EASTERN HORIZON

monthly review

Volume I Number 3

in this issue

Herbert Read — **Transformation in China**

Takeshi Saito — **Meeting of Different Cultures**

A Modern Marco Polo — **Intimate Travel Notes (II)**

Nigel Cameron — **Taming a Dragon**

Asrul Sani — **Poems from Indonesia**

K. A. Abbas — **The Boy who Moved a Mountain**

Yellow River Dam — **photos in monochrome**

Eastern Diary   News and Views   Newsletters   Book Reviews

September 1960

HK$2·00

VOL. ONE NO. 3 EASTERN HORIZON SEPTEMBER 1960

in next and future issues

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Understanding Asia

Edward White
Letters from America

Barbara E. Ward
Women in Asia

Joseph Needham
An Archaeological Study-tour in China

Edmund Blunden
Japanese Travelogue

Han Suyin
Tigers and Butterflies

John Blofeld
Adventures in Modern Siam

K. J. Yeang
A Stranger Between Us

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EASTERN HORIZON monthly review

VOLUME I NUMBER 3 SEPTEMBER 1960

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LETTERS

GOOD WISHES FROM BANGKOK

I was very happy to receive your letter and learn what has been happening to you during the many years since we met.

The copy of *Eastern Horizon* No. 2 reached me some days ago. I have read it with deep interest and with great appreciation of its high literary quality, which makes it very different from so many English-language periodicals in this part of the world. I wish you continued success in this important work you have chosen.

I should be very happy to write an article on Siam, but cannot do so in the immediate future; so please do use any parts of *People of the Sun* you like . . . When I write, it will be on some aspects of Siam not fully dealt with in my book.

JOHN BLOFELD

Chulalongkorn University,
Bangkok

FROM DR JOSEPH NEEDHAM

Congratulations on the appearance and format of *Eastern Horizon* Vol. 1, No. 1.

JOSEPH NEEDHAM

1 Owlstone Road,
Cambridge,
England

FROM 'THE EDGE OF THE WORLD'

I most certainly was surprised, and delighted of course, to receive your letter . . . Perhaps the only advantage of being rooted in these little islands on the edge of the world is that letters from foreign parts do arrive and seem to find their destination.

I was delighted to hear of *Eastern Horizon*. It sounds a most worth while endeavour and I look forward to seeing a copy, or rather perhaps I had better become a subscriber. Please send me full details. I will be most happy to push on your behalf . . . As for myself my recent two months in South East Asia were spent as a tourist, in the worst sense of the word, and would be of little interest. However, after I have seen the review, perhaps something might be forth coming.

COURTNEY ARCHER

Southbrook,
North Canterbury,
New Zealand

FROM INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE

We have received a copy of the *Eastern Horizon* and we wish to congratulate you on this excellent first issue and send you all our best wishes in your great venture.

We feel sure that this Asian monthly cultural review will be of great help in promoting better understanding between East and West . . .

JACQUES DEDEYN,
Honorary Director

The Indian Institute of World Culture,
6 Shri B. P. Wadia Road,
Basavangudi, Bangalore,
South India

'CONTENTS GOOD, COVER NICE'

We like the magazine very much, and think it is very creditable, especially for a first issue. Of course there are points which can be improved . . .

Contents in general are good, particularly Needham, Han Suyin, and the reviews by Lewis Gen and Wong Man, &c. And we think your cover is very nice. A friend of ours is quite enthusiastic about the magazine, and would like to help you to find contributors . . .

All the best from us both, and looking forward to hearing from you and seeing the 2nd issue.

DEREK BRYAN

London

FROM A. C. SCOTT IN NEW YORK

We arrived in New York yesterday from San Francisco. I'm too bewildered at present to give you my impressions of America and I have scarcely seen anything of New York yet. And it's very hot—in the 90 degrees. I saw the famous Chinatown in San Francisco. It seems to be chiefly made in Japan.

Well, how is the magazine? Is the first number out yet? I'll prepare you some more contributions as soon as I get settled down . . .

*

I received No. 1 of *Eastern Horizon* today, for which many thanks. I was glad to see that you managed to get it out in the face of all obstacles. It looks quite nice, I think . . . What sort of a reception have you had in the press and among readers so far? Regards and good wishes from us both.

A. C. SCOTT

New York

'WE LIKE EDMUND AND MMP'

Thanks for sending *Eastern Horizon*. We enjoyed it immensely. We especially liked Edmund Blunden and the Modern Marco Polo. We would like to have a year's subscription for ourselves and also one for . . . We both wish you continued success with your fine project.

JOE AND ERIKA

Hong Kong

CONGRATULATIONS FROM AUSTRALIA

I have had the opportunity to read through the first two copies of *Eastern Horizon* which were handed to me by Gerry Glaskin. I would like to extend my congratulations and praise . . .

I am a Malayan-Chinese studying Arts at the University of W. Australia and it is my desire to write later on, more seriously, I hope. I have been doing quite a lot of feature writing for the papers here, the *Straits Times* in Malaya, and a few other magazines. If you think there is some chance of my contributing to *Eastern Horizon*, please let me know. I would consider it a great honour.

GARY YEANG

Claremont,
West Australia

FROM *ORIENTAL GEOGRAPHER*

Thanks for your letter of May, 1960, informing about the publication of *Eastern Horizon*. We congratulate you on bringing out such a journal from the East and would very much like to exchange it with our journal, *Oriental Geographer*, and other publications from time to time. We are looking forward to receiving your specimen copy, and would gladly help you as much as we could.

A. H. SIDDIQI,
Associate Editor,
Oriental Geographer

East Pakistan Geographical Society,
Ramna, Dacca,
Pakistan

FROM *NEW ORIENT*

We have the honour in informing you that we shall appreciate very much if we can exchange our new bi-monthly *New Orient* for your new review *Eastern Horizon*. We are sending you by registered mail a specimen copy of our magazine . . .

DUSAN ZBAVITEL

Ceskoslovenska Academie Ved,
Orientalni Ustav,
Praha,
Czechoslovakia,

FROM *TODAY'S JAPAN*

Your magazine, *Eastern Horizon*, was brought to my attention the other day by Prof Edmund Blunden. It seems that there is a close similarity to the aims and purposes of *Eastern Horizon* and that of my own publication *Today's Japan Orient/West* and I should like to extend my sincere good wishes for the success of your venture. I am very much interested in seeing your magazine and would like to suggest that we enter into an exchange subscription . . .

