, according to Mr Zhu, is "serenity"

The highest state in art is not passion. The poet as a man may experience more passionate joy and sorrow than ordinary men, but when as a poet he expresses passionate joy or sorrow in poetry, it is like wine kept for many years: the sharpness has gone and mellowness alone remains. In another essay I have said, "When we understand this, we can see why the ancient Greeks considered serenity as the highest state in poetry and placed Apollo the god of poetry on the Olympian heights to look down at the noise and bustle of men with a brow unruffled and serene, musing in some sweet dream." Of course this serenity is a high ideal, not to be found in ordinary poetry. Ancient Greece, and especially its sculpture, often gives us this sense of serenity. This is a state of absolute enlightenment and contentment. It may be compared to the goddess Guanyin in a pensive mood, above all joys and sorrows, and we may also say that it absorbs and washes away all joys and sorrows. Such a mood is seldom found in Chinese poetry. Qu Yuan, Ruan Ji, Li Bai and Du Fu lapse too often into passion and indignation. But Tao Yuanming is all serenity, hence his greatness.

It may be true that the ancient Greeks considered serenity as the highest state in poetry — I have no means of knowing. But judging by the Greek poetry which still exists, Homer's epics are superbly vigorous while Sappho's lyrics are frankly passionate — neither of these poets is serene. I suppose serenity may be pronounced the highest state of poetry though it is not to be found in poetry, just as an egg shape may be pronounced the highest shape in man though it is not to be found in men. As for Apollo's staying in the Olympian heights, that was

because he was a god. All ancient and modern gods are placed on a pedestal. I have seen photographs of statues of this god with his eyes wide open and a clear, alert expression, not as if "musing in some sweet dream." Of course, I cannot say whether the real statue would induce a sense of serenity or not; but I think, if it did, that might be on account of its antiquity.

I am one who hovers between the "cultured" and the "vulgar." These remarks may be in poor taste, yet sometimes I consider myself quite "cultured," sometimes I enjoy looking at antiques. A dozen years or so ago I remember getting to know a rich man in Beijing, who somehow suddenly turned "cultured" too and bought a tripod, supposedly of the Zhou Dynasty, with a beautiful patina and an air of great antiquity. But a few days later he got a tinker to rub off every speck of patina, and then he displayed it in his sitting-room, gleaming bright. This is the only time in my life I have seen an ancient bronze polished. All the "cultured" who heard this thought it a huge joke, and I too was both shocked and amused. I soon sobered up, though, as a new idea struck me. This was not any "philosophical concept" but the idea that now for the first time I could see what those Zhou tripods were really like. Those tripods in the Zhou Dynasty were like rice-bowls today, which have to be kept clean. So tripods in those days must have been spick and span, bright and shining. In other words, they were not "serene" but strong and vigorous. I have never got over this vulgar view which has changed my approach to ancient art. Thus in the case of Greek sculpture, I still believe that one of the reasons why "mellowness alone remains" is that it was buried in the ground or weathered by wind and rain till it lost its sharpness and brightness, but when first carved it must have been brand-new, snow-white and sparkling. So the Greek beauty which we see today may not be what the ancient Greeks considered beauty, and we should look upon it as something new.

Whenever an abstract standard of ultimate perfection is set for literature and art, they are bound to reach a dead end. In art men fall under the spell of patina on bronze, in literature they are forced to lift lines out of context. But this can be very troublesome too, which is why Professor Zhu had to select two lines from Qian Qi and throw away the rest of the poem, using these two lines to sum up the poet's genius and condemn Qu Yuan, Ruan Ji, Li Bai, Du Fu and other poets who "lapse too often into passion and indignation." Actually these four poets have been victimized to bear out Professor Zhu's theory of aesthetics.

Let us have a look at Qian Qi's whole poem, *The River Goddess Plays the Cithern, Written for the Provincial Examination*

*They say the spirit of the ancient queen
Often plays the cithern by the River Xiang,
The river god rises to dance,
The wanderer is moved to tears;
The mournful air chills all around,
The clear notes vanish into nothingness,
Grey plane trees mourn,
Angelica breathes fragrance,
The flowing water bears the sound to the banks,
The wailing wind passes Lake Dongting,
The music ends, the player is lost to sight,
The peaks across the river are green*

This whole poem is inappropriate to quote if you want to make out a case for "mellowness" or "serenity," for the four lines in the middle seem rather sad, but if the two last lines are read without the rest they appear ambiguous, and no doubt it is this ambiguity that the critic finds so superb. We can tell from the title that the music which "ends" is that of a cithern, the "player" is a goddess, and "the peaks across the river" refers to the Xiang River,

and while it may be a good Tang Dynasty examination poem, there is nothing miraculous about the last two lines. Besides, since the subject was set for a provincial examination, there would naturally be no passion or indignation. If Qu Yuan had not quarrelled with his colleagues but was seeking an official career through the examinations, he would hardly be likely to voice a lament in his examination poem. His main concern would be to pass.

And so we should look at some other poems by this poet. I have no copy of his works with me, however. All I have is the *Selected Poems of the Dai Period*,* edited by some pedant; but this contains a good many poems including *Written in a Changan Hostel After Failing in the Examination*:

*Failing in my hope to reach the stars,
Sadly I watch the orioles fly;
On the eve of the festival pear trees are blossoming,
But the traveller has not yet put on spring dress.
The world's affairs change with the seasons,
My friends have deserted me;
Only the willows in the hostel remain,
And the sight of them fills me with nostalgia*

So when he failed in the examination and wrote a poem on the wall of the hostel, he showed his indignation. Evidently the first poem was smooth and non-committal because of the subject and because it was written for the examination. Like Qu Yuan, Ruan Ji, Li Bai and Du Fu, Qian Qi did sometimes show passion, but on the whole he was not a poet of their stature.

There is a method known as "judging a thing in its own context," which we should be able to apply with impunity to poetry too. But I still think in a discussion of an essay we should consider all a man's writings, as well as his

* 766-779.

whole life and the state of the society he lived in. Only then can our conclusion be fairly correct. Otherwise we might as well be talking in our sleep. I am not opposed to dreams, but I think it should be made clear to readers when a writer is dreaming, and this is not very different from my advice to serious readers not to rely solely on extracts and punctuated texts to study literature. By the time you have read a number of works, you will see that none of the great writers of the past was completely "serene." Tao Yuanming was great just because he was not completely "serene." He is considered "serene" today because his greatness has been diminished and truncated by anthologists and those who lift lines out of context.

8

The collected works of ancient writers still in circulation are probably all mutilated texts which were re-edited by later scholars. No Han Dynasty work exists in its original form, the collected works of Ji Kang of the Kingdom of Wei include poems written to him and answers to his arguments, while the works of Ruan Ji of the Jin Dynasty include letters from his friend Fu Yi. Though the first half only of Xie Tiao's works is left, here are poems written by his colleagues when they were together. To my mind, this kind of collection is the best, for while reading the writer's works we can see his relationship with others, compare his poems with theirs and understand why he said what he did. I know that the same method was used in compiling the *Works of Chen Duxiu*,* which include writings by others which have a bearing on his

Some important writers are so strict with themselves, so sparing of ink, that they like to pare down the work

* See footnote on p 76.

of a lifetime to three or four words to be inscribed on the top of Mount Tai for posterity. Of course that is up to them. Some other "writers" have such a guilty conscience that though protected by all the angels in heaven and very well able to make public their names, they skulk like a thief for fear their "works" will be traced to them, and they cut as they write till nothing is left but white paper, completely blank. Of course that is up to them too. But I think writings connected in any way with social events should be collected and published. Though undoubtedly this would include a great deal of rubbish, "thorns and brambles not cut away,"¹ that is how great mountains and marshes are. Conditions have changed since ancient times when manuscripts had to be copied by hand and wood-blocks cut for printing. All we need do nowadays is to set the types. Of course, there may still be some waste of paper and ink, but if we remember that even the sort of stuff written by Yang Cunren has been published, we may as well close our eyes and print everything. The Chinese often say: Advantages always carry with them disadvantages. But disadvantages may carry with them advantages too. Though a little shamelessness may lead to a flood of shameless publications, this will have the advantage of emboldening those who are too modest.

In fact quite a number of people have stopped being modest, but most of them still have a sense of "self-esteem." Of course, self-esteem is not a bad thing; at least it should give you some sense of shame. Yet "dressing up" and "covering up" are often mistaken for "self-esteem." Some collected works include a man's early writings, but often revised in such a way as to stick a white beard on a child's face. Some include writings by others, but great care is taken to exclude those containing

* From *On Literature*, a prose-poem by Lu Ji of the Jin Dynasty.

abuse and slander on the ground that these are worthless. In fact these are just as useful as the writer's own work. Even if not sufficient to bring all abuses into the open, provided they have some connection with writing of value, that is their own value at the time. The Chinese historians grasped this long ago. That is why official histories have sections on good officials and noble recluses, as well as on bad officials and deceitful ministers, there are sections on loyal men as well as on traitors. Otherwise we could not get the whole picture.

Besides, if all the tricks of these devils are allowed to disappear, a thorough understanding of those who opposed them and their writings will be impossible. We need not concern ourselves with the writings of hermits and recluses, but a writer who lives in the world of men and has some fight in him must have opponents in society. These opponents will never own up to this, though. They complain, "It's just too bad! I'm not against him — he's making it all up." If you watch carefully, however, you will catch them trying to stab you in the back, and when this is pointed out they will adopt open tactics instead. But even then they will claim that they are retaliating because they were slandered. They will never allow their tricks to be known to posterity. Not only will they destroy all records afterwards, but even at the time they will keep shifting their ground, and those who make collections will consider such trash not worth keeping. So finally we are left with the writings of one side only, and nothing to fill out the picture. Then all the militant writing of that time appears completely aimless, like ranting to the empty air. I have seen the work of certain old writers criticized as too sharp or too emotional just because their opponents' writings had disappeared. Had they still been in existence, they would perhaps have helped to dispel some of the critic's bewilderment. Therefore I think in future we should collect many of the writings regarded as worthless to use as appendices to

collected works. Though there is no precedent for this, it will be of value for future generations, just as when Great Yu cast the forms of various monsters on his bronze tripods.

And though the stupidity and shamelessness of some of our modern periodicals are quite phenomenal, this is the "literature" of present-day China or of a certain group at least. Since this can teach us about present conditions and teach future readers about past conditions, the large libraries ought to preserve it. However, I remember Mr C once told me that very few serious periodicals are kept, not to mention these. Mostly it is foreign periodicals that are preserved in large bound volumes. Evidently we still value the old more than the new and what is far away more than what is near.

9

Book 3 of the *Collected Works of Zhang Dai*,* in the Rare Editions Library, has a letter from Zhang Dai to his younger brother Yiru which starts:

Formerly I noticed that when you compiled your *Anthology of Ming Poetry* you excluded everything not in the style of Zhong Xing and Tan Yuanchun; but now that the gentlemen of the Foreknowledge Society are praising Wang Shicheng and Li Panlong** and attacking Zhong and Tan, your criterion has changed too — you abandon all poems in the style of Zhong and Tan. Their poems remain unchanged and so does your taste, yet you have turned around completely, as swiftly as a shadow or an echo. Why did you change your opinions, views and criteria so abruptly? When you

* A late Ming Dynasty writer.

** Famous writer of the Ming Dynasty, whose influence was later superseded by that of Zhong Xing and Tan Yuanchun

admired the style of Zhong and Tan, you should have known that it has its shortcomings too, and that not all their writings are as perfect as jade without a blemish. Now that you despise their style you should also know that blemishes cannot spoil the beauty of the whole, and not reject their work as utterly worthless. Instead of going entirely by the views of those few gentlemen, you should think things over carefully and calmly to distinguish between the good features and the bad. Why should you echo others?

He has given us a vivid picture of anthologists who chop round with the wind, and pointed out that anthologies are not to be trusted. Zhang Dai's own view was that an anthologist or historian should be free of personal bias. Thus he wrote to Li Yanweng:

I have worked for more than forty years on my book *Stone Chest*, not to establish views of my own but with a mind like still water or a bronze mirror. I write of beauty and ugliness as they are, aiming solely at verisimilitude.

But since a man's mind is not a mirror after all, and he must hold certain views, to set "equanimity" as the ideal in compiling anthologies, or "objectivity" as the ideal in writing history, is like setting "serenity" as the ideal in poetry — impossible of attainment. A few years ago writers of the "Third Category" like Du Heng advocated transcendentalism. Actually they were a bunch of clowns who very soon revealed their true character so that all decent people were ashamed to be associated with them — I need say no more here. Even those with no ulterior motive but sincerely eager to take a neutral stand like Zhang Dai must, in fact, have a bias too. In the same letter he said of the Donglin Group *

* A late Ming academic school with political leanings, headed by Gu Xiancheng and Gao Panlong.

For eighty or ninety years now, since the time of Gu Xiancheng's lectures, this Donglin Group has caused trouble in our country. Its rise and fall were taken to mark the prosperity and decline of the age. When the group was in power, to belong to it was a shortcut to officialdom; when it was in disgrace its adherents became black-listed. . . . Most of its founders were gentlemen, but many unsavoury characters also joined. Though a number of the supporters were unsavoury characters, there were also honest gentlemen, and the difference between them was very apparent. . . . We need not speak of the common herd, but there were notorious characters like grasping, despotic Wang Tu, savage Li Sancai, Xiang Yu who became the chief minister of the bandits, Zhou Zhong who wrote to the bandits advising them to assume imperial titles. I would rather cut off my arm than consider these as gentlemen because they belonged to the Donglin Group. A yet more shameless case was that of Shi Min who, when he surrendered to the bandits, claimed to belong to this group to increase his prestige. When the Prince of Lu as regent held a small court, the censor Ren Kongdang insisted that they must rely solely on men of the Tonglin Group; so the state of Lu really perished at its hands. I would gladly kill those men with my own hands and boil them in a cauldron over a strong fire.

He was full of righteous indignation at the time. And all he said about the bad elements was true, especially in the case of Shi Min; but what is astonishing is that even now, three hundred years later, there are still such men. However, Zhang Dai flayed the Donglin Group because it had bad elements in it, yet since ancient times there has been no group consisting entirely of gentlemen; and so all who want to be neutral oppose every group or party without stopping to think whether it has more

gentlemen or more unsavoury characters. Some even argued that though there were many good characters in the Donglin Group, there were bad characters too, while though most of the group's opponents were bad characters, some were good, so evidently there were good and bad characters on both sides with no difference between them. To regard the Donglin Group as good when it included bad people would be very shameful, while if there were good men among the bad lot who opposed it, that would be very creditable. In this way the good are criticized harshly while the bad are treated leniently. And such a critic, who may think himself very sharp, is actually helping the bad. It would be a very different matter to say. Though there were bad elements in the Donglin Group the majority were good, while though there were good men among its opponents the majority were bad.

Mr Xie Guozhen, who wrote *Cliques and Societies at the End of the Ming Dynasty*,* has read many records and done a painstaking job. After describing how Wei Zhongxian** twice persecuted the Donglin Group, he says

Their relatives and friends kept as far away from them as they could, while the literati with no sense of shame surrendered to the flag of Wei's party. The only ones to stand up for the right and try to help these gentlemen were a few poor scholars and common citizens.

He is referring here to the time when the mounted guards sent by Wei Zhongxian to arrest Zhou Shunchang were beaten and driven away by the citizens of Suzhou. It is true that the common people do not read the Confucian classics, do not understand the laws of history, do not know how to pick faults or analyse mistakes, but in general they are far better than those

* Published in Shanghai in 1934.

** A powerful eunuch of the late Ming Dynasty.

lofty, erudite literati at distinguishing between right and wrong. I have just received my *Shanghai Evening Post* with an item of news from its special correspondent in Beijing about students in a demonstration who were dispersed by policemen with hoses, sticks and bayonets, while some were shut outside the city to suffer cold and hunger. "Students of the Yanji Middle School and the Normal University Middle School and citizens nearby organized special teams to send them food, so that they did not go completely hungry." Who says the ordinary Chinese are fools? Despite all the dust thrown into their eyes and all the oppression, they can still see clearly. Zhang Dai also said

Loyal and upright men usually appear when the country is nearing ruin. They are like sparks struck from a flint, which flicker and go out. Unless the ruler makes haste to preserve these sparks, the fire will die out.