MARVIN MEYER,
Publisher,
Today's Japan

Tokyo

FROM *EAST AND WEST*

We shall be glad to receive Vol. 1 of *Eastern Horizon*, and we forward you accordingly No. 1 of Vol. XI of *East and West*.

LIONELLO LANCIOTTI

Instituto Italiano per il
Medio ed Estremo Oriente,
Roma, Italy

'KEEP IT UP!'

Congratulations on the Review. I have shown it to a number of people and they are all most favourably impressed. I do hope you can keep it up to this standard. It will be hard work. I have lent my copy to the Librarian at the National Assembly Library and he will order it. Hope you have arranged for the sale of *Eastern Horizon* in book shops here? It should sell well, for there is nothing at all like it. I shall write a review for the *New Zealand Monthly Review*—a new periodical.

MARGARET GARLAND

Wellington,
New Zealand

EASTERN HORIZON monthly review

To Our New Readers:

A limited number of copies of the first two issues are still available at our Editorial Offices, 155 Wongneichong Road, Happy Valley, Hong Kong.

Number 1 includes:

Joseph Needham	*The Dialogue of Europe and Asia*
Edmund Blunden	*Three Poems from Hong Kong*
A. C. Scott	*Cheongsam: Invention of the Devil?*
D. Guyver Britton	*Japanese Contemporary Music*
Mulk Raj Anand	*The Brothers (a short story)*

Number 2 includes:

Han Suyin	*Social Changes in Asia*
Edmund Blunden	*China in English Literature*
A Modern Marco Polo	*Intimate Travel Notes*
Tu Chin-fang	*As an Opera Actress Sees It*
G. M. Glaskin	*The Gollywog (a short story)*

Place your orders NOW!

EASTERN DIARY

Typhoons and heavy rains over, suddenly here's autumn. Of all the seasons in Hong Kong, it seems to me, autumn is the loveliest. Blue is the sea. Green are the hills. And bright are the leaves in a myriad colours. In day-time the air is usually so clear, so fresh, and there's always a breeze whispering around; and at night a little drizzle to send you to your dreams. Storm or mid-summer heat seems to be something long forgotten, unimaginable.

On a day like this, I'd like to picture you sitting somewhere in the setting sun, looking at the quiet sea, meditating or reading something to your liking—perhaps a copy of *Eastern Horizon*, who knows? If you are not here, oh how I wish you were!

*

In this issue we have the honour to publish an article by Sir Herbert Read, the eminent British poet and art critic. Sir Herbert visited Peking last autumn, and in 'Transformation in China' he tells us some of his experiences and observations during that journey. It is certainly interesting to know what so distinguished a poet and educator thinks of the great changes there.

*

My attention was drawn to the recent trial of Pratt in South Africa. David Beresford Pratt was charged with attempting to murder the South African Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd at a farm show last April. The other day he made a long statement under oath, telling the Supreme Court about his life and his 'fits of epilepsy' and of the 'immense feeling of relief' he felt after the job.

At the time of the shooting, he said, he had felt a 'violent urge to shoot apartheid, the stinking monster of apartheid which was gripping the throat of South Africa and preventing South Africa from achieving its rightful place among nations. But I did not associate that with the Prime Minister.'

Pratt said that on his return from Europe early this year he was 'horrified at the disintegration that had taken place during the period I was away.' In March the 'position was tense and acute to a fantastic degree. Then the emergency regulations were passed and I felt—what is left to stop the bottle bursting? When I went to the show-grounds I slipped a revolver into my pocket . . . From then onwards you heard everything described.'

He was certainly very right in saying: 'South Africa has got to come out of her wilderness. She has a great and glorious future waiting for her as long as she observes the basic laws of God and human being which in the words of Mr Macmillan is rule by merit and not by pigment of skin.

'South Africa has to throw off the slimy snake of apartheid which is grasping her throat. Secondly, she has to stop her policy of world isolation.'

Who's the madman, by the way? Pratt or Verwoerd?

*

Last month it was 'Study Chinese Steel.' This week they say 'Study Chinese

Textiles.' News like this keeps coming in from England. The Sheffield College of Technology has already decided to consider starting a Chinese language course for steel technologists. Now we hear another voice urging British textile experts to follow up.

The Textile Mercury, organ of the textile industry in U.K., said recently in an editorial:

> The idea, we think, may be worthy of consideration by the textile industry. China is one of those nations about which we cannot know too much these days . . . Economically she is a dark horse . . . China is pressing ahead with industrial development —and not saying very much that we can rely on about her achievements. This may well be due to the innate caution of the Chinese character. Unlike the brash countries of the Western world she prefers to sit tight until she can show actual achievements to back her claims.
>
> One thing is certain, China's industrial development is going on—fast. Since textile manufacture is a basic industry of any country we can be certain that it is playing a major role in China's bid for complete self-sufficiency . . . It may well be that in the future Chinese textile technologists will present us with astonishing developments.
>
> Manchester might be wise to follow the example of Sheffield in instituting some form of tuition in Chinese technology, so that we can at least understand what comes out of the 'mystic East.'

This is all very good. I only wish that Chinese were a little easier for beginners. In studying the language, steel, textiles, etc., the students may also understand gradually that the 'mystic East' is not so mystic after all.

*

When I say that the Chinese language is difficult for beginners, I don't mean that it is *that* difficult. The fact is, I for one have many European friends who have a very good knowledge of Chinese and, only yesterday I learnt that a friend in Vienna has taught himself to be an excellent scholar of the Chinese language. I have seen his calligraphy and it is very good indeed. And he has never been this side of Suez.

*

About a fortnight ago, The Bishop of Llandaff, Dr Glyn Simon, speaking to some 1,500 scientists attending the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, told them that they could not evade moral responsibility for the effects of their 'horrific researches.' He asked: 'Do those of you working on H-bombs, rockets, and new forms of germ warfare really believe that your jobs are necessary? . . . Scientists must not be excused from facing squarely the moral, ethical and spiritual implications of some of their activities—or from questioning the lawfulness of engaging in work on atomic missiles.'

Scientists, like other men, are subject to moral law, he said. He did not condemn birth control. But he added: 'When immense quantities of surplus food are being thrown into the sea we are faced with what is morally evil and wrong. Talk of birth control in such circumstances becomes an insult to the Almighty.'

I think I like this Bishop. But, what a pity that he was addressing only scientists.

When I turned over the newspaper cutting, right at the back of the Bishop's story there was a report from Colorado Springs with the headline: 'Air War Games Over America.' It reads: 'War planes took over the North American skies for six hours early today with all civilian aircraft grounded for the first time during a period of peace . . .' The exercise was planned by the Joint U.S. Canadian defence organization.

There are far too many organizers of 'war games.' They also might do well to listen to Bishop Simon.

*

Last week a reader sent me this:

> The deep-blue bay swarms with kaleidoscopic activity. Small brown sampans and big black junks skitter amid the marine traffic like skidding water bugs. Everything about Hong Kong seems analogous to some form of animal life. When a freighter drops its anchor into the flotsam-coated harbor, it is immediately encircled by frantic sampans, tenacious junks and determined barges, competing to unload unknown products from unknown ports. The impression is that of a giant beetle being devoured by ants.

and also the following:

> Much of the population of Hong Kong lives on the water. The small sampan is a large family's home. Chickens and ducks hang in wicker cages over the water from the stern of each tiny craft. A dog is tied to the mast with a rope, along with younger children. Chinese are born and die on their boats. The boy born on one sampan marries a girl born on the sampan that floats beside it. The family dog of one breeds with the dog of the other. And at night they all bed down together in the boat that encompasses all their worldly possessions. But the tourist will find that there is nothing ugly about Hong Kong. It is too basic to be ugly.

What rubbish this is!

The two passages are from an article in a recent issue of *Esquire*. Good descriptive stuff. But, how patronizing. 'Everything about Hong Kong seems analogous to some form of animal life'—whatever that might mean; and 'too basic to be ugly'? This sort of impressionistic nonsense just won't do. There is great poverty in Hong Kong and we know it; and there is ugliness that springs from poverty. But poverty is no crime, or is it?

*

Britain must have changed a lot these days. We've already learnt something of the changes from MMP in his charming Travel Notes. But I am still rather surprised to read what Atticus had to say in *The Sunday Times* just arrived from London.

In a very entertaining and informative article, Atticus commented:

> How American is Britain? Sometimes it seems that we are rapidly becoming the fifty-first State. We have 30,000 American citizens living in Britain, not to mention the 80,000 U.S. servicemen stationed here and the 400,000 American tourists who visit us each year. There are 2,200 million dollars of American capital invested in Britain, and more than 400 American firms have set up business over here. It has been estimated that every twelfth working man in Britain is on an Anglo-American pay-roll. It almost looks as though soon we shall all, in the words of the war-time song, be working for the Yankee Dollar.

According to Atticus, American soft drinks, 'Muzak' (background music scientifically piped in to match the time of day and type of work), Hamburger stands, stream-lined American business methods, American jeans, Flying Meringues (American cars), Ben Shah, Jackson Pollock, bowling alleys, and so on are all invading Britain from across the Atlantic.

I knew something about this trend but I had not realized that it is going so far. A friend is just in from London and I am waiting to hear his first-hand report. It should be quite interesting.

Liu Pengju

ON MANY HORIZONS

The Generals and the Thief

A joint tomb for the seven main Japanese war criminals executed after the Pacific War, including General Tojo, war-time Premier, was unveiled today in Aichi prefecture.

The granite tomb was built on Sanganesan Hill at Hazu by a group of Japanese sympathisers despite strong opposition.

Dr Ichiro Kiyose, President of the House of Councillors and a member of the Japanese defence panel for the defendants when they faced the Allied Tribunal in Tokyo, wrote the inscription on the tombstone, reading: 'The tomb of seven martyrs.'

Reuter, Tokyo, Aug. 16

Police have caught up with probably Japan's richest thief in years.

After living for the past five years on 23,200,000 *yen* (about £30,000) he netted from a total of 347 safe-cracking jobs, 34-year-old Hideyoshi Mitsuyama, who was arrested on August 14, confessed yesterday, police said.

Mitsuyama, arrested at Osaka's Grand Hotel, astounded police by declaring his only tools—no matter how difficult the safe—were two screw drivers and a torch.

AP, Tokyo, Aug. 24

Space Ship 'Noah's Ark' Returns

Russia today launched its second space ship containing experimental animals, including two dogs, Tass News Agency reported.

The dogs were called Strelka (Little Arrow) and Belka (Squirrel).

The four and half ton ship went into orbit about 200 miles high and is now circling the earth every 90.6 minutes, Tass said.

The main purpose of the launching is the further development of a system to insure man's life and safety in space as well as his return to earth.

The ship carries a special radio transmitter working on 19,995 megacycles, and radio-television equipment to observe the condition of the experimental animals and the work of all other apparatus on board.

The cabin is equipped with all the essentials for man's future flight.

Reuter, Moscow, Aug. 19

The Russians brought their space-borne 'Noah's Ark' back to earth last night and the two dogs, Strelka and Belka, and the other animals were all reported doing well.

Both the 4½-ton space ship and the capsule with the animals on board, which had been separated, were brought down in the planned landing area. They landed only about six miles off target, the Soviet news agency Tass said.

The space ship was orbiting 200 miles up, and at a radio signal from earth was brought safely down through the earth's atmosphere as it circled the earth for the 18th time.

Reuter, Moscow, Aug. 21

Socialised Medicine for Cuba

Ernesto (Che) Guevara, Argentine-born physician who heads Cuba's National Bank, told a medical meeting that doctors must get ready for 'the task of social medicine.'

His speech pointed the way toward socialised medicine in Cuba.

'To serve the neighbour has more worth than a good fee,' Mr Guevara said. 'The gratitude of people is worth much more than all the gold one can accumulate. We must therefore erase the old concepts and begin getting closer and closer to the people.'

AP, Havana, Aug. 21

Sino–Afghan Non-aggression Treaty

The ceremony of the treaty of friendship and mutual non-aggression between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Afghanistan was held here this evening in Sadarat Palace.