The "ruler" he had in mind was the First Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. This does not apply today.

As long as the flint remains, the sparks will not die out altogether. All the same, I would like to repeat the advice I gave nine years ago: Don't demonstrate again!

Written at night on December 18 and 19, 1935

1936

THE EXHIBITION OF SOVIET GRAPHIC ART

I remember a time when we could seldom learn anything about the Soviet Union from our own magazines. The attitude of some respected writers and scholars even to their literature was like that of a delicate young lady to tar — she not only disdains to soil her hands with it but even wrinkles her nose some distance away. In the last couple of years, though, things have changed. Of course, from time to time we still see a few cartoons taken from foreign periodicals, but more people are sincerely introducing the Soviet Union's achievements in construction, making men look up to see planes, dams, workers' housing and collective farms, instead of just looking down and shaking their heads to sigh over their down-at-the-heel shoes. Not all those who do the introducing are men with "dangerous" political tendencies, but neither do they delight in the misfortunes of others; hence they are honestly pleased to see peace and prosperity in a neighbouring state and eager to share their pleasure with the Chinese people. For both China and the Soviet Union, I think this an excellent thing. On the one hand we are learning the truth and coming to understand the Soviet Union, on the other misunderstandings are being cleared up, and this proves that in China there are many who will speak the truth, "neither awed by might nor tempted by gain."

But whereas all these introductions took the form of articles and photographs, the Exhibition of Soviet Graphic

Kravchenko's new work *Dneprostroy* should serve as a tocsin to rouse us from such slovenliness. N Piskarev was probably the first of these artists to be introduced to China; his four illustrations of Serafimovich's *Iron Flood* have long been enjoyed by many young Chinese readers, and today his illustrations of *Anna Karenina* show us another aspect of his art.

Here are also works by D Mitrokhin, L Khizhinsky and S. Mochalov, all of whom were previously known here, as well as many others now introduced for the first time. All these works, whether by artists who had won a name before the October Revolution or by young artists born early in the twentieth century, show us how they are uniting their efforts as they advance on the road of peaceful construction. The catalogue contains brief introductions to other artists and works, and concludes by pointing out the main feature they have in common: "the general socialist content and basic effort to achieve realism." There is no need for me to add anything.

But one fact we should note is that some of the exhibits are the work of Ukrainian, Georgian and Byelorussian artists. I fancy that if not for the October Revolution we should never have seen such works, indeed, they might never have seen the light of day.

Now these over two hundred works have made a splendid appearance in Shanghai. As graphic art they may seem to us less delicate than French woodcuts, less vigorous than German; but they are truthful without pedantry, beautiful without effeminacy, joyful without wantonness, forceful without coarseness. They are not tranquil, however. They make us conscious of a certain tremor — a tremor like that caused by the firm footsteps of a great company of comrades-in-arms as they advance, step by step, across the firm, bounteous black earth on the road of construction.

February 17, 1936

I WANT TO CHEAT

When I am dead beat, I sometimes admire those writers who rise above the things of this world and wish I could follow their example. But I never succeed. Transcendent minds must be like molluscs which cannot do without a shell. They must have clear water too. But I doubt whether builders of ivory towers can be found at Mount Asama,* at least not in the hostels which can certainly be found there.

As a last resort to win transitory peace of mind, I have recently invented another method, namely, cheating.

Last autumn or winter, a Japanese sailor was murdered in Zhabei, Shanghai. At once many families moved house and the prices of removal-vans rocketed. Naturally all those who moved were Chinese, watched with interest by foreigners standing by the roadside. I often went to watch too. One night fell all was quiet, the snack-vendors disappeared, and the only sound was the occasional barking of dogs in the distance. But two or three days later moving house was apparently prohibited. The police savagely beat the carters and rickshaw men who were moving luggage, while Japanese and Chinese papers unanimously conferred on those moving house the title of "foolish mob." This implied that the world had been at peace until the "foolish mob" turned the orderly world upside down.

I never moved, never joined the ranks of the "foolish mob." This was not owing to my wisdom, though, but

* A beautiful Japanese resort, where visitors sometimes committed suicide by plunging into the crater of the volcano.



Lu Xun with the Woodcut Discussion Group

to indolence I came under fire in January five years ago during the Battle of Shanghai, which the Japanese prefer to call an "incident." Besides, I was long ago deprived of my freedom, and those authorities who deprived me of my freedom have flown away with it. This means that wherever I go, it will be the same. The Chinese are a highly suspicious people. Other nations point this out as a laughable weakness. And yet to be suspicious is not a weakness, not unless you remain suspicious without coming to any conclusion. As a Chinese, I know this well. As a matter of fact we have come to a conclusion that is, that we cannot be certain of anything. But later events usually prove the correctness of this. The Chinese have no doubts about their doubts. So I abstained from moving not because I believed that the world was at peace but because it would be equally dangerous elsewhere. The memory of five years ago, when I saw in the papers the great number of children killed but no mention of exchanges of prisoners of war, still distresses me today.

The persecution of those moving house or the beating of carters are extremely small affairs. The Chinese are accustomed to using their blood to wash clean the hands of the mighty, so that they may be spotless once more. And if a matter ends so simply, that counts as very creditable nowadays.

But while everybody is busy moving house, I am in no mood to stand all day by the roadside watching the fun, nor to sit at home reading a history of world literature. I went a little further today, to find solace in a cinema. There, the world was indeed at peace. This was in the district* to which everyone is moving. I was just about to step inside when I was stopped by a girl of twelve or thirteen, a primary-school student collecting funds for flood relief. Because it was cold, the tip of her nose

*The International Settlement in Shanghai.

was red. When I told her I had no change, she looked bitterly disappointed. Feeling very apologetic, I took her into the cinema and after buying my ticket gave her a dollar. That made her so happy that she exclaimed, "How good you are!" and gave me a receipt. With this on me, I need not contribute any more wherever I go. So I, the "good," walked inside with a light heart.

What film did I see? That I have forgotten completely. It must have been either about an Englishman who for his country subdues some cruel Indian potentate, or about an American who goes to Africa, makes a fortune and marries some marvellous beauty. After whiling away some time like this, I went home at dusk, re-entering those hushed surroundings. I heard a dog bark in the distance. The satisfied expression of that girl rose before my eyes again. I was conscious of having done a good deed, but at once I felt new discomfort, as if there were soap or something of the sort in my mouth.

True, two or three years ago there were unusually big floods which, unlike those in Japan, did not recede for some months or half a year. But I also know that there is an organization in China called the Bureau of Water Conservancy, which levies a tax from the people every year, and keeps an office going. Still we have these great floods. I also know of a group that put on a play to collect relief funds, but because they made little more than twenty dollars the bureau was angry and refused the money. I have heard, too, that they machine-gunned those flood refugees who were rushing to safety on the score that they disturbed the public peace. I suppose the refugees all died long ago. But the children do not know this, and are desperately trying to collect living expenses for the dead, disappointed when they fail, glad when they succeed. Actually one dollar is not even enough to buy one day's cigarettes for one of those gentlemen in the Water Conservancy Bureau. Though well aware of this, I gave one dollar, as if believing that it would real-

ly reach the hands of the refugees. All I was doing, in fact, was buying happiness for a guileless child. I hate to see people disappointed.

I suppose if my mother, aged eighty, were to ask me if Heaven really exists or not, I would answer unhesitatingly in the affirmative.

But later this evening I felt less comfortable. It seems to me that children are different from old folk, and I shouldn't have deceived that girl. I wanted to write an open letter to explain my motive and clear up misunderstandings, but then I realized that there was nowhere to publish it and abandoned the idea. It was then already midnight. I went outside to have a look.

There was hardly a soul in sight. Only under the eaves of some house a snack-vendor was chatting with two policemen. He was an unusually poor vendor, seldom seen hereabouts, and he had so much left on his hands that obviously his business had been slack. To let him make a little money, I bought two bowls of dumplings for twenty cents, which I ate with my wife.

Zhuang Zi once said, "The fish in a dry cart-rut which once held water keep each other damp with their spittle and puff their moist breath at each other." But he comments, "They would be better off in streams or lakes where they could forget each other."

Our tragedy is that we cannot forget each other. And I am cheating others quite recklessly. Unless I graduate from this course of deception, or stop half way, I fear I shall never write satisfactory essays.

Unfortunately, before I had graduated or stopped half way, I came across Mr. Yamamoto. Since he asked me for an article, I agreed for politeness' sake. And having agreed I should write, in order not to disappoint him. But the essay I am writing is still cheating.

One is not too comfortable while writing such an essay. There are a great many things I would like to say, but I must wait for an improvement in "Sino-Japanese friend-

ship”^{*} I am afraid this friendship may soon reach a stage when any opposition to Japan will be counted high treason in this China of ours — for they say that the Communists are using the slogan “Resist Japan” to bring about China’s destruction — and the round orb of the sun^{**} will glitter over guillotines on all sides. Even then, though, it will not be time to lay bare our hearts.

It may be that I am over-sensitive. Of course, it would be a fine thing if we could use such convenient devices as the pen or the tongue or the tears which the religious claim clear the eyes, to make men see and know each other’s hearts. But I fear things are seldom so simple in this world. What a pity it is! I write these disjointed remarks with a sense of apology to my kindly readers.

Last of all, let these few personal premonitions written with my blood serve as a sort of answer to their courtesy.

February 23, 1936

* A slogan used by the Japanese imperialists and pro-Japanese Kuomintang officials

** Referring to the Japanese flag

A PREFACE TO BAI MANG'S *THE CHILDREN'S PAGODA*

Spring is more than half over yet it is still cold, and sitting alone late at night after a whole day of rain I find the continuous patter of raindrops depressing; the more so since a letter from far away arrived this afternoon, asking me to write some kind of preface for Bai Mang's poems. The letter began, "You probably knew my late friend Bai Mang. . . ." This makes me even sadder.

Speaking of Bai Mang, yes, I knew him. Four years ago I wrote "Written for the Sake of Forgetting"^{*} in the hope of forgetting him and those others who died for the cause more than five years ago now. Many fresh bloodstains have long since overlaid my memories of them, but this reminder once more conjures up a lifelike picture of him: the cotton-padded gown he wore in summer, the sweat glistening on his young face, and the smile with which he told me, "This is the third time. I came out on my own. The last two times my brother bailed me out, then tried to interfere. This time I'm not going to tell him. . . ." I guessed wrong in that article I wrote: Xu Peigen was his elder brother. Head of the aviation bureau, he finally shared his younger brother's fate though for a different reason.^{**} Bai Mang's real name

* See Volume III, pp 234-46.

** In 1934, the Kuomintang Bureau of Aviation was burned down in a fire, and Xu was arrested for this. Thus both he and Bai Mang shared the fate of imprisonment.

was Xu Bai, while the pen-name he used most frequently was Yin Fu

If a man is loyal to his friends, the possession of a dead friend's writings is like a ball of fire in his hands he can hardly eat or sleep till he has had them published I know this feeling very well and realize that it is my duty to write some sort of preface What distresses me is that I understand nothing at all about poetry and have no poets among my friends whenever I had one I always quarrelled with him I never quarrelled with Bai Mang, however, perhaps because he died too soon So I shall say nothing here about his merits as a poet — that is beyond me

The Children's Pagoda is not coming out to compete with our usual run of modern poets, but for another reason This book is a glimmer in the east, an arrow whistling through the forest, a bud at the end of winter, the first step in the army's advance, a banner of love for the pioneers, a monument of hate for the despoilers This collection cannot compare with any so-called mature, polished, serene or profound works, for these poems belong to an utterly different world

There are many, many people in that world, and Bai Mang in his life was friend to them all This fact alone, I think, is sufficient to ensure this collection's survival, with no need for any preface of mine

The night of March 11, 1936

Written by Lu Xun in Qiejieting Studio, Shanghai

WRITTEN IN DEEP NIGHT

1 INTRODUCING KATHE KOLLWITZ TO CHINA

One may pass by a heap of burned paper on waste land, or inscriptions on a ruined wall and never see them. Yet each is eloquent with love, mourning or with wrath stronger than the human voice can express. And a few people do understand their meaning.

In 1931 — I forget the month — the first number of the magazine *The Dipper* made its appearance. It was banned soon after its birth. Its first number published the woodcut of a mother with eyes closed in grief, holding her baby in her outstretched arms. This woodcut *Sacrifice* was the first of a series of woodcuts entitled *War*. Professor Kathe Kollwitz was the artist and this was the first of her works to be introduced to China.

I contributed this woodcut to *The Dipper* in memory of Rou Shi who had been my student and friend and who had co-operated with me in introducing foreign literature to China. He had a pronounced liking for woodcuts, and once compiled three volumes of American and European works of this nature — though the printing was poor. For some unknown reason he was arrested shortly afterwards and shot, together with five other young writers at Longhua, Shanghai. Perhaps from fear, or because it was forbidden, no newspaper reported this killing. But because of numerous other cases similar to this, many knew that Rou Shi was no longer among the living. I believe his old blind mother was the only person who con-

tinued to think of her beloved son as still working as a translator and proof-reader in Shanghai. At the same time I accidentally came across the woodcut *Sacrifice* in the catalogue of a German bookshop. I clipped it out and contributed it to *The Dipper* and in this way I silently commemorated the sacrifice of Rou Shi. Later I learned that many people recognized its implied meaning, though most of them thought my intention had been to commemorate the death of all the young victims.

At that time a volume of Kathe Kollwitz's work was in the mail on the way from Europe to China. By the time it reached Shanghai, the man most interested in introducing it to this country was lying in the earth, though none of us knew just where. Well, I turned the pages of the volume alone. In it I found poverty, sickness, hunger, death — also, of course, struggle and bloodshed, though of the latter there was comparatively little. As in the expression of the self-portrait of the artist, so in this book there was more of love and pity than hatred and wrath. To me, this self-portrait seemed representative of the mothers of all who are insulted and injured. The same type of mother is to be found in the rural regions of China where polished finger-nails are never seen. People usually laugh at her, thinking she cares only for weak, helpless children. But I think this mother loves her strong and useful son also. But since he is able and strong she does not have to worry about him, so devotes herself to her "insulted and injured" child.

The twenty-one works of Kathe Kollwitz now published in China are proof of this, and they are of value to young Chinese art students, having much to teach us.

1. Despite their frequent suppression, woodcuts have become very popular in China within the past five years. Among other types of graphic art we have only the works of Anders Zorn. In the Kathe Kollwitz volume just published, the etchings and lithographs show a technique and content very different from anything Zorn has done.

By their study one finds a different kind of graphic art and recognizes their universal advantage over oils.

2. Chinese who have not had an opportunity to travel abroad often have the idea that all white people are either preachers of Christianity, or well-dressed, well-fed managers of business firms given to the habit of kicking people about when out of humour. But the works of Kathe Kollwitz show that there are others "injured and insulted" like us in many places on the earth, as well as artists who mourn, protest and struggle on their behalf.

3. The Chinese press today is always publishing pictures of Hitler. These are all alike. All show Hitler at the moment he is bellowing. This momentary posture is fixed for eternity in all the photographs. One becomes weary of the repetition. But in the works of the German artist Kollwitz, one sees a different kind of people: not "heroes" perhaps, but more approachable and more sympathetic. The longer you look at them, the more beauty you find in them and the more their power attracts you.

4. This is the fifth year after Rou Shi was murdered and the works of Kathe Kollwitz were introduced to China by him. According to the Chinese way of counting, this woman artist is now seventy years of age. This is an occasion deserving our celebration. This great artist has been forced into silence today, but more and more of her works have appeared in the Far East. Yes, no force can halt the advance of art which serves humanity.

2. ON DYING IN SECRET

It is only recently that I have realized how bitter it is for a man to die in secret.

Before the revolution in China, a condemned man was paraded through the streets before his execution. Then

he could complain of injustice, curse the officials, recount his own heroic exploits or deny any fear of death. At impressive moments, the spectators following him would cheer and later on spread the story. When I was young, I heard of many such cases. I always thought the scene barbarous, the method cruel.

Not long ago in the magazine *Wind of the Universe*, edited by Dr Lin Yutang, I read an article by Mr Zhutang putting forward a different view. To him, cheering the condemned means worshipping a defeated hero, supporting the weak. "As an ideal, this may be noble enough, but it will not do in human society. To condemn the strong and support the weak means that we are against all strong men. To worship defeated heroes means that we do not recognize successful heroes." This is why "All the successful emperors and princes in history, to maintain their rule for several centuries, probably had to kill tens and hundreds of thousands of innocent people to gain momentary submission."

They had to kill tens and hundreds of thousands to gain "momentary submission." From the point of view of those "successful emperors and princes" this is really most distressing, but they had no other way. I have no intention of offering advice, though I see now the kindness of these "successful emperors and princes" in allowing the condemned to speak in public before their execution. It also showed confidence in their own strength to dare let the condemned speak and give them the satisfaction of boasting before death. And the populace, too, knew that these men were finished. My earlier feeling that this was cruel was incorrect; there was kindness in it too. I am always more distressed and worried by the death of a friend or student if I do not know when, where and how he died. And I imagine that from their point of view to perish at the hands of a few butchers in a dark room is more bitter than dying in public.

“Successful emperors and princes” do not kill men in secret, however. The only thing they keep secret is the fun they have with their wives and concubines. When they are declining they keep another secret: the amount and hiding-place of their wealth. Not till later do they add yet another secret: that of secret killing. By this time they, like Mr. Zhutang, are terrified to find that the people have ideas of their own and do not judge heroes by success or failure.

So a time comes when they use this third secret method anyway, even without the help of advisers. It may already have been adopted in some places. When this happens, the public streets seem civilized, the populace peaceful, but if we put ourselves in the place of those killed it is more cruel than dying in the open. When I first read Dante's *Divine Comedy* and came to his descriptions of Inferno, I was amazed by the tortures he had conceived. But now with more experience I understand that he was kind: he never conceived of a hell so cruel that nobody can see it, which is so common today.

3 A FOLKTALE

In the *Deutsche Zentrale Zeitung* of February 17, I found “A Folktale” by Willi Bredel commemorating the eightieth anniversary of the death of Heine. Because I like his title, I shall write one myself.

Once upon a time there was a country where those in power had ground down the people yet still looked upon them as formidable opponents, whose latinized letters were machine-gun bullets and whose woodcuts were tanks. Though they were the conquerors they did not alight from trains at the regular stations. Feeling unsafe on the earth, they flew about in the air; and their resistance grew so low that in any emergency they came down with flu, infecting their ministers so that all fell ill.

They published massive dictionaries, more than one of them, but none for practical use. To understand the real situation, one had to refer to a dictionary which was never printed. There one could find most original definitions. "Liberation" is equivalent to "execution," "Tolstoy's philosophy" means "running away." The definition of "official" is "relatives, friends and slaves of a powerful man." "City" is explained as "high and solid ramparts of brick to stop students going in and out." "Morality" is "forbidding women to show their arms." "Revolution" is "flooding the fields and bombing 'bandits'."

They published large tomes of laws compiled by scholars sent to different countries to study their legal systems and select the best, so that no country in the world possessed a code so comprehensive. But at the beginning was a blank page which only those who had read the dictionary which was never printed could read. Here were three clauses. First, some cases should be treated with leniency. Secondly, some cases should be treated severely. Thirdly, this does not apply in every case.

Of course there were also law courts, but the prisoners who could read the blank page never protested in court, for only evil-doers protested and whoever protested would be treated severely. Of course there was a High Court of Justice, but those who could read the blank page never appealed, for only evil-doers appealed and whoever appealed would be treated severely.

One morning, a crowd of armed police surrounded an art school. In the school some men in Chinese gowns and others in Western suits were running about searching and ransacking the place. The police followed them, all with pistols. Presently in the dormitory one of those in a Western suit caught a student of about eighteen by the shoulder.

"The government has sent us to make a search. Will you . . ."

"Go ahead" The boy promptly pulled out his suitcase from under the bed

Years of experience had taught the intelligent young people here not to keep anything incriminating. But this lad was only eighteen. So a few letters were discovered in a drawer. Because they described the hard circumstances in which his mother had died, he hadn't had the heart to burn them. A gentleman in the Western suit studied these letters carefully word by word. He raised his eyebrows when he read "The world is a feast where men eat men. Your mother was eaten, and so are countless other mothers on this earth. . . ." He produced a pencil to underline this passage.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

""

"Who ate your mother? Does man eat man in this world? Have we eaten your mother, eh?" His eyes bulged as if at any moment they might turn into bullets.

"No! . . . Of course, not . . . No" The boy was flustered.

Instead of shooting him with his eyes, the man folded the letter and stuffed it into one pocket. Then he put together the student's woodcuts, knives and prints, *The Iron Flood*, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, also some newspaper cuttings. He told one of the policemen:

"Take these along with you!"

"What's wrong? Why are you taking those?" The boy knew this looked bad.

The man in the Western suit cast one glance at him. Then pointing to him he ordered another policeman:

"Take him along!"

Springing forward like a tiger, the policeman seized the boy by the scruff of his neck and dragged him out of the dormitory. Outside the door were two more students of the same age, each with a strong hand grasping the scruff of his neck. Round them stood a crowd of teachers and students.

4 ANOTHER FOLKTALE

One morning twenty-one days later, a cross-examination was held in the police-station. In a small dark room sat two officials, one on the right, the other on the left. The one on the right had on a Chinese jacket, the one on the left a Western suit. This latter was the optimist who denied that in this world man eats man. He was here to take down the deposition. Policemen, shouting and swearing, dragged in an eighteen-year-old student. His face pale, his clothes dirty, he stood there before them. The Chinese Jacket, having asked his name, age and birth-place, demanded

“Are you a member of the woodcut club?”

“Yes ”

“Who heads it?”

“The chairman is Ch — The vice-chairman H — ”

“Where are they now?”

“I don’t know — they were both expelled ”

“Why did you try to stir up trouble in your school?”

“What!” The boy exclaimed in surprise

“H’m!” The Chinese Jacket showed him a woodcut

“Did you do this?”

“Yes ”

“Who is it?”

“A writer ”

“What’s his name?”

“Lunacharsky ”

“Is he a writer? What country does he belong to?”

“I don’t know ” To save himself, the boy lied

“You don’t know? Don’t try to deceive me. Isn’t he Russian? Isn’t he obviously a Red Army officer? I’ve seen his photograph in a history of the Russian revolution. Can you deny that?”

“It’s not true!” At this heavy blow, the boy cried out in despair.

“This is only to be expected. As a proletarian artist, you would naturally make the portrait of a Red Army officer.”

“No. . . . I tell you I never. . . .”

“Don’t argue. Don’t be so stubborn. We know quite well that life is hard for you in the police-station. You must make a clean breast of things so that we can send you to court for sentencing — conditions are much better in jail.”

The boy said nothing. He knew that speech or silence were equally useless.

“Speak up!” The Chinese Jacket sniggered. “Are you C.P. or C.Y.?”*

“Neither! I don’t know what you mean!”

“So you can make a portrait of a Red Army officer but don’t understand C.P. and C.Y.? So young yet so cunning. Out!” As he waved one hand in dismissal, a policeman with the skill of long practice dragged the boy away.

I must apologize if this doesn’t read like a folktale any more. But if I don’t call it a folktale, what can I call it? The strange thing is that I can tell you when this happened. It was in 1932.

5 A TRUE LETTER

After midnight, April 4, 1936

Dear Mr. Zhou,

You asked what happened after I left the police-station. Here is the story in brief.

On the last day of the last month that year, the three of us were sent by the provincial government to the High Court of Justice. The trial took place at once. The prosecutor’s cross-examination was most peculiar, consisting of three questions only.

* A member of the Communist Party or of the Communist Youth League.

First 'What is your name?'

Second "How old are you?"

Third "Where are you from?"

After this peculiar trial we were sent by the court to the military prison. Anyone wanting to get a general picture of our rulers' art of ruling need only go to the military prison. No slaughter, no torture can be too cruel for them. Whenever the situation grows tense, a batch of so-called important political prisoners is dragged out to be shot, regardless of their term. For instance, when Nanchang was threatened,* twenty-two were killed in three quarters of an hour, when the Fujian People's Government[†] was set up a good many more were shot. The execution ground was the prison vegetable garden, five mu in size. The corpses were buried in the garden — as fertilizer — and vegetables grown on top.

About two and a half months later, our indictment arrived. You wouldn't think, would you, that after three questions only the judge would be able to draw up an indictment? But it seems he could. I no longer have the document here but I can still recite it except for the legal clauses, which unfortunately I've forgotten.

The Woodcut Club organized by Ch— and H— was a body controlled by the Communists for the study of proletarian art. The prosecuted all belong to this club. All the woodcuts they made showed Red Army officers, labourers and starving people. They were designed to stir up the class struggle and show the inevitability of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Soon after this we were tried. Five imposing officials sat in a row. But I didn't lose my head because at that

* In April 1933, the Red Army smashed the fourth Kuomintang encirclement campaign and advanced towards Nanchang.

** In November 1933, some patriotic Kuomintang generals staged a coup d'état in Fujian. They were soon crushed by Chiang Kai-shek.

moment a picture came into my mind, a picture called *The Judges* by Honoré Daumier. How brilliantly he did it!

On the eighth day after the trial, a final session was held to pass sentence. The charges against us were still those in the indictment, but towards the end another passage had been added.

With regard to their offence and in accordance with the —th clause of the —th article of the Criminal Code against those who endanger the state, they should be sentenced to five years' imprisonment each. Since, however, they are young and foolish and were led astray, allowances may be made for them. Therefore in accordance with the —th clause of such and such law, their sentence is hereby reduced to two and a half years. They may appeal within ten days after receiving this sentence if they do not agree. . . .

What use would it be to appeal? Of course I "agreed." These are their laws after all.

To sum up. From the time of my arrest to my release, I visited three slaughter-houses where they kill people. Apart from thanking them for not cutting off my head, I must thank them for increasing my knowledge. Regarding torture alone, it was only there that I learned that China today has. First, whipping with rattan canes; second, the leg-press; but both these are fairly light. Third, there is the iron rod torture. The culprit is made to kneel, a long iron bar is placed across the bend of his knees and two hefty fellows stand one on each end. By degrees the number is increased from two men to eight. Fourth, the red-hot chain. A red-hot iron chain is spread on the ground and the culprit is ordered to kneel on it. Fifth, the drinking torture, when hot-pepper soup, paraffine, vinegar and wine are poured through the nostrils. . . . The sixth torture is to hang up the culprit by his thumbs

with fine hempen cord and beat him while he dangles in the air I don't know the name of this one

But the cruelest thing was what they did to a young peasant in the same cell with me in the police-station. The boss insisted that he was an army commander in the Red Army, but he denied this emphatically. So they put needles under his nails and drove them in. They hammered in one needle, but he wouldn't confess, they hammered in another, still he wouldn't confess. Then a third a fourth until there were needles in all his ten fingers. Even now that young man's ghastly white face, sunken eyes and hands dripping with blood keep floating before my eyes, making me unable to forget, making my heart ache.

It wasn't till after I was discharged that I found out the reason for my arrest. The root of the trouble was that we students were dissatisfied with the school, especially with the proctor, who was an agent of the Provincial Kuomintang Committee. To suppress the discontent of all the students, he had the three remaining members of the Woodcut Club arrested to display his might. The gentleman in the Chinese jacket who insisted that Lunacharsky was a Red Army officer was the proctor's brother-in-law. Most convenient!

After finishing this brief account, I am looking at the pallid moonlight on the ground outside my window and an icy hand seems to be gripping my heart. I don't believe I am a coward, but my heart has grown cold.

I hope you are keeping well

Ren Fan

Note All the material from the second half of "A Folktale" onward is based on Ren Fan's letter and his "A Brief Account of My Life in Jail"

April 7, 1936

THE INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT IN MARCH

In January this year Tian Jun published an essay entitled "On *S.S. Dairen*" describing how, more than a year ago, he and his wife were lucky enough to leave Dalian,* a place fraught with perils for them.

The next day when we caught our first glimpse of the green peaks of Qingdao, our hearts so long frozen felt fresh stirrings of life.

"Ah, motherland!"

We exclaimed this as if in a dream!

Of course, had they returned to their "motherland" in some official's entourage no one would have made any comment, still less so had they returned to "wipe out the Reds"; but in fact they came only to publish *A Village in August*,** and this involved them with the world of letters. So it would have been better not to have felt those "fresh stirrings of life" so soon. In March "someone" in the International Settlement in Shanghai commented coldly:

"Tian Jun shouldn't have returned from the northeast so soon."

Who said that? "Someone." Why? Because "*A Village in August* is not altogether true to life." But these

*Dalian, formerly known as Dairen, was under Japanese occupation at that time

** This novel published in August 1935 dealt with the resistance to Japan in the northeast led by the Chinese Communist Party and exposed the non-resistance policy of the Kuomintang. Lu Xun had edited the manuscript and written a preface for it

comments I am passing on are "true" I have as evidence an article by Mr Dick* in "Sunday Literature," one of the weird glimmers of light from the *Great Evening News*** supplement "The Torch"

A Village in August considered as a whole is an epic but it is not altogether true to life, as for example in its description of what happens after a village is attacked by the people's revolutionary forces. Someone remarked to me, "Tian Jun shouldn't have returned from the northeast so soon," because he felt Tian Jun still needed a longer period for study and if he had further enriched his experience this novel would have been better. As it is, there is much that is questionable both in the technique and the contents. Why has nobody pointed this out?

Of course we cannot refute this. It is as if "someone" were to say that Gorky should not have stopped working as a docker so soon, for then his writings would have been even better, and Kisch*** should not have fled abroad so soon but sat it out longer in Hitler's concentration camp, for then his subsequent reportage would have been more worthwhile. Anyone who disputes such statements must be an imbecile. However, as regards the International Settlement in March a few remarks are still called for, because we have not yet reached the happy period when we can "enrich our experience" thoroughly and avoid being imbeciles.

In a time like this, people are prone to impatience. For instance, Tian Jun wrote his novel too early and it is "not altogether true to life", and as soon as Mr Dick heard "someone's" strictures he responded by blaming others

* Pseudonym of Zhang Chunqiao

** A reactionary paper started in Shanghai in 1932

*** A Czech writer who wrote in German visited China after the Japanese invasion of the northeast and published the book *China Geheim (Secret China)*

for not pointing out all that was "questionable," nor could he wait to "enrich his experience" before trotting out this "correct criticism" of his. However, I see nothing wrong in this. If javelins are all we have, then we should use javelins instead of waiting for the tanks and incendiary bombs now being manufactured or about to be manufactured. In that case, unfortunately, Tian Jun is not to blame for having "returned from the northeast so soon." It certainly is hard to pass fair judgement

Besides, judging by Mr Dick's article, there is apparently no need for a long stay in the northeast to know the "truth" about it. This Mr "Someone" and Mr Dick have probably stayed in the International Settlement, not studying in the northeast or returning from it later than Tian Jun, yet they know whether or not his novel is true to life. Moreover, they do not have to rely on "correct" criticism to help the writer make progress, because even before other people have pointed out all "that is questionable" in the technique and contents of *A Village in August* Mr. Dick has reached the conclusion, "I believe that people are already writing or about to write better works than *A Village in August*, because readers need them!"

In other words, tanks are coming or about to come, so we may as well break our javelins

At this point I should also add that the title of Mr. Dick's article is "We Must Practise Self-Criticism"

A trenchant title, that. Though its author does not state that this is "self-criticism," he has in fact made a "self-criticism" by writing off *A Village in August*. Nor will his task end or this novel have a chance of surviving until the publication of the formal "self-criticism" for which he is hoping. For cryptic handshakes of this kind are more damaging to their target than listing ten major crimes. Listing crimes brings specific charges, whereas ambiguous aspersions can lead others to guess at endless iniquities.