The treaty was signed at eight p.m. local time by Chen Yi, Vice-Premier of the State Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, on behalf of China and Sardar Mohammed Naim, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Afghanistan, on behalf of Afghanistan.

A joint communiqué of the two countries was signed at the same time by Vice-Premier Chen Yi and Deputy Minister Naim.

Report from Kabul, Aug. 26

On the Brink

Writing in the *London Financial Times*, able MIT economist Paul A. Samuelson points out that US unemployment continues at 5 percent or more; 'that even the optimists do not expect us in the year ahead to reach anything like the 4 percent rate of real growth that is universally admitted to be within our powers,' and that there may be 'a fundamental clash in the American economy between the goal of high employment and growth and the goal of price stability.' According to all the old-fashioned methods of business cycle forecasting (which may not be applicable to the present situation), Samuelson adds, 'I should have to state . . . the evidence is strong that we are now on the brink of a recession, if indeed we have not been in one since January.'

It is entertaining and educational to compare Eisenhower's rosy account to the enraptured Republicans with the stories appearing daily in the financial pages of decreased earnings, reduced steel production and declining markets, and to note, too, the growing list of anti-recession actions by the Reserve Board and Federal agencies to keep Eisenhower's 'unprecedented prosperity' from sagging any further.

from *The New Republic*, Washington, Aug. 15

2,000-Year-Old Dwellings

Chinese archaeologists recently unearthed remains of earthen and tiled houses more than 2,000 years old at a construction site of a water conservancy project in Inner Mongolia.

According to the New China News Agency, the houses were part of a settlement of about 1,000 square metres from the Warring States Period (403 B.C.–221 B.C.) to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) located in an ancient city in Liangcheng county of the autonomous region.

It is estimated that people of the Warring States lived in these rectangular house, which were excavated together with horses, sheep, lamps and bowls.

Among other relics unearthed were iron farm tools, weapons, bronze arrow-heads, pottery articles including earrings, bowls, ewers and other articles of daily use.

The agency added that two kilns for manufacturing pottery ware were also found. One of the kilns was without roof but the original form could still be made out.

Reuter, London, Aug. 30

£10,800,000 in Back Tax

The South Korean Finance Ministry today sent notices to 24 wealthy Korean businessmen asking them to pay a total of 19,643 million *hwan* (£10,800,000) in back tax and fines.

It was the first action taken by the Chang Government against profiteers who had reportedly accumulated fortunes during the Rhee administration through tax dodging and other irregular means.

Ministry sources said the men involved controlled the 46 largest enterprises and 33 of them had received United States economic aid funds.

Normally, back tax and fines must be paid within a week.

The Ministry announced that 'in view of unusually large sums involved and of the importance of their normal operation for Korea's economy, a special legislation will be introduced to guarantee a sufficient mercy period for them to raise cash.'

Reuter, Seoul, Sept. 1

Peking Opera in Canada

The Peking Opera arrived at Toronto for a sixteen-day performance tour on September 3 from Winnipeg, capital of Hanitoba Province.

The two performances given by the theatre in Winnipeg were quite a hit in this fourth largest city in Canada and were very enthusiastically received by the local theatre-goers and Chinese residents there.

The visiting Peking Opera visited Stratford, more than one hundred miles from Toronto, on September 3 and saw Shakespeare's 'King John' at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival.

The Chinese artists performed some scenes from Peking operas and some musical items to the artists of the festival.

Report from Toronto

President Toure Visits Peking

President Sekou Toure of Guinea arrived in Peking by air this afternoon from Ulan Bator.

He was greeted by Chinese leaders including the Head of State, Mr Liu Shao-chi, and Premier Chou En-lai. He is the first African head of state to visit Peking.

More than 10,000 people waving Chinese and Guinean flags and chanting 'Welcome President Toure' turned Peking airport into a sea of

colours as the President's Russian Ilyushin—18 plane landed.

Reuter, Peking, Sept. 10

Olympic Flame Dies

The 17th Olympiad, biggest of them all, ended to-night when the Olympic flame was extinguished, leaving Russia undisputed champions for the third games in a row.

Once again they topped the gold medals table with 43 to the 34 of their closest rivals, the United States.

Reuter, Rome, Sept. 11

Cholera Takes Heavy Toll in India

Cholera and gastro-enteritis took 6,498 lives in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh in the seven weeks ending September 3, officials announced here yesterday.

Nearly 18,000 people were affected by the two diseases in the state.

Eighty-three persons have also been killed in Uttar Pradesh by monsoon floors, bringing the known flood death toll in India this season to about 350.

Meanwhile reports from the south Indian state of Anhdra Pradesh said officials there feared famine following the failure of monsoon rains this year.

Reuter, Lucknow, Sept. 13

Hurricane Havoc

Winds of nearly 100 m.p.h., violent rain, and high tides hit New England as Hurricane Donna, continuing on her path of destruction, swept up the east coast of the United States. With warnings from the United States Weather Bureau that this may prove to be the most damaging storm ever to strike New England, mass evacuations were carried out along the shore area and low-lying districts, and police, coastguard, fire hospital, and Civil Defence services were standing by.

Since the hurricane struck the Leeward Island last week, 128 people have been killed and damage has been assessed at hundreds of millions of dollars. The details are: Leeward Islands—14 killed, heavy property damage, 2,700 homeless, hundreds injured. Puerto Rico—106 drowned, wide-spread damage. Florida—Eight dead, damage $1,000 m., 27 counties declared disaster areas.

from *The Times*, London, Sept. 15

Hillary to Climb Without Oxygen

Sir Edmund Hillary accompanied by four New Zealand members of his Himalayan research expedition passed through Sydney this week on their way to India.

Other members from New Zealand, England and Canada will join the group later.

They will spend nine months in Nepal carrying out physiological tests at high altitude and searching for the Yeti, and will make an attempt to climb Mount Makalu without oxygen.

Sir Edmund is carrying with him his 'Yeti' gun which will shoot hypodermic syringes from a distance of 50 yards which is guaranteed to knock the Yeti right out. He said no European has yet seen a Yeti, and what has been reported is probably a red bear which walks on its two hind legs, but this they hope to find out. The expedition is being financed at a cost of £57,860 by Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, U.S. educational book publishers.

from *China Mail*, Hong Kong, Sept. 14

Cuba Recognises China

Cuba today announced the establishment of diplomatic relations with Communist China.