Naturally, Mr Dick means well by his call to "practise self-criticism" because "those writers are our own" At the same time, however, I think we must never forget "those others" who are not "our own writers," nor should we only attack "those" within our own ranks A critic should criticize both sides, pointing out both good points and bad If in the world of letters where two sides exist we simply disparage ourselves to show our "correctness" or fair-mindedness, this is actually currying favour with "those others" or disarming our own forces for them

April 16, 1936

REPLY TO A LETTER FROM THE TROTSKYITES

1. THE LETTER

June 3, 1936

Dear Mr Lu Xun,

After the failure of the 1927 Revolution, instead of withdrawing in order to prepare for a comeback, the Chinese Communists took to military adventurism. Abandoning work in the cities, they ordered Party members to rise everywhere although the tide of revolution had ebbed, hoping to make Reds out of the peasants to conquer the country. Within seven or eight years hundreds of thousands of brave and useful young people were sacrificed on account of this policy, so that now in the high tide of the nationalist movement there are no revolutionary leaders for the city masses, and the next stage of the revolution has been postponed indefinitely.

Now the Reds' movement to conquer the country has failed. But the Chinese Communists who blindly take orders from the Moscow bureaucrats have adopted a "New Policy." They have made a volte-face, abandoned their class stand, issued new declarations and sent representatives to negotiate with the bureaucrats, politicians and warlords, including those who slaughtered the masses, in order to form a "united front" with them. They have put away their own banner and confused the people's minds, making the masses believe that all those bureaucrats, po-

liticians and executioners are national revolutionaries who will resist Japan too. The result can only be to deliver the revolutionary masses into the hands of those executioners for further slaughter. These shameless acts of betrayal on the part of the Stalinists make all Chinese revolutionaries blush for shame.

Now the bourgeois liberals and upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie of Shanghai welcome this "New Policy" of the Stalinists. And well they may. The traditional prestige of Moscow, the blood shed by the Chinese Reds and their present strength — what could play better into their hands? But the greater the welcome given to this "New Policy," the greater damage will be done to the Chinese revolution.

Since 1930, under the most difficult conditions, our organization has made unremitting efforts to fight for our ideal. Since the defeat of the Revolution we have opposed the recklessness of the Stalinists and advocated a "revolutionary democratic struggle." We believe that since the Revolution has failed, we must start all over again from the beginning. We have never ceased to gather together revolutionary cadres to study revolutionary theory, accepting the lessons of defeat to educate revolutionary workers so that during this difficult period of counter-revolution we may lay a firm foundation for the next stage of the revolution. The events of the past few years have proved the correctness of our political line and method of work. We were against the opportunist and reckless policies and bureaucratic party system of the Stalinists. Now we resolutely attack their treacherous "New Policy." But precisely because of this we are under fire from all sorts of careerists and party bureaucrats. Is this our good fortune or is it a misfortune?

For the last decade and more, sir, I have admired your scholarship, writing and moral integrity, for while many thinking men have fallen into the quagmire of individualism you alone have fought on without respite to express

your own views. We should count it a great honour to hear your criticism of our political views. I am sending you a few of our recent publications, which I beg you to accept and read. If you are good enough to write a reply, please leave it with Mr. X —. I shall go to his house within three days to fetch it.

With best wishes,

Chen —

2. THE REPLY

June 9, 1936

Dear Mr. Chen,

I have received your letter and the copies of *Struggle* and *Spark* which you sent me.

I take it that the main drift of your letter is contained in these two points: You consider Stalin and his colleagues bureaucrats, and the proposal of Mao Zedong and others — “Let all parties unite to resist Japan” — as a betrayal of the cause of revolution.

I certainly find this “confusing.” For do not all the successes of Stalin’s Union of Soviet Socialist Republics show the pitifulness of Trotsky’s exile, wanderings and failure which “forced” him in his old age to take money from the enemy? His conditions as an exile now must be rather different from conditions in Siberia before the revolution, for at that time I doubt if anyone so much as offered the prisoners a piece of bread. He may not feel so good, though, because now the Soviet Union has triumphed. Facts are stronger than rhetoric; and no one expected such pitiless irony. Your “theory” is certainly much loftier than that of Mao Zedong: yours is high in the sky, while his is simply on the ground. But admirable as is such loftiness, it will unfortunately be just the thing welcomed by the Japanese aggressors. Hence I fear that

it will drop down from the sky, and when it does it may land on the filthiest place on earth. Since the Japanese welcome your lofty theories, I cannot help feeling concern for you when I see your well-printed publications. If someone deliberately spreads a malicious rumour to discredit you, accusing you of accepting money for these publications from the Japanese, how are you to clear yourselves? I say this not to retaliate because some of you formerly joined certain others to accuse me of accepting Russian roubles. No, I would not stoop so low, and I do not believe that you could stoop so low as to take money from the Japanese to attack the proposal of Mao Zedong and others to unite against Japan. No, this you could not do. But I want to warn you that your lofty theory will not be welcomed by the Chinese people, and that your behaviour runs counter to present-day Chinese people's standards of morality. This is all I have to say about your views.

In conclusion, this sudden receipt of a letter and periodicals from you has made me rather uncomfortable. There must be some reason for it. It must be because some of my "comrades-in-arms" have been accusing me of certain faults. But whatever my faults, I am convinced that my views are quite different from yours. I count it an honour to have as my comrades those who are now doing solid work, treading firmly on the ground, fighting and shedding their blood for the survival of this generation of Chinese. Excuse me for making this an open reply, but since more than three days have passed you will probably not be going to that address for my answer.

Yours faithfully,
Lu Xun

REPLY TO XU MAOYONG* AND ON
THE QUESTION OF THE¹ UNITED FRONT
AGAINST JAPANESE AGGRESSION

August 1, 1936

Dear Mr Lu Xun,

I sincerely hope you have recovered. Your illness and on top of that the bickering in literary circles have deprived me, much to my regret, of the chance to profit by your instructions.

My straitened circumstances and poor health constrain me to leave Shanghai and live in the country until I have raised enough cash by editing or translating books to come back. For a time I shall be outside of the Shanghai world of letters. I mean to take this opportunity to think carefully about all sorts of problems; then I may be able to clarify my ideas.

At present, I cannot help feeling that your words and actions during the last half year have inadvertently encouraged a bad trend. You have not looked carefully into Hu Feng's** tricky nature or Huang Yuan's*** sycophantic behaviour, but have let them use you as an idol to delude and impress the masses. This is why the move-

* Then the administrative secretary of the League of Left-Wing Writers

** Hu Feng was a member of the League of Left-Wing Writers in early 1930s

*** Editor of the magazine *Translated Literature* started by Lu Xun and Mao Dun in September 1934

ment to split our ranks, prompted by their ambition, has now got out of hand. Hu Feng and his clique are clearly activated by selfish interests, their extreme sectarianism and their theories are self-contradictory and riddled with errors. For instance, the slogan "mass literature of the national revolutionary war" was originally put forward by Hu Feng to oppose the slogan "national defence literature", but later he said one was the main thing, the other subsidiary, and later still he claimed that the first was the slogan of Left-wing literature in its present stage of development. Not even you, sir, can defend such chops and changes. It would have been very easy to attack their actions and words, but just because they had you as their shield and we all have such a high regard for you, we found ourselves in a most difficult position as regards solving the problem and in this battle of words.

I am well aware of your intention. The one thing you feared was that those Left-wing comrades-in-arms who joined the united front would abandon their original stand, and it seemed to you that Hu Feng and company looked most lovably "Left", hence you agreed with them. But I must point out that this was because you had failed to understand the present basic policy. The mainstay of the present united front — in China just as in the rest of the world — is undoubtedly the proletariat, however, this is not owing to its name, special position or history, but because of its correct grasp of reality and its tremendous ability to struggle. Hence, objectively speaking, the proletariat must of course be our mainstay. Nevertheless, subjectively, it is inappropriate for the proletariat to openly pin on a badge and demand leadership not on account of its work but because of special qualifications, so that comrades-in-arms belonging to other classes are frightened away. Thus, at present, to raise a Left-wing slogan in the united front is wrong and endangers the united front. And so you were mistaken, sir, when in your recently published *Answer to a Visitor During Ill-*

ness you claimed that the slogan "mass literature of the national revolutionary war" was the most recent development of proletarian literature and that it should be the chief slogan of the united front.

Again, regarding those "comrades-in-arms" who have joined the Association of Writers and Artists, surely not every single one of them is a Rightist and a low character as you, sir, suspect. Besides, as the "comrades-in-arms" who have gathered round you include men like Ba Jin' and Huang Yuan, can you really suppose that all the members of the Association of Writers and Artists are inferior to them? I have learned from the press the reactionary nature of the anarchists in France and Spain who are sabotaging the united front just as the Trotskyites do; and the actions of the Chinese anarchists are even more despicable. Huang Yuan is a creature with no ideas of his own who just makes a living by flattering celebrities. The sycophantic way in which he made up in the past to Fu Donghua and Zheng Zhenduo** was no different from his professions of loyalty to you today. How you can associate with creatures like this and refuse to co-operate with the majority really passes my understanding.

I fancy the root of your mistakes in the past half year is that you consider only people, not facts. You often misjudge people too. In my own case, for example, of course I have many faults, but you consider my main one is slapdash writing, which I find really laughable. (Why should I deliberately write "Zheng Zhenduo" instead of "Qiu Yunduo"? Is Zheng Zhenduo someone of whom you approve?) To suddenly put a man beyond the pale for a little thing like this strikes me as unjustified.

* Ba Jin, before becoming a novelist and writer of short stories and essays, had introduced some works by anarchists.

** Editors of the monthly *Literature*.

I am leaving Shanghai today and am too busy preparing for the journey to write any more — I have perhaps already written too much. In this letter I have no intention of attacking you, sir, but I really hope you will reconsider various facts more carefully.

My translation of *The Life of Stalin** will soon be published, and when it comes out I shall send you a copy in the hope that you will read it carefully and give me your criticism of both its content and my translation. I wish you better health.

Maoyong

Above is the letter sent me by Xu Maoyong which I am publishing here without his permission, because it consists entirely of a lecture to me and an attack on others and publishing it does not detract from his dignity — indeed he may have written it with a view to my publishing it. Of course, people cannot fail to see from this letter that the young man who sent it has some “bad” tendencies.

But I have one request. I hope Messrs Ba Jin, Huang Yuan and Hu Feng will not follow Xu Maoyong's example. Because if they pay back in kind this letter which attacks them they will be falling into his trap. In this time of national crisis aren't there people who in broad daylight talk in a dignified, high-sounding way but at night resort to provocations to split our ranks? This letter was planned as a new challenge to those who have not joined the Association of Writers and Artists, and they hope these people will take up the challenge so that then they can charge us with the crimes of “sabotaging the united front” and of “treason.”

However, we are not to be drawn. We are not going to concentrate our attack on a few individuals. It is not

* By the French writer Henri Barbusse

our way to "first pacify the country before resisting invaders"

But here I have some observations to make. First, as regards my attitude towards the united front against Japanese aggression. Actually, I have stated this in quite a few places already, yet Xu Maoyong and his lot seem unwilling to glance at these statements; instead, sinking their teeth into me, they insist on maligning me for "sabotaging the united front" and lecturing me for "failing to understand the present basic policy." I don't know what their basic policy is (Isn't it just to snap at me?) But *the policy of united front against Japanese aggression proposed to the whole people by the present Chinese revolutionary party is one I have seen, one that I support; and I join this front unconditionally because I am not only a writer but also a Chinese*. That is why, to me, this policy is *absolutely correct* and why I want to join this united front. Of course, the only weapon I have is a pen, and all I can do is write articles and translate books. If some day this pen ceases to be of any use, I am confident that when it comes to using other weapons I shall not fall short of people like Xu Maoyong!

Next, as regards my attitude towards the united front in literary and art circles. *I am for the view that all writers, no matter what groups they belong to, should unite in response to the call to resist Japanese aggression.* I have also put forward my ideas as to how to organize such an association. Naturally those ideas were killed off by certain so-called "advisers," who retaliated at once out of the blue by charging me with the crime of "sabotaging the united front." This is what first made me decide not to join the Association of Writers and Artists for the moment, but to wait and see what they were really up to. At that time, in fact, I had my suspicions of these self-styled "advisers" and young people like Xu Maoyong. Because judging by my own experience those who pose as "revolutionaries" are prone to slander others as

“renegades,” “counter-revolutionaries,” “Trotskyites” or even “traitors” and are usually up to no good, they craftily kill off the nation’s revolutionary forces with no regard for the interests of the revolutionary masses, simply making use of revolution for their own selfish ends. Frankly speaking, sometimes I even suspect that they may have been sent by the enemy. I thought it better, for the time being, to steer clear of a menace which could do our people no good and not to obey their orders. Naturally, events will prove their true character, and I certainly have no desire to pass judgement on them. But if they are truly devoted to the revolution and the nation and resort to clumsy tactics merely because they are out in their reckoning and mistaken in their views, then I think they really need to correct themselves.

My attitude towards the Association of Writers and Artists is that I consider it a body of writers who are for resistance to Japan, and though it has members like Xu Maoyong it also includes some new people, but we must not assume that the formation of this association means that the united front in literary and art circles has already been established. Far from it. We have not yet united all the writers and artists of different groups. The reason is that this Association of Writers and Artists still smacks strongly of sectarianism and gangsterism. Setting other aspects aside to consider just its regulations, the qualifications for membership are too strict: each member has to pay one dollar’s entry fee and two dollars’ annual subscription, which shows it is élitist instead of being a “mass” organization to resist Japan.

Where theory is concerned, articles such as “The Problem of Unity” and “National Defence Literature” published in *The World of Letters*, No 1,* are basically sectarian. One writer quoted a statement I made in 1930**

* Two articles by He Jiahua and Zhou Yang respectively

** Referring to a statement by Lu Xun which was lifted out of context to support ‘national defence literature’

and made that his starting-point; so although he kept professing readiness to unite with writers of any school, he was still imposing his own arbitrary restrictions and conditions. He had forgotten what age we are living in. In my view, *on the question of resisting Japan no conditions should be laid down for writers banding together. Provided a writer is not a traitor, is willing to resist or approves resistance, then whether he belongs to the "brother-and-sister" school,* the school of pedantic gibberish' or the "duck-and-drake-and-butterfly" school,† it doesn't matter.* On literary problems, however, we can still criticize each other. This same writer also cited the example of the popular front in France; but I think here he forgot his nationality. *Because our people's united front against Japanese aggression is much wider in scope than the popular front in France.*

Another writer expatiating on "national defence literature" said that this required a correct writing method, and that today apart from "national defence literature" there was only "literature of national betrayal." He wanted to rally all writers with this slogan "national defence literature" and prepare in advance the label "literature of national betrayal" with which to condemn others in future. This is a really brilliant sectarian theory. To my mind, *we should unite writers under the banner of "opposing Japanese aggression" or "national defence," but we cannot ask all writers to unite under the slogan "national defence literature" because some of them do not write works "with national defence as the main theme," yet in other respects they can still join the united front against Japanese aggression.* And even a writer like myself who has not joined the Association of Writers and Artists is

* Referring to the type of romances popular after the May 4th Movement

** Referring to some current works written in classical Chinese

*** Referring to stories about Shanghai's new "talented scholars and beauties" written after the 1911 Revolution.

excluding friendly forces and insidiously undermining the strength of the resistance is your own narrow-mindedness, in which you surpass the "white-gowned literator" Wang Lun* To my mind, *on the resistance front we should welcome all forces whatsoever that resist Japanese aggression; at the same time, in literature we should allow everyone to raise new ideas for discussion. "Attempts at being original" are nothing frightening either* This is different from monopoly in commerce; and in fact you put forward your slogan of a "national defence literature" without first securing a patent from the Nanjing government or the "Soviet" government either. But now in the world of letters there seem to be the two trademarks of "national defence literature" and "mass literature of the national revolutionary war," and the responsibility for this must be taken by Xu Maoyong and company, for I did not regard them as two different camps in the article I wrote to answer a visitor's questions during my illness.