The announcement came after a Cabinet session in which the Prime Minister, Fidel Castro, participated by long distance telephone from New York, where he is attending the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Cuba is the first nation in the Western Hemisphere to recognise China. The Castro regime had previously signed a trade pact with Peking.

The Castro regime also established diplomatic relations with North Korea and voted into law a commercial agreement with Yugoslavia.

AP, Havana, Sept. 24

'Why Can't We Shut Up . . . ?'

As a nation we certainly run off at the mouth. Why can't we shut up and make things at least a little harder for our opponents?

Clarence Johnson,
designer of the U–2

'All Our Girls are Girls'

Every one of our sixteen women athletes [at the Olympic games] has produced a certificate of sex, which is a condition of her entry. I am quite certain that all our girls are girls.

Mary Amies,
secretary,
British Women's Amateur Athletic Association

Transformation In China

Herbert Read

THE nature of the revolution that has taken place in China is not yet known to the Western World. Blinded by the prejudice that the word 'communism' always creates and misled by deliberate misrepresentations that come from the Left as well as from the Right, it is difficult for anyone who has not been to China to realize that within the year 1958–9 an entirely new form of social organization came into existence in this country—a form that owes little to the Soviet pattern and that may for this reason be of great significance to other parts of the world.

My own observations were made in China in the midst of the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Liberation. It was a great historical event for the Chinese people, now so united and so proud of their success. But the strength of their feelings of unity and confidence is a direct consequence of the transformation that has taken place since October 1958.

There are now rival claims to the honour of being the first People's Commune to be established, but the general sequence of events is not obscure. It was in the province of Honan that a group of agricultural producers' co-operatives decided to go a step further in socialist organization, and on August 7th, 1958, published the constitution 'as reference material.' Their example was followed, first by one, then by twenty, and then by hundreds of localities, until by the beginning of September thirty per cent of China's agricultural population was organized in similar communes. A veritable 'landslide' followed and by the end of September ninety per cent of the peasant population had formed communes. The remainder of the co-operatives soon followed and by spring of 1959 all China's five hundred million peasants were organized into 26,000 communes. Revision and consolidation went on through most of 1959, but the situation is now stable with 24,000 communes and no exceptions except the State farms, which account for only one million of the five hundred million peasants.

WHAT is a commune? First of all, though it makes use of the Chinese word that came into existence at the time of the Paris Commune *(gungshe)*, it is not directly inspired by the communes of the past: it is an original creation of the Chinese people, produced inevitably by their peculiar economic circumstances. It has two characteristics which distinguish it fundamentally from the communist organizations in other countries: the *spontaneity* of its origins and the *autonomy* of its proceedings. The Communist Party of China did not create the

communes: it saw them emerge from chaos like some organism and at once recognised that they were the correct socialist solution to the special problems of China. As realistic and not doctrinaire Marxists, the Party quickly adapted its policy to the economic facts. As soon as the Honan communes came into existence, Mao Tse-tung himself went down to the province to investigate and was convinced that the peasants had found the right solution for the agrarian problem. Discussions with the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party followed Mao's tour and on August 29, 1958, a resolution was published approving the communes as the best form of social organization 'for the transition to communism,' and as the 'basic unity' of the future communist society.

A commune is distinguished from a collective farm, or a state farm, in that it is not concerned solely or even primarily with agricultural products, but is a way of life for a region. It includes all the small industries on which agriculture is immediately dependent, as well as all questions of trading and supply, education, health, welfare, cultural amenities and military defence ('home guard'). It is run by an administrative committee with an elected chairman and two or three vice-chairmen. It is usually divided into several 'production brigades,' with their separate committees and brigade leaders, and these brigades in turn are divided into perhaps a hundred 'production teams.' A production team may specialize on market-gardening or animal husbandry, on fishing or food-processing. But whatever is produced is for the benefit of the whole commune, and though certain teams are at present rewarded for their specialist skill, any differentiation is determined by the central administrative committee of the commune. There are no national trade unions to contend for differential rates: there are no sectional interests of any kind. There is a region, roughly determined by geographical factors; there are people born and living in this region. Socialism is the best life possible to the people within this region.

The official policy statements describe the communes as the penultimate stage in the transition from socialism to communism. In communism all local and personal differentiations would be abolished: the remuneration of a peasant in Inner Mongolia would be the same as that of a peasant in Szechwan or Hopeh, and everyone would receive according to his needs, instead of, as at present, according to his ability. But this ideal will take a long time to realize, and meanwhile the peasants are very satisfied with their autonomous communes.

It is a moving experience to visit a People's Commune. One is met by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (the Vice-Chairman is sometimes a woman) and immediately treated to tea and statistics. The ceremony over (and it may take a considerable time), one can then converse informally as one walks round the commune, meets various brigade leaders and production teams, the teachers in the nurseries and primary schools, the doctors in the clinic or the inmates of the Home of Respect for the Aged. However much the situation and economic activities of the commune may vary, the pattern of the organization is the same. And it is an amazingly complete organization, even intricate, though many of the details may still be sketchy. That such a vast transformation, involving five hundred million people, should have taken place within a year is in itself a miracle; that there are rough edges and improvised structures is natural enough.

I have mentioned autonomy as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Chinese commune. It is doubtful if autonomy can ever be absolutely complete —geographic factors may deprive a community of some essential mineral, such as cobalt; and there are machine-tools (such as the tractor and the harvester) beyond

the productive capacity of the most highly developed commune. But usually the commune will have built *(within a year)* its own factories for all the implements of husbandry, and will, moreover, have manufactured the bricks to build these factories and smelted its own iron ore for the manufacture of spare-parts and tools. One commune I visited mined its own coal and (to indicate the extremes) had constructed a series of fish-ponds to supply fish to the neighbouring city.