Of course, I must also explain why there is nothing wrong with the slogan "mass literature of the national revolutionary war" and what its relationship is to the slogan "national defence literature." First let me say that the former slogan was not raised by Hu Feng. It is true that Hu Feng wrote an article about it, he did so at my request. It is also true that his article did not explain matters clearly. Again, this slogan was not an attempt on my part "at being original," but was arrived at after discussion by several people, Mr Mao Dun among them. Mr Guo Moruo was far away in Japan being watched by secret agents at the time, so we could not consult him even by letter. The only pity is that Xu Maoyong and his lot were not invited to join in the discussion. However, the problem is not who put forward

* A narrow-minded character in the classical Chinese novel *Outlaws of the Marsh*

this slogan but whether or not it is wrong. *If it is to urge Left-wing writers who have hitherto restricted themselves to proletarian revolutionary writing to hasten to the front line of the national revolutionary war against Japanese aggression, if it is to remedy the ambiguity of the slogan of "national defence literature" in terms of literary theory, and to correct some of the incorrect ideas instilled into this formulation,* then the raising of this slogan for these reasons is appropriate and correct. If instead of thinking with the soles of their feet people use their brains a little, this cannot simply be dismissed as "an attempt at being original." The formulation "mass literature of the national revolutionary war" is intrinsically clearer, more profound and more significant than that of "national defence literature." It was put forward in the main for those progressive writers usually known as Left-wing, in the hope that they would strive to make further progress. In this sense and at present, when we are forming a united front, Xu Maoyong's condemnation of this slogan is nonsense. This slogan can also be raised for writers in general or for particular schools, in the hope that they too will strive to make progress. To deny this, again, is nonsense. However, this is not the criterion for the anti-Japanese united front. When Xu Maoyong alleges that I claimed this "should be the chief slogan of the united front" this is even worse nonsense. I would like to ask Xu Maoyong whether he has actually read what I wrote or not. If those who read what I wrote do not interpret this slogan in the way Xu Maoyong and company explain "national defence literature" — a mistake made by Nie Gannu* and others — then they can

* Nie Gannu in his article "Slogans for Writers and the Question of Banding Together" considered "national defence literature" as a concise slogan to guide writers but also said "mass literature of the national revolutionary war" was "more explicit" and "less ambiguous." He took a sectarian stand in distinguishing between the two slogans instead of explaining the fundamental difference between them.

see that this slogan has nothing to do with sectarianism and exclusionism. Here the term "mass" can be interpreted in the ordinary sense of "popular" and at present certainly means "of the whole people."

I said that "national defence literature" is one specific slogan in our present literary movement because this slogan is catchy, and as many people are already accustomed to it it can extend our political and literary influence, besides, it can be interpreted as patriotic literature in a wide sense, to unite all writers under the banner of national defence. So even if it has been misinterpreted and has intrinsic defects it should still be tolerated, as this is in the interest of the resistance. In my view, both these slogans can co-exist, and we need not justify this as Mr. Xin Ren did on the grounds of the "period" and the "times",* much less do I agree to all the restrictions others impose on "mass literature of the national revolutionary war." If the slogan "national defence literature" must be considered orthodox because it was raised first, I have no objection to giving this authority to those who want to be orthodox, because what is important is not fighting over slogans but taking action. If one just shouts slogans and fights for orthodoxy, one can of course produce "writings" and earn enough from them to make a living, but even so not for too long.

Finally, I have a few words to say about myself. Xu Maoyong claims that my words and actions during the last half year have encouraged bad trends. So let me examine them. Regarding words, I have published four or five articles, and apart from this at most have chatted a few times with visitors and told the doctor the symptoms

* In August 1936, Xin Ren published in *Realist Writing* an article "On Problems in the Current Literary Movement". In this he described "national defence literature" as a short-term topical slogan which could not take the place of the long-term slogan "mass literature of the national revolutionary war" which suited the needs of the times, but should be comprised in it.

of my illness. Regarding actions, I have done slightly more: printed two volumes of woodcuts and one of random thoughts, translated a few chapters of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, been ill for three months, and signed my name to something.* These things aside, I have neither visited brothels or gambling dens, nor taken part in any meetings. I really don't know how I am encouraging or have encouraged bad trends. Surely not by being ill? Unless it was wrong to fall ill but not die, there can be only one answer: I was wrong to fall ill and be unable to fight against such bad trends as Xu Maoyong's.

Next, regarding my relationship with Hu Feng, Ba Jin and Huang Yuan. I only got to know them recently, all through literary work, and although I cannot yet call them close friends we can be considered as friends. So when people unable to produce any genuine evidence slander my friends as "traitors" and "despicable," I have to defend them, not just out of loyalty to my friends but as a result of considering the people and facts involved. Xu Maoyong's accusation that I consider only people, not facts, is slander. It was after considering certain facts that I reached my conclusion about creatures like him. I had only a nodding acquaintance with Hu Feng to start with. One day last year a celebrity** invited me over for a talk, and when I got there a car drove up and out of it jumped four fellows — Tian Han, Zhou Qiyong†** and two others† — all impressive in foreign suits. They said they had come specially to notify me that Hu Feng was a traitor sent by the authorities. When asked for evidence they said this had been disclosed by Mu Mutian after

* This was the "Proclamation of Chinese Writers and Artists" which called for a broad united front among writers and artists to resist Japan.

** Xia Yan

*** Zhou Yang

† Xia Yan and Yang Hansheng.

he turned renegade * That the words of a renegade should be considered as gospel truth by Left-wingers really staggered me. After a few more questions of mine had been answered, I replied that the evidence was extremely flimsy and I did not believe it. Of course then we parted in dudgeon. But after that I never heard Hu Feng referred to as "traitor" again. Strange to say, however, since then whenever the gutter press attacks Hu Feng they usually drag me in, or lead up from me to Hu Feng. As when recently *Realist Writing* published some proposals I had dictated to O.V. and *Society Daily* said that O.V. was Hu Feng and there were discrepancies between his account and my original views. Or as when, a little earlier, Zhou Wen protested to Fu Donghua about certain changes and cuts in his short story, the same paper claimed that Hu Feng and I were behind this. The most dastardly case was last winter or this spring, when that same paper published the stop-press news that I was going to sell out to Nanjing with Hu Feng's connivance, how soon or how late depending on his manoeuvring.

I have also considered facts relating to others. Wasn't a certain young man pointed out as a "traitor" so that all his friends steered clear of him, he was reduced to roaming the streets with nowhere to go and finally was arrested and tortured? And wasn't another young man likewise smeared as a "traitor," but because he had taken part in a courageous struggle he ended up in Suzhou Jail and who knows whether he is now alive or dead? The facts have proved that both young men neither wrote formal recantations like Mu Mutian's lot nor staged new dramas in Nanjing like Tian Han.

At the same time, I also consider the persons concerned. Even if Hu Feng is not to be trusted, I can at least trust myself. I never negotiated with Nanjing via Hu Feng.

* Mu Mutian had joined the League of Left-Wing Writers. In 1934 he was arrested and turned renegade.

This led me to understand that Hu Feng is too outspoken and prone to give offence, someone I can have dealings with, while it made me start distrusting and even detesting those young men like Zhou Qiying who like to slander others. Of course, Zhou Qiying may have other good qualities. He may change his ways in future and turn out a true revolutionary. And Hu Feng has his shortcomings: hypersensitivity, petty-mindedness, a pedantic approach to theory and a refusal to write in a popular style, however, he is clearly a young man with ideals who has never taken part in any movement opposing the resistance or the united front. This cannot be refuted, however hard people like Xu Maoyong try to smear him.

As for Huang Yuan, I think he is a conscientious translator with progressive leanings, as can be seen from *Translated Literature* which is a serious magazine as well as some other translations. Ba Jin is a writer with passion and progressive ideas, one of our very few good novelists, though he has been dubbed an "anarchist" he has never opposed our movement and is one of the signatories to the militant proclamation jointly signed by writers and artists. Huang Yuan was a signatory too. When translators and writers such as these want to join the anti-Japanese united front, we welcome them, and I fail completely to understand why Xu Maoyong and his clique should call them "despicable." Does *Translated Literature* offend their eyes? Or is Ba Jin responsible for the sabotage of the revolution by Spanish anarchists?

Another thing. A recent practice in China which not only "encourages" but is itself a "bad trend" is calling your opponent opprobrious names without producing any evidence. Examples are the way Xu Maoyong labels Hu Feng as "tricky" and Huang Yuan as "sycophantic." The charge made by Tian Han, Zhou Qiying and their lot that Hu Feng was a "traitor" turned out to be untrue and was due to their stupidity, it was not that Hu Feng

pretended to be a "traitor" while actually he was not, to show them up as liars. When *Society Daily* claimed that Hu Feng had pulled me over to the other side, although I have still not gone over, the reporter was deliberately slandering me; it was not that Hu Feng pretended to pull me over while doing nothing of the sort, to make the reporter out a rumour-monger. Hu Feng is not so "lovably 'Left,'" but I think his personal enemies are really "fearfully 'Left'" Huang Yuan has never written in my praise, nor has he written a biography of me. He simply edits a monthly and does this so conscientiously that the general opinion of it is favourable. Why should this be "sycophantic"? Why does this mean "professing loyalty" to me? Is *Translated Literature* my private property? No doubt Xu Maoyong learned from his superiors that when Huang Yuan "made up in the past to Fu Donghua and Zheng Zhenduo" he behaved in a "sycophantic way." But I never heard or saw it. In my own dealings with him I have not noticed any "sycophancy," and as Xu Maoyong was never once with us I fail to understand on what he bases his judgement that this sycophantic behaviour was "no different." I witnessed those occasions, yet Xu Maoyong who never saw us together has the effrontery to make such vicious attacks to me, an eyewitness. This is surely carrying despotism to its limits. Is this because he "understands" the "present basic policy"? Because it is the same "in China just as in the rest of the world"? If so, this is really frightening!

Actually the "present basic policy" cannot be such a strait-jacket. Aren't all who want to resist Japanese aggression our comrades? So what does "trickiness" or "sycophancy" matter? Why must Hu Feng's writings be blotted out and Huang Yuan's magazine crushed? Do they consist of nothing but the "Twenty-one Demands"* and "cultural aggression"?

*The secret demands presented by Japan to Yuan Shikai's government in 1915.

What we should first get rid of are those despots who use a great banner as a tiger-skin to disguise themselves and intimidate others, when they feel the least offended they use their "authority" (1) to pass sentence on others, and the charges are fearfully heavy. Of course, a united front will be formed, but a united front formed by intimidation is no use in a fight. There have been previous examples of this, yet the ghosts of the fallen have not realized their mistake and have reappeared before me in the form of Xu Maoyong.

Before and after the founding of the League of Left-Wing Writers, there were some so-called revolutionary writers who were actually the vagabond sons of ruined families. Some were discontented, some revolted and fought, but the tactics they usually brought to the literary forum were those of bickering wives and sisters-in-law and squabbling brothers-in-law in families in decline. They would gossip and make trouble by idle talk, regardless of principles. This tradition has never died out. Take for instance my relationship with Mao Dun and Guo Moruo. One I know, the other I have never met, one I have never clashed with, the other and I have written sarcastic things about each other, however, in a major fight we are for the same goal and certainly do not spend the whole time thinking about personal favours or grievances. Yet the gutter press delights in comparing Lu Xun with Mao Dun or harping on Guo Moruo's attitude towards Lu Xun, as if we were forever fighting for position and using secret weapons against each other. Thus after *Translated Literature* stopped publication, *The Treasury of World Literature** finished printing the first part of *Dead Souls*; however, some of the gutter press

* A periodical founded in May 1935 to publish selections of classical Chinese and world literature. Its editor was Zheng Zhenduo.

claimed that "Zheng Zhenduo truncated *Dead Souls*," or that Lu Xun had given up translating in anger. This is really a bad trend, this trying to split our literary ranks with rumour-mongering, and it approximates to "treachery" Yet these are the depths to which bankrupt writers will sink

In my view Xu Maoyong is a writer of this bickering type, connected with the gutter press but not yet completely degraded, although already muddle-headed enough (Or else despotic) For instance he said in his letter

It would have been very easy to attack their actions and words, but just because they have you as their shield.. we found ourselves in a most difficult position as regards solving the problem and in this battle of words

Whether he meant to attack Hu Feng's trickiness and Huang Yuan's sycophancy from the angle of moral rectification, or to attack Hu Feng's articles and Huang Yuan's magazine from the literary angle, I am in no hurry to find out. What I want to ask is. Why should they find it so difficult to attack them because I know them? Of course, I refuse to follow the lead of rumour-mongers, but if Xu Maoyong and company have justice on their side, how could I make the whole world turn deaf and blind to those men's shortcomings? And what did he mean by "solving the problem"? Exile or decapitation? Can one charge people with crimes like this and throw one's weight about in the high-sounding name of the "united front"? I sincerely pray that "national defence literature" will produce some great works; otherwise, "encouraging" this "bad trend" may be added to my crimes of the last half year.

Xu Maoyong concluded by exhorting me to read *The Life of Stalin* carefully. Yes, I shall do so. As long as I

remain alive, of course I must study. But in conclusion I too would like to ask him to read it carefully several times himself, for while translating it he does not seem to have learned anything from it, and he really needs to read it carefully again. Otherwise, with this banner in his grasp, he will feel superior to everybody else and lord it over them like a slave-driver whose sole task is cracking a whip. In that case he will be incurable, not only of no use to China but downright harmful too.

August 3-6, 1936

JOTTINGS IN MID-SUMMER

1

- A. Come to judge between us, all of you! Why should B tear off my gown?
- B. Because A looks better without a gown. I was trying to be helpful. Otherwise I wouldn't have gone to such trouble.
- A. But I prefer to wear it.
- C. Now we have lost the four northeastern provinces, but what do you care? All you can do is shout about your gown. What an egoist you are, you swine!
- Mrs. C. What a fool! He doesn't even know that Mr. B is a good friend, willing to co-operate.

2

Naturally it is good to proclaim by the written and spoken word the sufferings of those who are slaves under a foreign yoke. But we must take great care lest people reach this conclusion: "Then it is better after all to be slaves to your own compatriots, like us."

3

Since a "united front" was proposed, those "revolutionary writers" who went over to the enemy have re-

appeared, posing as pioneers of the "united front" All their contemptible acceptance of bribes and traffic with the enemy are now made out to be "progressive," glorious deeds

4

This happened after the fall of the Ming Dynasty

Of the living, some submitted gladly, the majority was coerced Those who lived in the greatest comfort and ease were the collaborators, those who held most aloof and enjoyed most respect were the gentlemen of leisure who reviled the traitors When they had died in retirement at a ripe old age, there was nothing to stop their sons from taking the official examinations, each boasting of his worthy father too As for those who laid down their lives in silent resistance, very few of them left descendants

I hope our present men of letters will not imitate those Ming Dynasty gentlemen

5

A We thought you were a good reliable fellow, B That's why we didn't hide those facts about the revolution from you How could you turn informer?

B Preposterous! How can you call me an informer? I simply mentioned these things because they asked me

A. Couldn't you have said that you didn't know?

B The idea! I have never told a lie in my life I'm not that sort of unreliable fellow.

6

- A Ah, Mr B, it's three years since we met You must be disappointed in me.
- B Not at all . . . Why should I be?
- A I told you I was going to the West Lake to write a poem of twenty thousand lines, but I still haven't written a single word. Ha, ha!
- B Well I haven't been disappointed.
- A You seem to have gained in worldly wisdom You used to be known for your good memory and intolerance you wouldn't have taken things so easily then But now you have learned to lie.
- B I haven't told any lie.
- A You mean to say you are really not disappointed in me?
- B Well, that is beside the point — I never believed you.