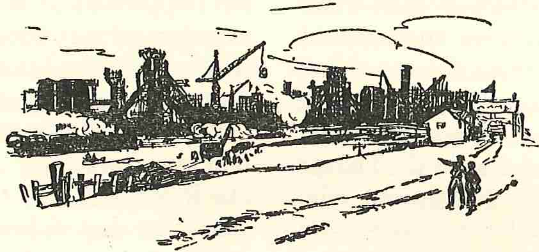
Perhaps the most elaborate communal schemes are concerned with water-conservancy and irrigation, and it was the necessity for such schemes (inevitably involving more than one of the pre-existing townships or villages) that brought the first communes into existence. Irrigation schemes in China are often of great antiquity. (I visited the famous one near Chengtu constructed by Li Ping in 250 B.C.) and one might say that water is the life-blood of the communal system. But water is not enough. The fantastic rise in productivity (roughly fourfold over the past five years) has only been made possible by intensive methods of cultivation, and this means the provision of adequate supplies of fertiliser. Each commune will have one or more fertilizer factories. One I visited was in the charge of a magnificent youth of eighteen, who had not only supervised the construction of the factory, but had meanwhile learned the necessary chemistry from textbooks and journals—he had left school at the age of sixteen and had not had the time or the opportunity to go to the university.

Such autonomy is economic, but in the case of the People's Commune of China, it is also political. I made a particular point of clarifying this question, because it is always assumed that communism must be bureaucratic. The communes do receive visits (about once every two months, and after ten days' notice) from agricultural and economic (accountancy) experts sent from Peking or the provincial capital; but the purpose of these visits is to aid and advise the communes. There is at no stage any question of dictation. The communes set their own production targets and their pride is not merely to fulfil them, but to exceed them.

Some aspects of this agrarian revolution might be criticized—sometimes, for example, it seems that priority over the housing of human beings has been given to the housing of the animals—but criticism is silenced when one considers all that has been achieved in so short a time. Ten years ago most of the peasants of China were living well below subsistence level, many of them dying of starvation. Now every peasant in China is adequately fed (every commune has its canteens, to release the housewife for more essential work), and food is free for those who cannot pay for it. Every peasant can now have proper clothing, and new housing is coming as quickly as the bricks can be made and the labour spared from the more essential tasks of food production. To the older people it seems that a miracle has happened; their gratitude is deep and strong, and any idea that this revolution is not permanent, and not universally accepted, is political illusion.

It is called communism. Anarchism is a dirty word in doctrinaire Marxism, but it seems to me that the social revolution that has taken place in China is much nearer to the ideals of Kropotkin than to those of Marx and Lenin. The State, as authoritarian centralism and dictatorship, has not come into existence in China, so there is no need for it to wither away. Mao has been wiser than Lenin or Stalin: he has fought against the creation of a centralized, all-powerful bureaucracy, and he has succeeded. There are, it is true, vast new ministerial buildings in Peking; but their main object seems to be educational. To such an extent that the Chinese civil servant is himself at school—he has to spend a month every year working in a factory or in the fields.

It does not matter what the system is called: it is a living reality and the Chinese Communist Party itself claims that it is an entirely new form of social organization. As such it works: the over-optimistic estimates published in the autumn of 1958 have been checked, but the revised figures still show a 25 per cent increase in agricultural products over 1957, which is an unprecedented leap forward. But what counts more than statistics is the happiness and contentment of the peasants. Their standard of living is still far below that of Western European standards, but it is four times as high as it was ten years ago, and it will continue to rise rapidly under the prevailing spirit of enterprise. I visited one village dining-room three days after the Tenth Anniversary celebrations, and the cook told us with pride that on October 1st he had served a dinner of seven courses. To people accustomed in the past to an existence always on the edge of starvation, with a little meat two or three times a year if they were lucky, it seemed as if the millennium had already arrived.



Meeting of Different Cultures

Takeshi Saito

IT is well-known that in the confluence of the cultures of Greece and of Israel in the Roman Empire lies the origin of Western culture, and that Christianity caused great changes in the heathen culture. Then, in what way were those changes made? This is the subject which will help us Christian scholars a great deal in our examination of our task of dealing with the traditional culture of Japan.

Let me take England as an example. In the sixth century, when Buddhism was introduced to Japan, an Irish monk, Columba, came to a northwest isle of Scotland, and Augustine dispatched by Pope Gregory I, arrived in the southeast of England. Christianity was propagated there rather rapidly, due partly to the undeveloped stage of Anglo-Saxon culture in that period. The Yule festivity became Christmas in much the same manner as the day of Christ's Nativity was associated with the birthday of the 'invincible sun.'

Similarly, the feast of Christ's Resurrection was named after Eastre, the Anglo-Saxon dawn-goddess whose festival was celebrated in spring. Then, the British people, instead of ignoring Greek and Roman mythology as the remnants of a heathen culture, utilized it as symbols of various human ideas. Consequently, Greek and Roman mythology became so popular among English authors that it was abused; some writers of the Renaissance even referred to Christ as 'Pan'; but finally this practice of referring to pagan mythology almost disappeared under the Puritan influence. The English people, always avoiding extremes and taking the *via media*, know the importance of their tradition and make significant progress based upon it. (There was an exception, however, when in the time of the English Reformation many monasteries were destroyed as they were thought to be nests of Catholic priests. If you look at those ruins you bitterly regret this barbarous act of destruction.)

In Japan, too, it is highly desirable that our traditional culture should become Christianized, and Christianity should not easily compromise with other religions. As Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism are deeply rooted in the Japanese culture, it may not turn out here as it did in the Anglo-Saxon culture, but some proper way might be found through comparative studies of traditional and Christian culture in Japan. Nevertheless, to retain the traditional Japanese culture does not necessarily mean, for example, to have church-buildings designed after the style of Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples. In these days when the Western type of architecture has become very popular in our big cities, it cannot be

maintained that some Western style of church-building is outlandish and inappropriate to the climate and weather of this country. In fact, Western-style painting and architecture done by Japanese artists will never be identical with the traditional examples of similar works done by Western artists. No matter how hard our artists may attempt to paint or or build in the manner of the Western tradition, the peculiar styles, tones, and and shades of Japanese art will be reflected somewhere, somehow. Although the Japanese novel and poetry of today appear closely to follow the Western pattern of literature, it will be impossible for the Japanese authors to think and perceive in the same manner as Westerners, for they were born under the influence of 'tanka' since *Manyo-shu*, and 'haiku' since Basho.