7

According to Zhuang Zi, it does not matter where you leave a dead body, for it will perish just the same, "devoured by the birds of the air or the ants in the earth"

I am not so generous, though. If my flesh and blood are to feed beasts, I prefer to feed lions, tigers and eagles. Not one scrap will I give to mangy curs

When lions, tigers and eagles are well fed they afford a magnificent spectacle in the sky, on cliffs, amid deserts and jungles While even when captured and kept in a zoo, or killed and stuffed as specimens, they are still a fine sight which drives petty thoughts from the mind.

But if you fatten a pack of mangy curs, all they can do is rush madly about and whine — disgusting!

8

One part of Sainte-Beuve's writings, edited by Giraud, is called *Mes Poisons*. I read the following passage from the Japanese translation "Open contempt is not the strongest contempt. Silence is the highest contempt. In fact, what I am saying here is superfluous."

True, "a stout fellow must have venom in him." But when this can be put down in writing it is mild venom merely. The highest contempt is wordless, without even a flicker of the eye.

9

When a man is taken as the model for some character with many faults in a novel, he thinks himself out of luck.

But his luck is not the worst by any means. For there are people who cannot be included in a novel. If you were to describe them in a realistic way, the novel would be ruined.

The same thing applies to painting. Artists may paint snakes, crocodiles, tortoises, shells, waste-paper baskets, garbage heaps, but nobody ever draws grubs, scabby heads, snot or human excrement.

Some people avoid me as soon as they know that I write stories. I often want to dissuade them in these terms, but unfortunately I am not as venomous as that.

THIS TOO IS LIFE

This, too, happens during illness

There are things which a healthy or a sick man ignores, either because he does not come across them or because they are too insignificant. But a man just recovering from a serious illness experiences them. In my case two good examples are the fearfulness of exhaustion and the comfort of rest. I used often to boast that I did not know what it was to be tired. In front of my desk there is a swivel-chair, and sitting there to write or read carefully was work; beside it there is a wicker reclining chair, and lying there to chat or skim through the papers was rest. I found no great difference between the two, and often boasted of the fact. Now I know my mistake. I found little difference because I was never tired, because I never did any manual labour.

A relative's son, after graduating from senior middle school, had to go to a stocking factory as an apprentice. He was very unhappy about this, and the work was so hard that he had virtually no rest the whole year round. Too proud to slack, he stuck it for a year and more. Then one day he collapsed and told his elder brother, "I've just no energy left"

He never stood up again. He was sent home where he lay unwilling to eat or drink, to stir or speak. A Protestant doctor fetched to examine him said there was nothing organically wrong but the boy was completely worn out. Since there was no cure for this either, what followed, naturally, was a lingering death. I had two days like that, but for a different reason: whereas he was

tired out by work I was tired out by illness I had literally no desire for anything, as if nothing concerned me and all action would be superfluous I did not brood over death, but neither did I feel alive This, known as "the absence of all desire," is the first step towards death, and it made some who loved me shed secret tears But I took a turn for the better when I wanted something to drink, and from time to time I looked at the things around me — the walls and the flies Only then did I feel tired enough to need rest

To lie just as one pleases, stretching one's limbs and giving a huge yawn before settling into the most comfortable position to relax in every muscle, is sheer delight I had never enjoyed this before I doubt if the healthy and lucky have enjoyed it either

The year before last, I remember, after another illness I wrote "Random Talk After Sickness" in five sections and gave it to *Literature*, but since the last four sections could not be published the first was printed alone The article started clearly with a (1) but stopped abruptly without any (2) or (3) to follow, so that anyone who thought carefully must have been puzzled, but we cannot expect this thoughtfulness from every reader, nor even from every critic And on the basis of the first section someone passed this judgement on me: "Lu Xun is in favour of illness" This time I may be spared, but to be on the safe side I had better announce here "More is to follow"

Four or five days after I began to mend, waking in the night I called Guangping to wake her

"Give me some water And put the light on so that I can have a look round"

"What for?" She sounded rather alarmed, doubtless thinking I was raving.

"Because I want to live Understand that? This, too, is life. I want to take a look round"

"Oh . . ." She got up and gave me some tea, hesitated a little and quietly lay down again without putting on the light.

I knew she had not understood

A street-lamp outside the window shed a glimmer of light in the room, and I had a quick look at the familiar walls and the angles between them, the familiar pile of books and the unbound pictures beside them, while outside night took its course, and all that infinite space, those innumerable people, were linked in some way with me. I breathed, I lived, I should live on. I began to feel more substantial and experienced an urge to action — but presently I fell asleep again.

The next morning when I looked round in the sunlight, sure enough, there were the familiar walls, the familiar piles of books . . . normally I would look at these too as a form of relaxation. But we tend to despise these things though they are one part of life, ranking them lower than drinking tea or scratching ourselves, or even counting them as nothing. We notice rare blossoms, not the branches and leaves. The biographer of a famous man generally does nothing but emphasize his peculiarities: how Li Bai wrote his poetry and became tipsy, how Napoleon fought his battles and went without sleep, not describing them when sober or asleep. In fact, a man who spends all his time getting tipsy or doing without sleep will certainly not live long. He can go without sleep or become tipsy sometimes because at other times he is sober and sleeps. Yet considering these normal events as the dregs of life, people will not spare them a glance.

So the men or happenings they see are like the elephant's leg which made the blind man groping round the elephant fancy it was shaped like a pillar. The ancient Chinese always liked to have "the whole." Even when making "black chicken pills" to cure women's disorders, they used the whole chicken, feathers, blood and

all This method may be rather ridiculous, yet the idea behind it is not a bad one

The man who strips off the branches and leaves will never get blossoms and fruit

Annoyed with Guangping for not putting on the light for me, I complained of her to everyone who called By the time I was able to get about again, I looked through the magazines she had been reading Sure enough, while I lay ill in bed quite a few distinguished journals had appeared Though some still published "Beauty Tips," "An Old Tree Sheds Light" or "The Secrets of Nuns" in the back, the first pages had some rousing heroic articles Writers now have a "most vital theme" even Sai-jin-hua* who slept for a time with the German commander Waldersee during the Yi He Tuan Uprising has become canonized as a goddess in heaven to guard our realm

Most admirable of all is the fact that the "Spring and Autumn" supplement of the *Shen Bao* which used to refer with such relish to the Empress Dowager and the Qing court, has also changed completely with the times In the comments at the beginning of one number, we are even told that when eating melons we should think of our territory now carved up like a melon Of course there is no gainsaying that at all times, in all places and on all occasions we should be patriotic Still if I were to think like that while eating a melon, I doubt whether I could swallow it Even if I made an effort and succeeded, I would probably have prolonged indigestion And this may not be owing to my bad nervous state after illness To my mind, a man who uses the melon as a simile when lecturing on our national disgrace, and the next moment

* A famous courtesan During the occupation of Beijing by imperialist troops after the Yi He Tuan Movement, she became the mistress of Count Waldersee, the commander of the allied forces She was believed to have intervened occasionally when the imperialist troops were looting and killing people

cheerfully eats a melon absorbing its nourishment, is rather lacking in feeling. No lecture could have any effect on such a man.

Never having joined the volunteers myself, I can only guess at their feelings. But I ask myself. Does a soldier eating a melon make a point of eating and thinking at the same time? I doubt it. He probably just feels thirsty, wants a melon and finds it sweet, without giving a thought to any other high-sounding ideas. Eating the melon refreshes him and enables him to fight better than if he were thirsty; hence melon-eating does have something to do with resistance, but nothing to do with the rules on how to think laid down in Shanghai. If we ate and drank with long faces all the time, very soon we should have no appetite at all, and then what would become of our resistance?

Still there are men who will talk in this strange way, who will not even let you eat a melon normally. Actually a soldier's daily life is not entirely heroic, but when the whole of it is bound up with heroism, you have a real soldier.

August 23, 1936

DEATH

While preparing a selection of Kathe Kollwitz's works for publication, I asked Miss Agnes Smedley to write a preface. This struck me as most appropriate because the two of them were good friends. Soon the preface was ready, I had Mr. Mao Dun translate it, and it has now appeared in the Chinese edition. One passage in it reads

All these years Kathe Kollwitz — who never once used any title conferred on her — has made a great many sketches, pencil and ink drawings, woodcuts and etchings. When we study these, two dominant themes are evident. In her younger days her main theme was revolt, but in her later years it was motherly love, the protective maternal instinct, succour and death. All her works are pervaded by the idea of suffering, of tragedy, and a passionate longing to protect the oppressed.

Once I asked her, "Why is it that instead of your former theme of revolt you now seem unable to shake off the idea of death?" She answered in tones of anguish, "It may be because I am growing older every day."

At that point I stopped to think. I estimated that it must have been in about 1910 that she first took death as her theme, when she was no more than forty-three or -four. I stop to think about it now because of my own age, of course. But a dozen or so years ago, as I recall, I did not have such a feeling about death. No

doubt our lives have long been treated so casually as trifles of no consequence that we treat them lightly ourselves, not seriously as Europeans do. Some foreigners say that the Chinese are most afraid of death. But this is not true — actually, most of us die with no clear understanding of the meaning of death.

The general belief in a posthumous existence further strengthens the casual attitude towards death. As everyone knows, we Chinese believe in ghosts (more recently called "souls" or "spirits"), and since there are ghosts, after death we can at least exist as ghosts if not as men, which is better than nothing. But the imagined duration of this ghostly existence seems to vary according to one's wealth. The poor appear to believe that when they die their souls will pass into another body, an idea derived from Buddhism. Of course, transmigration in Buddhism is a complicated process, by no means so simple, but the poor are usually ignorant people who do not know this. That is why criminals condemned to death often show no fear when taken to the execution ground, but shout, "Twenty years from now I shall be a stout fellow again!" Moreover, according to popular belief a ghost wears the clothes he had on at the time of death; and since the poor have no good clothes and cannot therefore cut a fine figure as ghosts, it is far better for them to be reborn at once as naked babies. Did you ever see a new-born infant wearing a beggar's rags or a swimming-suit? No, never. Very well, then, that is a fresh start. Someone may object. If you believe in transmigration, in the next existence you may even be worse off or actually become a beast — what a fearful thought! But the poor don't seem to think that way. They firmly believe that they have not committed sins frightful enough to condemn them to becoming beasts: they have not had the position, power or money to commit such sins.

But neither do those men with position, power and money believe that they should become beasts. They either turn Buddhist in order to become saints, or advocate the study of the Confucian classics and a return to ancient ways in order to become Confucian sages. Just as in life they expect to be a privileged class, after death they expect to be exempt from transmigration. As for those who have a little money, though they also believe they should be exempt from transmigration, since they have no high ambitions or lofty plans they just wait placidly. Round about the age of fifty, they look for a burial place, buy a coffin, and burn paper money to open a bank account in the nether regions, expecting their sons and grandsons to sacrifice to them every year. This is surely much pleasanter than life on earth. If I were a ghost now, with filial descendants in the world of men, I should not have to sell my articles one by one, or ask the Beixin Publishing House for payment. I could simply lie at ease in my cedarwood or fir coffin, while at every festival and at New Year a fine feast and a pile of banknotes would be placed before me. That would be the life!

Generally speaking, unlike the very rich and great, who are not bound by the laws of the nether regions, the poor would like to be reborn at once, while those comfortably-off would like to remain as ghosts for as long as possible. The comfortably-off are willing to remain ghosts because their life as ghosts (this sounds paradoxical but I can think of no better way of expressing it) is the continuation of their life on earth and they are not yet tired of it. Of course there are rulers in the nether regions who are extremely strict and just, but they will make allowances for these ghosts and accept presents from them too, just like good officials on earth.

Then there are others who are rather casual, who do not think much about death even when they are dying, and I belong to this casual category. Thirty years ago as

a medical student I considered the problem of the existence of the soul, but did not know what to conclude. Later I considered whether death was painful or not, and concluded that it varied in different cases. And later still I stopped thinking about the matter and forgot it. During the last ten years I have sometimes written a little about the death of friends, but apparently I never thought of my own. In the last two years I have been ill a great deal and usually for a considerable length of time, which has often reminded me that I am growing older. Of course, I have been constantly reminded of this fact by other writers owing to their friendly or unfriendly concern.

Since last year, whenever I lay on my wicker chair recovering from illness, I would consider what to do when I was well, what articles to write, what books to translate or publish. My plans made, I would conclude, "All right — but I must hurry." This sense of urgency, which I never had before, was due to the fact that unconsciously I had remembered my age. But still I never thought directly of "death."

Not till my serious illness this year did I start thinking distinctly about death. At first I treated my illness as in the past, relying on my Japanese doctor, S——. Though not a specialist in tuberculosis, he is an elderly man with a rich experience who studied medicine before me, is my senior, and knows me very well — hence he talks frankly. Of course, however well a doctor knows his patient, he still speaks with a certain reserve, but at least he warned me two or three times, though I never paid any attention and did not tell anyone. Perhaps because things had dragged on so long and my last attack was so serious, some friends arranged behind my back to invite an American doctor, D——, to see me. He is the only Western specialist on tuberculosis in Shanghai. After his examination, although he complimented me on my typically Chinese powers of resistance, he also announced that my end was near, adding that had I been a European

I would already have been in my grave for five years. This verdict moved my soft-hearted friends to tears. I did not ask him to prescribe for me, feeling that since he had studied in the West he could hardly have learned how to prescribe for a patient five years dead. But Dr. D——'s diagnosis was in fact extremely accurate. I later had an X-ray photograph made of my chest which very largely bore out his findings.

Though I did not pay much attention to his announcement, it has influenced me a little. I spend all the time on my back, with no energy to talk or read and not enough strength to hold a newspaper. Since my heart is not yet "as tranquil as an old well," I am forced to think, and sometimes I think of death too. But instead of thinking that "twenty years from now I shall be a stout fellow again," or wondering how to prolong my stay in a cedar-wood coffin, my mind dwells on certain trifles before death. It is only now that I am finally sure that I do not believe that men turn into ghosts. It occurred to me to write a will, and I thought: If I were a great nobleman with a huge fortune, my sons, sons-in-law, and others would have forced me to write a will long ago, whereas nobody has mentioned it to me. Still, I may as well leave one. I seem to have thought out quite a few items for my family, among which were

- 1 Don't accept a cent from anyone for the funeral. This does not apply to old friends.
- 2 Get the whole thing over quickly, have me buried and be done with it.
- 3 Do nothing in the way of commemoration.
- 4 Forget me and live your own lives — if you don't, the more fools you.
- 5 When the child grows up, if he has no gifts let him take some small job to make a living. On no account let him become a writer or artist in name only.

- 6 Don't take other people's promises seriously
- 7 Have nothing to do with people who injure others but who oppose revenge and advocate tolerance.

There were other items, too, but I have forgotten them. I remember also how during a fever I recalled that when a European is dying there is usually some sort of ceremony in which he asks pardon of others and pardons them. Now I have a great many enemies, and what should my answer be if some modernized person asked me my views on this? After some thought I decided. Let them go on hating me. I shall not forgive a single one of them either.

No such ceremony took place, however, and I did not draw up a will. I simply lay there in silence, struck sometimes by a more pressing thought: if this is dying, it isn't really painful. It may not be quite like this at the end, of course; but still, since this happens only once in a lifetime, I can take it . . . Later, however, there came a change for the better. And now I am wondering whether this was really the state just before dying. A man really dying may not have such ideas. What it will be like, though, I still do not know.

September 5, 1936

“FOR FUTURE REFERENCE” (3)

Warm, well-fed white men need titillating entertainment, but once they tired of films about African cannibalism and big game we yellow-skinned, flat-nosed Chinese were put on the screen. Then followed such incidents as “films insulting to China,” and our patriots were moved to righteous indignation.

Five or six years ago our shindy with Douglas Fairbanks over *The Thief of Bagdad* left a bad taste. Apparently neither side remembered that the prince in the film was a Mongolian, nothing to do with us, moreover the story came from *The Arabian Nights*, and Douglas Fairbanks was not to blame for he was merely an actor, not the director.

But I have no intention either of speaking up for Douglas Fairbanks here.

The case of *The Shanghai Express*, brought up again this year, is much more to the point. Let me quote some clippings from the press, for both the event and the comments are of interest, and if I condense them they may lose their flavour. First there is Mr Xiao Yun's account, “Von Sternberg's Second Visit to Shanghai,” published on September 20 in “The Clubroom,” a supplement of the Shanghai *Da Gong Bao*.

For several days now film circles in Shanghai have been busy entertaining an honourable guest from America, the celebrated director of Paramount Pictures, Josef von Sternberg. While some are giving him an enthusiastic welcome, many others are attacking him, for it was he who produced *The Shanghai*

Express, a film insulting to China. He was guilty of a great affront to our country. This is not easily forgotten.

The incident of *The Shanghai Express* happened five years ago just after the battle which began on January 28,¹ when our people in general were still very sensitive to slights. So when this Hollywood film with its distortion of facts appeared in Shanghai, there was an immediate uproar, and after a brief showing of two days only this picture was withdrawn for ever from Chinese eyes. Today, five years later, the director of this film is still condemned by public opinion. It may be that this will teach Von Sternberg a lesson: it is not wise to insult others for no reason.

When Von Sternberg made *The Shanghai Express* he had virtually no knowledge at all of China. Not knowing China, he could defend himself by saying that he did not insult us deliberately. But now he has been to China, he has seen China, if on his return to Hollywood he makes another film like *The Shanghai Express* that will be unpardonable. While in Shanghai he told people that he was most favourably impressed with China, and we hope this is the truth.

But what happened later? Unfortunately on that very same day the selfsame paper in its supplement "The Theatre and Cinema" printed Mr Qi Yang's "Interview with an Artist":

Director Josef von Sternberg, whose *Shanghai Express* aroused attention in China, will no doubt gather material for another film "insulting to China" during this trip.

* On January 28, 1932, Japanese troops attacked Shanghai and the fighting lasted until March 4.

"The Chinese do not know themselves," he says "This visit to China has given me further confirmation of many things described in *The Shanghai Express*" So, unlike most visitors to China who change their tune when they come here, Von Sternberg has all an artist's lofty indifference to public opinion, which is really admirable

I made no direct protest about *The Shanghai Express*, but asked him what change there had been in his views on China and Japan when he was in the United States and when he came to China

He did not answer immediately, but presently said with a smile

"There has been no change in my views when I was in the United States and after I came to China, though the atmosphere in the East is certainly different. The scenery in Japan is very lovely, and in China Beijing is good too, but Shanghai seems too showy, Suzhou too old. There is certainly something mysterious in the air. Many newspapermen have asked me about *The Shanghai Express* incident, but there is no need to gloss over it, for that is how things were. And now I have an even clearer impression. I have brought no camera with me, but my eyes will not let me forget what I have seen." That reminded me of the story of how a few years ago the shacks on Zhongshan Road in Nanjing were pulled down before a visit from some foreigners.

So instead of recanting he has become more convinced and said what he thought. He does indeed possess a sort of rough Teutonic virtue. I agree with the reporter "This is really admirable"

We should have sense enough to "know ourselves," and sense enough to know others too. We should understand that he cares nothing for the "censure of

public opinion” in China. We should understand just how much weight our public opinion carries

“But now he has been to China, he has seen China While in Shanghai he told people that he was most favourably impressed with China.” And according to the interview this “is the truth” But what impressed him was Beiping, the place, not the Chinese people. In foreign eyes the place China has virtually no connection now with the people.

Besides, where people are concerned we actually have nothing good to show him. After reading these articles about Von Sternberg, I had a look at newspapers of the previous day, the nineteenth And I found nothing to be proud of. Here are one or two news items:

Beiping, Sept. 18 (Central News Agency) — On the anniversary of the September 18th Incident,* the police in Beiping took strict precautionary measures. At six in the morning the whole security and detective force sallied forth to take the necessary precautions in all public centres, schools and strategic points along the streets. A close inspection was made. The police and garrison forces had no rest. The atmosphere in the city is somewhat tense, but the day has passed with no untoward incident.

Tianjin, Sept 18, 11 p.m., Special — This evening the Japanese troops at Fengtai suddenly surrounded the garrison forces there led by Feng Zhi’an and ordered them to surrender. Relations remained strained all night. Japanese reinforcements have been sent from Beiping to Fengtai. Further details are unknown. During the last month the Japanese authorities have repeatedly requested General Song Zheyuan to withdraw Feng’s forces, but General Song has not agreed.

Two days later, on the 20th, this item of news appeared:

* See footnote on p. 85 above.

Fengtai, Sept 19 (Japanese Domei Agency) — The Fengtai incident of the 18th was satisfactorily solved at 9 30 a m on the 19th. The Japanese troops, having raised the siege, assembled before the station. The Chinese troops also collected there and misunderstandings were smoothed out.

Another day later, on the 21st, the paper carried this news

Beijing, Sept. 20 (Central News Agency) — Now that the misunderstanding between the Chinese and Japanese troops at Fengtai has been settled, in order to avoid a repetition of such incidents both sides after careful discussion decided to move their troops further away. The Fifth Company of our Second Battalion stationed at Fengtai has now moved to Zhaojia Village south of Fengtai, so that there are no longer Chinese troops in the vicinity of the Japanese garrison at Fengtai.

I don't know where Von Sternberg is now. If he is still in China, perhaps he is thinking that this year is a "year of misunderstanding," and the eighteenth the day of the "students' revolt."

Actually, the Chinese do have sense enough to know themselves. The trouble is that some people are content to practise self-deceit and try to deceive others too. They are like a man suffering from dropsy but afraid to see a doctor, who hopes others may be foolish enough to think he is simply growing fat. After deceiving himself for some time he comes to believe that he is simply fat, not swollen with dropsy, or that even if swollen his case is better than most. If someone points out that he is dropsical, not fat, and that this is a disease with nothing good about it, he will feel dismayed and ashamed and will angrily abuse that man for a fool. But he will still try to frighten or deceive him in the hope that, intimidated

by his anger and abuse, the other will reconsider the case, discover certain compensating factors and end by admitting that this is really corpulence after all. Then the man with dropsy will feel reassured and will remain dropsical but happy and at ease.

It does you no good to refuse to see those humiliating films. It simply means that you refuse to see them, closing your eyes to your dropsy. But it does no good either if, after seeing such films, you do not stop to reflect. I am still looking forward to the time when Smith's *Chinese Characteristics* will be translated into Chinese. We should read this, reflect and analyse ourselves to see whether he has said anything correctly or not, then make reforms, struggle and change ourselves without asking others for their forgiveness or praise. So we shall prove what the Chinese are really like.

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF ZHANG TAIYAN

Some time ago the officials and gentry of Shanghai held a meeting to commemorate Zhang Taiyan, but since this was attended by less than a hundred people and ended in an atmosphere of gloom, someone commented that the younger generation is less interested in Chinese scholars than in the foreigner Gorky. This criticism is uncalled for, however. Ordinary people would never dare attend a meeting of officials and gentry anyway, and besides, Gorky was a fighter, while though Mr Zhang Taiyan first became known as a revolutionary, he later retired to live as a quiet scholar cut off from the age by means of a wall built by himself and others. Of course he is still being commemorated by some, but he will probably be forgotten by the majority.

To my mind, his contribution to the history of revolution is actually greater than that to the history of scholarship. I remember over thirty years ago, when his *Qiu Shu** was first printed, I could not even punctuate the sentences, let alone understand them, and the same was true of many young people in those days. I heard about China's Mr Zhang Taiyan not because of his studies in the Confucian classics and ancient philology, but because he attacked Kang Youwei,** wrote a preface to Zou

* A collection of essays written in a rather obscure style, first printed in 1899.

** He attacked Kang Youwei's monarchist views.

Rong's *The Revolutionary Army*, and was imprisoned in the jail of the International Settlement in Shanghai. At that time some Zhejiang students in Japan were bringing out a magazine called *Zhejiang Tide*, and this published Zhang Taiyan's poems written in jail, which were not so difficult to understand. These poems stirred me so much that I still remember them. Here are two of them.

To Zou Rong in Prison

*Zou Rong, my younger brother,
With dishevelled hair sailed to the islands of Japan;
There he cut off his queue with sharp scissors,
And fed on salted beef
Now the hero has gone to prison,
Even heaven and earth are sad;
At our death let us link hands,
For on that day will fall two worthy heads.*

Hearing of Shen Yuxi's** Death in Prison

*For long I did not see Yuxi,
But knew he was wandering by lakes and rivers;
The autumn wind bewails a gallant man
Now gone to the capital to meet death
His ghost will not mix with demons,
But thinking of his writings my heart is broken;
May he await me in the nether regions;
North and south are many new graves.*

In June 1906, immediately after his release from jail, he sailed for Japan and went to Tokyo, where soon he was editing *The People's News*. I liked this paper, not

* An early revolutionary imprisoned by the Qing government. He died in prison.

** Another revolutionary who was arrested and killed at the end of the Qing Dynasty.

because of his old-fashioned and difficult prose style or his dissertations on Buddhist philosophy and "bilateral evolution," but because of his campaigns against Liang Qichao who was for retaining the monarchy, against Wu Zhihui and Lan Gongwu who claimed that to study *A Dream of Red Mansions* was the way to attain Buddhahood. He really put up a gallant and inspiring fight. I listened to his lectures too during this time, not because he was a good scholar but because he was at the same time a revolutionary, so that today I can still remember his expression and gestures but not a word of the ancient philology about which he lectured.

After the 1911 Revolution, since his ideal was realized he ought to have done great things, but he remained in obscurity. This was quite unlike Gorky, who was highly respected during his life and honoured after death. I think the reason for the difference in their fates was that all Gorky's dreams had come true and he identified himself with the common people, sharing their joy and anger, their pleasures and sorrow. But whereas Zhang's desire to overthrow the Manchus had been realized, his desire "first to give men faith through religion to improve their moral sense, secondly to arouse their patriotism through nationalism" was merely a visionary ideal. So when Yuan Shikai usurped the state power to suit his selfish ends, Zhang Taiyan further lost any real basis and nothing was left to him but empty writing. Now the sole great memorial remaining to him is the fact that he was the one to invent the name of the Chinese Republic (first used in *The People's News*), though today I fear not many remember this. Since he had cut himself off from the people he grew by degrees more passive, later even taking part in the revival of the ancient *tou hu* ceremony* and accepting presents from warlords, for which he is frequently reproached. This was no more than a blemish.

* See footnote on p 89 above.

in pure jade, however, not a serious stain on his character in the end. When we consider his career, what other man of his generation dared to dangle his big medal on his fan,¹ and go to the president's house to curse Yuan Shikai's treachery? What other man of his generation remained firm in his revolutionary ideal despite seven persecutions and three prison sentences? This showed the spirit of a great man, a model for those coming after. Recently some philistines have written articles for the papers jeering at him in a superior way. This just proves that "A low mind thinks the worst of everyone" and "A tiny insect, trying to shake a mighty tree, is ludicrously ignorant of its own weakness."²

But after the revolution Zhang Taiyan hid the point of his lance to set a scholarly example for the men after him, and edited his own works in Zhejiang. Doubtless he felt that to attack, criticize or even curse others was contrary to the ancient Confucian tradition and would cause scholars to point the finger of scorn. So many of his tirades which had appeared in different periodicals were omitted, nor were the two poems I quoted included either. In 1933, a further collection of his writings was published in Beiping, but this consisted entirely of scholarly works with none of his early writing and of course no philippics: he appeared simply as a great Confucian scholar. Many people claimed to be his pupils and a list of his students was hastily compiled. Recently I read a notice in the press about the copyright of his works and it was announced that a third collection of his writings would be published, but I do not know whether this time they will include those polemic essays or not. To my mind, those polemic essays are the greatest and

* At the beginning of the Republic, Zhang Taiyan was awarded a medal for his service to the revolution.

** Lines from a poem by Han Yu of the Tang Dynasty, ridiculing a minor poet who disparaged Li Bai and Du Fu.

most lasting monument to his life. If they are not yet included, I believe they should be collected and printed so that he may live in the hearts of the younger generation, in the hearts of those who are fighting. But, alas! This is hardly the time to hope for such a thing!

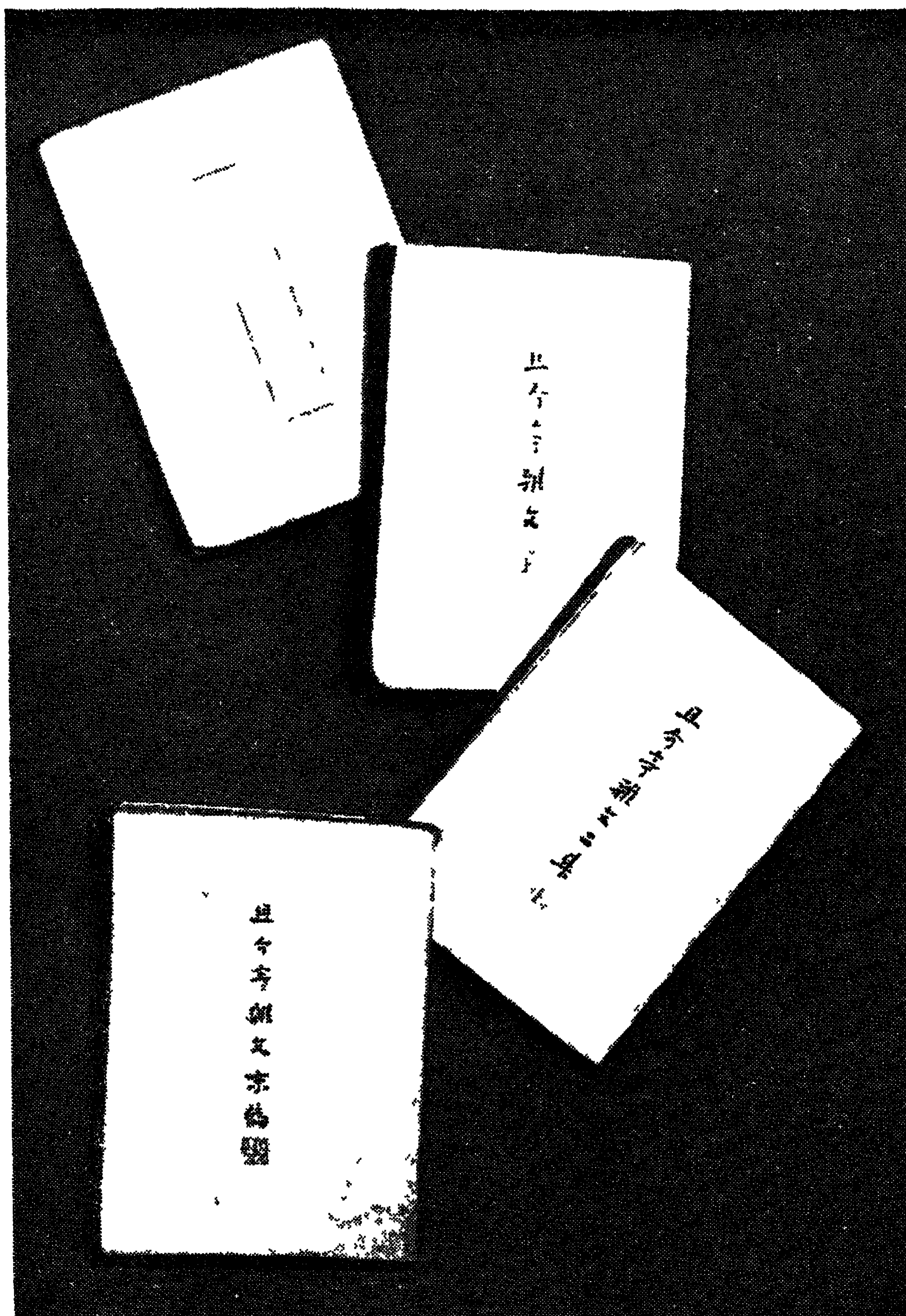
October 9, 1936

A FEW MATTERS CONNECTED WITH ZHANG TAIYAN

Having put down this title, I rather hesitate for fear lest empty talk preponderate over the main subject — what is usually known as “Loud thunder but little rain.”