For instance, we know the virtue of reticence and silence, but find it difficult to understand why Westerners believe that verbal expression is always indispensable. We appreciate the beauty of quietness, but may hardly comprehend the Westerners' greater delight in motion. In both Bushido and Knighthood loyalty to their masters and lords is considered the highest duty, but in Bushido the personality of women and children was often slighted, while in Knightood strict manners and etiquette towards ladies was part of the code of honour. In connection with this, it may also be said that 'courtly love' in the West even though it might imply a tacit approval of the vice of adultery, was better than the polygamy once publicly approved in the East. Thus there are a great number of differences between the traditions of Japan and those of the West. To bring them closer on the basis of Christian principles, there is no other way but to combine these two with full knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages, the merits and demerits of both. It is said that a Japanese boom is wide spread in America and other countries, but it might be an expression of the curiosity stirred up by exoticism. Western understanding of the Orient will in the future be tested by how deeply the beauty of silence and the glamour of tranquillity penetrate the lives of Western peoples. Japan has sometimes copied Western culture, but if she ignores her own traditions and does not consider the cultural climate of her country, and especially if she is unmindful of Christianity, this adoption of Western ways will do nothing but expose what a superficial nation the Japanese are.

The Japanese and Western ways of thinking may well be different, just as their ways of living need not be the same. The important point is whether or not our culture is based on Christianity. If East and West have unity based on Christianity, it will be preferable to have variety in other matters. This case of unity in variety exists even in American and European cultures. Needless to say, there are differences in the respective cultures as well as in the racial characteristics of Great Britain, France, and Germany. (I wonder how well the average Japanese recognize these differences. In the rural areas most Japanese may think all Westerners as Americans.)

Professor Paul Tillich's remarkable book *The Protestant Era* has in its long preface a noteworthy paragraph on the various cultures in Europe and America. Because this German theologian took part in the religious socialist movement and could not stay in the Hitler-dictated Germany, he emigrated to the United States, where he lectured at Union Theological Seminary in New York. There he had to express himself in English, and discovered that there is a difference in the ways of thinking between the German- and the English-speaking peoples. According to him, there were many ambiguities in his thought but these were covered by the mystical vagueness of the

classic philosophical German. The spirit of the English language demanded the clarification of his ambiguous expressions. He also says that since he has learned the interdependence of theory and practice in Anglo-Saxon culture, be it religious or secular, he has been freed from the fascination of that particular kind of abstract idealism which enjoys system for system's sake. Professor Tillich has been influenced in such a manner as this by his colleagues and students while working with them on some American university campuses.

This calls our special attention to the fact that we scarcely bear in mind the delicate differences between cultures when we talk about Western culture indiscriminately and lump everything together. It may not be, however, too difficult to recognize the differences between German and English philosophy, but most of us are not fully aware of or pay much attention to the fact that there have developed a number of peculiarities even between English and American cultures.

Japan owes a great deal to the ancient cultures of India and China, though they were naturally changed in Japan in the course of hundreds of years. It is very desirable, especially in these days, fully to understand this cultural unity in variety which took place in various countries. And if we know where a culture meets with other cultures, it will be a great help to our efforts of better understanding of other nations. Cultural relations are a firm cement for the brotherhood of nations.

Some Siamese Women

John Blofeld

THE walls of the Grand Palace enclose a great silence these days. Silent the flutes and drums. Silent the courts once echoing the cries of royal children, the urgent cluck of shocked attendants. And long since silenced by death and dispersion, the laughing chatter of those silent throngs—silk-clad, bejewelled, jasmine-fragrant, sleek, their hair bedecked with petalled loveliness. For the descendant of those who were the fount of gaiety and glitter now lives beyond the sacred walls in a new-built palace-villa, less mediæval, less mustily evocative of ancestral presences. Yet that quarter of the palace richest of all in splendour has escaped the enveloping silence; enthroned within a gilded shrine-hall, hemmed about by gorgeous courts, resides the sacred symbol of the Kingdom's being, the Emerald Buddha.

High upon a golden pyramidal throne rests this jasper statue, green as the jewel from which it is named, fought over by kings and nations for a thousand years, holiest of statues, chief guardian of Siamese prosperity. So it is said that, not long since, when thieves dared the sacrilege of plucking forth the great jewel in the forehead, the Buddha's Eye of Wisdom, the fate of the country trembled in the balance; and were the statue to permit itself to be removed, there would be woeful prophecies of the Kingdom's destruction. Thrice a year, with the alternating of the seasons, the golden vestments are changed amid solemn rites; and, for the principal religious ceremonies of the year, the King himself comes in state to light candles before the statue. All the shrine-hall, itself a palace of many-hued gorgeousness, are towers and steeples, pavilions and galleries as brilliantly coloured as the feathers of a bird of paradise. On holidays and feast-days, the common folk from all parts of the Divine City come in flocks with flowers, candles and incense, to prostrate themselves here at the holy of holies, symbol of the highest spiritual aspirations of the nation. Here, too, come travellers and tourists from the corners of the world, among whom few are hardened as to complain in supercilious tones that, after all, the acres of 'jewel-mosaic' are but coloured glass set in gilt. The overall effect is too splendid for such carping snobbery.

One morning I came away from the shrine-hall reflecting that, even if the Emerald Buddha were set among a nest of unlacquered barns, it would still be capable of inspiring a kind of reverential awe, if only because during a thousand years or more the loftiest thoughts of multitudes of men and women have been centred upon it. Assuming that our modern physicists are right in postulating that 'the stuff of the world is mind-stuff,'

it does not require too much credulity to suppose that such an image gradually acquires a certain recognizable atmosphere from so great a concentration of mental force. As I wandered round the outer gallery which encircles the whole temple, glancing at the richly coloured incidents from the Ramayana depicted as a purely Siamese story in a mile or so of panoramic murals, I suddenly stopped short. There, not ten paces from me, was what might almost have been a Ramayana picture come to life. It included a figure very rarely seen in Bangkok — the Princess. She was standing with two other Siamese women facing some foreigners, and towering above her rose a monstrous Raksha, greenfaced, tusk-toothed, daemonic, terribly armed with a double-handed sword. It seemed almost alive and breathing on account of the shimmering waves of heat striking up from the pavement. This monster, two or three times human size, a seeming epitome of pitiless ferocity and devilish strength, is so hideous that one would think it spawned by the imagination of a madman. Happily for the human race, such monsters were converted to Buddhism some thousands of years ago and thereafter they have turned their dreadful wrath not upon men but upon demon enemies of the Buddhist Faith. It is in their character of Guardians of the Faith that statues of them stand in the temples upon holy ground. The contrast provided by the slim elegance of the three ladies chatting so unconcernedly with their backs to this glaring monster was so great that I burst out laughing and brought several pairs of questioning eyes upon me. The Princess greeted me enigmatically with the words:

'*John!* Phra Putta Chao (the Lord Buddha) himself has sent you to me. Nothing could be more opportune.'