After writing “Some Recollections of Zhang Taiyan” it seemed to me there were still some trifles I could jot down, but for lack of energy I had to stop. When I woke the next morning the paper had arrived, and reading it I could not help rubbing my head in amazement. “So today is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chinese Republic! So the Chinese Republic has been in existence for a quarter of a century — wonderful!” I meant how “wonderfully” fast time flies. Then, skimming through the supplements I saw some articles by new writers jeering at older men, which affected me like cold water poured on my head. I thought: I suppose the young really have no patience with old fogeys. Take my own case, I seem to get odder every day. Instead of saying twenty-five years, I prefer to say a quarter of a century to show much time has passed, but why should this worry me? And the way I rub my head to show surprise is really backward too.

I have used this way of showing delight or emotion for a quarter of a century too. It used to be a sign of triumph, meaning “After all my queue is cut off.” But young people today cannot share such emotions as these. If a man with a long queue were to appear in a city today, those of thirty or thereabouts and youngsters in the



Four collections of Lu Xun's essays
written between 1934 and 1936.
Fringed Literature and the three
volumes of *Essays of Qiejieting*

As for its use, the queue could be pulled in a fight, could be cut off as a penalty for adultery, could suspend a man from an iron pole in an opera, could be used as a whip by a father, could be shaken about like a writhing snake by an acrobat. Yesterday I witnessed an arrest on the street, in which the police caught one culprit with each hand, one man catching two. Had this been before the 1911 Revolution, a policeman could have grabbed at least a dozen queues with one hand, hence it was most convenient for public security too. Unfortunately since "the ocean routes were opened" and Chinese started reading foreign books, we began to compare ourselves with others. Even if not described by foreigners as wearing "pigtails," we felt rather silly shaving half the head, leaving one tuft of hair to be braided into a long queue like the stem of a water chestnut.

I think even the young people born during the Republic must know this. During the reign of Guang Xu* in the Qing Dynasty, Kang Youwei tried to bring about a reform, but failed; then as a reaction to this came the Yi He Tuan Uprising and imperialist armies occupied Beijing. This date is very easy to remember, being 1900, the end of the nineteenth century. After that the Qing officials and common people wanted reforms again, and in accordance with precedents officials were sent to foreign lands on a tour of inspection and students were sent out to study too. I was one of the students sent to Japan by the Governor of Jiangsu, Anhui and Jiangxi provinces. Of course I already knew something of anti-Manchu views, of the heinousness of queues and the persecution of scholars, but it was the inconvenience of queues that first struck me.

All Chinese students who went to Japan were eager in the first place for new knowledge. In addition to studying Japanese prior to entering colleges for special-

* 1875-1908.

ized study, they frequented the clubs, ran round the bookshops, attended meetings and listened to public speeches. The first speech I heard was in a hall the name of which I have forgotten, where a bold young man with a white bandage on his head and a Wuxi accent was making an anti-Manchu speech. I was most impressed until he said, "Here am I cursing that old woman, while over there that old woman must be cursing Wu Zhihui too!" The listeners were tickled and roared with laughter. But I was rather disappointed to find students abroad behaving so frivolously. The "old woman," naturally, meant the Empress Dowager. It was true that in a meeting in Tokyo Mr. Wu was cursing the Empress Dowager, but I did not believe that the Empress Dowager was addressing a meeting in Beijing at that time and cursing Wu Zhihui. It is all very well to make jokes in a speech, but pointless fooling of this sort serves no good purpose and actually does harm. Mr. Wu was well known, though, in academic circles for his fight with the minister Cai Jun, and the white bandage concealed his honourable scar. He was soon taken back to China under a police escort, and as they passed the canal outside Tokyo he leaped into the water, to be fished out at once and taken away. Zhang Taiyan referred to this later when he and Wu were battling with their pens, "He leaped not into the sea but into a ditch — exposing his face." Actually the canal outside the Japanese imperial palace is not too small, but, since he was escorted by police, whether his face was exposed or not he would have been fished out anyway. This battle of pens became more and more virulent till both parties were using violent invective. This year when Wu Zhihui sneered at Zhang Taiyan's acceptance of certain privileges from the National Government, he was thinking back to this incident which took place more than thirty years ago, showing what a deep grudge he bore. But in Zhang Taiyan's works, edited by himself, none of this invective is included. Though Zhang Taiyan

fought hard against the Manchu rule, he admired certain Qing Dynasty Confucian scholars, and probably thought to imitate them by not sullyng his works with such writings. He was the one to lose out and suffer, however. Such tolerance can only serve to cover up abuses and leave a legacy of trouble.

The cutting of queues was a major event in those days. When Zhang Taiyan cut his queue, to mark the occasion he wrote an essay from which I quote.

In this, the seventh month of the 2,741st year after the establishment of the Republic,* I am thirty-three years old. The Manchu government has acted unrighteously, it has persecuted and slaughtered gentlemen and offended powerful neighbouring states, murdering their envoys and robbing their merchants, until now we are attacked on every side. Enraged by the iniquities of these tribesmen and the shame brought upon the sons of Han, I shed tears and said, "I am over thirty and have reached the age to stand firm, yet I am still wearing this uncouth barbarian dress and conforming to their rules. Unless I change my way, I am a guilty man!" I wanted to bind up my hair in the ancient style, but there was not time to procure the ancient garments. So I said, "Formerly those loyal subjects of the House of Ming, Qi Bansen and the monk Yinxuan, cut off their hair before their death. According to Guliang Chi's commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Han Dynasty History*, the men of Wu and of Yue cut their hair short. Since I come from the land of Wu-Yue,[†] I shall be according with the ancient ways if I crop my hair.

* Counting from 841 B.C. when the Zhou people drove out King Li and set up a sort of "republic."

** Zhang Taiyan and Lu Xun both came from Zhejiang, in ancient times the land of Wu-Yue.

This essay appeared in the first wood-block edition and the second edition of his *Qiu Shu*, but later when the collection was renamed *Jian Lun* this essay was omitted. I cut off my queue neither because I belong to the land of Yue and wanted to follow the ancient Yue tradition of short hair and tattooing, nor because of any revolutionary motive. The true reason was that I found a queue inconvenient. It was inconvenient when I had to take off my hat or when I took exercise, and it was rather uncomfortable having it rolled up on top of the head. Actually there were quite a few cases of men who got rid of their queues but let them grow again after returning to China in order to become loyal subjects of the Qing Dynasty once more. Huang Xing* never cut off his queue when he was a student in a normal college in Tokyo, nor did he clamour for a revolution, he simply gave us a glimpse of his rebellious Chu temperament when the Japanese dean of studies ordered students not to appear with bare arms, whereupon Huang deliberately stripped to the waist and sauntered with his enamel wash-basin through the court from the bathroom to his study.

October 17, 1936

* (1872-1916), a revolutionary who worked with Dr Sun Yat-sen. He came from Hunan, in ancient times the Kingdom of Chu.

APPENDICES

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF LU XUN'S LIFE AND WRITING

1881

September 25 Born in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province

1898

May Entered the Jiangnan Naval Academy in Nan-
jing
Wrote short essays including 'Notes of Jia-jian-
sheng.'

1900

Entered the School of Railways and Mines at-
tached to the Jiangnan Naval Academy.
Wrote poems in the classical style, "Farewell
to My Brothers," etc

1901

Continued his studies in the School of Railways
and Mines.

1902

April Was sent to Japan for further study Enrolled
in Kobun College, Tokyo.

1903

Continued to study in Kobun College
Wrote articles for *Zhejiang Tide*, including "The
Soul of Sparta," "On Germanium" and "An
Outline of Chinese Geology." Made an abridged

translation of Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Voyage to the Centre of the Earth*

1904

August

Entered Sendai Medical College

1906

Left Sendai Medical College to carry out a plan of literary work with Xu Shoushang

1907

Wrote the essays "On the Demoniac Poets," "History of Science," "Cultural Trends," etc

1909

Published in Tokyo his *Stories from Other Lands*, Vol I and Vol II, including stories by Russian and Eastern European writers

Returned to China in August to teach physiology and chemistry in the Zhejiang Normal College, Hangzhou

1910

August

Dean and physiology teacher in Shaoxing Middle School

Edited old tales and compiled records dealing with Shaoxing

1911

When Shaoxing was affected by the revolution he became principal of Shanhu Normal School

Wrote the short story "Reminiscences of the Past," published in 1913

1912

At the invitation of Cai Yuanpei, then Minister of Education, joined the Ministry of Education in Nanjing

Started compiling a collection of Tang and Song stories

In May moved with the Ministry to Beijing. Stayed in Shaoxing Hostel.

1914

Began to study Buddhist sutras

1915

Began to collect and study rubbings of old inscriptions in his spare time

1918

April

First used the pen-name Lu Xun for "A Madman's Diary," which was published by the magazine *New Youth*, May 1918. From May 1918 onwards he published in the same magazine, under the pen-name Tang Si, poems in the new style including "Dream" and essays, including "My View of Chastity," etc.

That winter wrote the story "Kong Yiji"

1919

April

"Kong Yiji" was published.

May

"Medicine" was published

November

His essay "What Is Required of Us as Fathers Today" was published

1920

His stories "Tomorrow," "A Small Incident," "The Story of My Hair" and "Storm in a Teacup" were published.

That autumn started lecturing in Beijing University and Beijing Normal University

1921

May

Published "My Old Home."

December 4

"The True Story of Ah Q" began to be published in serial form in the *Beijing Morning Post*.

1922

Translated Eroshenko's fairy-tale drama *The Rosy Clouds*

Wrote "The Dragonboat Festival," "The White Light," "The Rabbits and the Cat," "The Comedy of Ducks," "Village Opera" and "Mending Heaven"

December Compiled his collection of stories *Call to Arms* and wrote a preface for it

1923

June His translated *Modern Japanese Short Stories* was published

August *Call to Arms* was published

December *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, Vol I, was published

This year started teaching in the Beijing Women's Normal College and the School of Esperanto

1924

Wrote "The New-Year Sacrifice," "In the Tavern," "A Happy Family" and "Soap," also "Autumn Night" and other prose poems

June Published *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, Vol II

1925

Wrote "The Ever Burning Lamp," "The Misanthrope," "Regret for the Past" This year his stories "Master Gao," "Public Trial," "The Divorce," etc were published

April Started *The Wilderness*, a weekly, and edited the literary supplement of the *Guo Min Xin Bao*.

August When the students of the Beijing Women's Normal College opposed their reactionary president, Yang Yinyu, Lu Xun became a member of the committee which supported the students' cause

November Compiled his collection of essays *Hot Air*

1926

The essay "On Deferring Fair Play," reminiscences like "The Dog, the Cat and the Rat" were published. Wrote the historical stories "Forging the Swords" and "The Flight to the Moon."

After the March 18th Incident he went into hiding to escape persecution by the Northern warlord government, returning to his lodgings in May.

- June* *Bad Luck*, another collection of essays, was published.
- August* *Old Anecdotes on Chinese Fiction*, compiled by Lu Xun, was published.
- August 26* Left Beijing and went to Xiamen (Amoy) to teach in Xiamen University.
- September* His second collection of stories, *Wandering*, was published.

1927

- January* Went to Guangzhou (Canton) to head the department of literature of the Sun Yat-sen University. Was later dean of the university.
- His collection of essays *Bad Luck (II)* was published.
- March* His collection of essays *The Grave* was published.
- April* On April 12, the Kuomintang reactionaries staged a coup d'état and began to massacre revolutionaries. On April 15, they started to butcher progressives in Guangzhou, and Lu Xun attended a meeting at the university in an attempt to rescue the students arrested. The attempt failed, and on the 29th he resigned.
- July* His collection of prose poems *Wild Grass* was published.
- September* Left Guangzhou.
- October 3* Reached Shanghai.
- December* His *Selected Tang and Song Stories*, Vol. I, was published.

1928

- February* His *Selected Tang and Song Stories*, Vol II, was published
The magazine *Tatler*, formerly published in Beijing, was transferred to Shanghai and he became chief editor
- September* His collection of reminiscences *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* was published
- October* His collection of essays *And That's That* was published

1929

- January* Organized the Dawn Blossoms Press with Rou Shi and others
Published the *Dawn Blossoms Weekly* and books including *Selected Short Stories of the World*
- June* His translation from the Japanese version of Lunacharsky's *On Art* was published. Became chief editor of the Scientific Art Criticism Library
- October* His translation from the Japanese version of Lunacharsky's *Literature and Criticism* was published

1930

- February* Became a founding member of the China Freedom League
- March* Spoke at the opening meeting of the China League of Left-Wing Writers. The title of the speech was "Thoughts on the League of Left-Wing Writers"
Wrote "Hard Translation and the Class Character of Literature"
- April* Began to edit a library of modern literature and translated some of the works himself
- July* Translated from the Japanese version Plekhanov's *On Art*
- August* Translated from the Japanese version Yakovlev's *October*, which was published in February 1933

- September 17* Attended a celebration of his fiftieth birthday organized by the League of Left-Wing Writers
- November* Revised his *Brief History of Chinese Fiction*

1931

- April* The first number of *The Vanguard*, journal of the League of Left-Wing Writers which was printed secretly, published his article "The Revolutionary Literature of the Chinese Proletariat and the Blood of the Pioneers" to protest against the Kuomintang's murder of five young revolutionary writers including Rou Shi in February. Wrote for the American *New Masses* "The Present Condition of Art in Darkest China" to expose the iniquitous rule of the Kuomintang. Translated from the Japanese version Fadeyev's *The Nineteen* and published it himself

1932

- April* Edited his collections of essays *Three Leisures* and *Two Hearts*, which were published in September and October.
- September* Edited a selection of stories by twenty Soviet writers and translated some of the works himself. It was published the following year.
- November* The essay "On the 'Third Category'" was published.
- December* The essay "Literary Ties Between China and Russia" was published.

1933

- January* Joined the China League for the Defence of Civil Rights and was elected to its executive committee.
- February* Wrote "Written for the Sake of Forgetting" commemorating Rou Shi and four other revolutionary writers.
- March* The *Selected Works of Lu Xun*, edited by himself, was published.
- April* *In Two Places*, his correspondence with Xu Guangping, was published.

July Compiled his collection of essays *False Liberty* and wrote a postscript for it. This was published in October. *The Selected Essays of Lu Xun*, edited and with a preface by Qu Qiubai, was published.

September Took part in the Far Eastern Conference of the World Committee Against Imperialist War, and was elected honorary chairman of the presidium.

1934

February Compiled his collection of essays *Mixed Dialects*, which was published in March.

October Edited his collection of essays *Pseudo-frivolous Talk*, published in December.

1935

January Finished translating L. Panteleyev's *The Watch* from the German version, which was published in July. His revised *Old Anecdotes on Chinese Fiction* was published.

February Began to translate Gogol's *Dead Souls* from the Japanese and German versions.

March Translated Gorky's *Russian Folktales* from the Japanese version, finished in April and published in August. Translated eight stories by Chekhov, published in 1936 as *The Bad Child and Other Strange Tales*.

May His previously unpublished works written between 1903 and 1933 were published.

September "A Layman's Remarks on Writing" was published.

November His translation of Part I of *Dead Souls* was published. Wrote the historical story "Curbing the Flood."

December Wrote "Gathering Vetch," "Leaving the Pass" and "Resurrecting the Dead." These and other earlier stories on historical themes were published in 1936 as *Old Tales Retold*.

Edited his collection of essays *Fringed Literature*, published in June 1936. Also edited *Essays of Qieyeting I and II*.

1936

- January* Wrote a preface for his selection of Kathe Kollwitz's graphic art
- February* Started to translate the second part of Gogol's *Dead Souls*.
- October* Wrote a preface for Cao Jinghua's *Selected Stories of Seven Soviet Writers*, and wrote his last essay "A Few Matters Connected with Zhang Taiyan"
- October 19* Died in Shanghai.

Writings published after his death included three collections of *Essays of Qiejieting*.