Her face was drawn, her eyes full of anxiety. I learnt that a few minutes before, while the Siamese ladies were conducting a group of foreign visitors, internationally famous for their welfare work, to see the sights of the city, messenger had hurried into the temple with the news that Tan Tong, who had stayed behind at Siracha, was seriously ill. He had telegraphed for the Princess to drive down at once. This was doubly unfortunate because on top of her anxiety for her husband were problems arising from her being one of the organizers of various events arranged for the distinguished visitors. Leaving the city at such short notice, she urgently needed someone's help and would I please be that someone? The outcome of this meeting was that, during the rest of that day, I visited several Bangkok women, none of them intimately known to me and some of whom were complete strangers.

THE first lady to whom I conveyed a message from the Princess was not quite a stranger as we had met once in the house of mutual friends. The widow of an official who had received a title from the last absolute monarch of Siam, she is addressed as Khun Ying, roughly the equivalent of My Lady. This Khun Ying Manimai S—is a charmer in her early sixties. Though she prefers Siamese costume at home, she has dressed for going out in European-style blouse and skirt ever since this relatively new fashion was for a time made obligatory. In most other respects, Khun Ying Manimai leans gently towards the past.

I found her at home, feet comfortably bare, for it is only New Women of the kind I was to visit next who permit their polished wooden floor-boards to be defiled by street dirt and shoe marks, besides sacrificing coolness and comfort on the altar of 'Progress.' As soon as the servant had announced me, the Khun Ying came out to the door to receive me in the courteous Asian manner. She made me precede her into a sitting-room which was comfortable and discreetly furnished. Chinese cabinets, standing against the few bits of wall-space not given up to wide,

unglazed windows, contained her numerous ceremonial tea-sets of the kind formerly presented by the monarch upon great occasions to those he wished to honour. There were also a few pieces of the ancient Sawankaloke porcelain, their pale green glaze resembling Chinese Soong. On a carved teakwood couch which possibly belonged to her great-grandfather was one of those high triangular Siamese pillows now almost never seen except as an adjunct to love-scenes in Siamese ballet. Suspended above the door were a pair of original swords in embossed metal sheaths which her husband's ancestors or her own must once have carried in the King's service. They set me musing on the appeal ancestral weapons have always had for all races. In that room, I really felt I was in Siam, yet no foolish attempt had been made to re-create the past artificially by banish-the comfortable sofas and cushioned chairs of the present day. Rather, it reflected the tastes of someone alive to the virtues and conveniences of both past and present.

As I had learnt to expect in these somewhat old-fashioned houses, there were plenty of children and young girls about, some hovering within call, others working and playing in courtyard and garden. These I guessed were the children of three or four retainers whose families had served the master's family for a hundred years or more. Whenever one of them had business with the Khun Ying, while still at a little distance from her, she knelt and covered the last few feet by shuffling forward on her knees. A newcomer to Siam, shocked by so 'feudalistic' a practice, need only have glanced from the Khun Ying's benign expression to the happy faces of the girls themselves to realize that the latter's bondage was a bondage of love. All were neatly dressed, chubby, and so far from grave that they had difficulty in controlling smiles and laughter out of deference to a guest. Two or three of the older girls wore substantial gold chains and lockets framing miniature Buddha-plaques. Clearly the Khun Ying was not mean to them. I suppose she had reared these girls from infancy, paid for the schooling, medical treatment and other necessities without the smallest legal obligation to do so; and, very likely, she will help them to find suitable husbands by providing them with a sufficient dowry to set up little households of their own. Probably, their brothers are already out at work, having been apprenticed or otherwise assisted by their mistress.

The Khun Ying's voice is low and pleasant, yet with just a flavour of command in it.

'So the poor Princess has had to go and nurse her husband? But then, why poor? I dare say she is delighted to have escaped all the fuss of this gala and exchanged it for peace and the sea breeze at Siracha. Tan Tong will be in good hands as soon as she gets back. When she's away from him, he's like an elephant on must, roaring and bellowing at everyone. Then the Princess returns and all is peaceful again. What a lovely pair they are! No wonder you value them as close friends. They are Siam through and through, for all their foreign experience. Now then, what has she told you to say to me?'

'Just this, Khun Ying. She wants you to act as joint-hostess in her place at the reception tonight and again at the tea-party at Ayuthia tomorrow.'

'*Phutho!* So they are going out to the old capital for the day; is that it? I don't care much for the place myself. The Burmese destroyed it too thoroughly. All those hundreds or thousands of ruined chedi (reliquary towers) look very fine, of course. But there's little else—just the one glorious Buddha-statue in his ruined shrine. Now even that's changed, I'm told. One of the former Premier's last official acts was to build a sort of concrete box around it. Ah, well. I suppose I must go.'

After a pause to offer me tea and cigarettes, she added:

'What a pity they have no time to go to Lopburi (a still older capital). Our foreign guests will naturally be interested to see the ruins of Phaulkon's house—you know the story, don't you, of the Greek sailor serving on a British ship who came here in the time of King Louis XIV and became more or less Chief Minister to our King Phra Narai? That was a wonderful thing to happen! If he'd been more successful in serving King Louis' interests, our Siamese King would perhaps have embraced Catholicism and we might all be Catholics by now! But maybe our King was only playing with Louis.'

'Yes, Khun Ying, I took my wife to Lopburi years ago—'

'Oh dear, did you? How we women run on and on telling men what they know already.'

'No, no. I didn't mean it like that. I was going to tell you that my wife entered the precincts of a ruined Hindu temple there carrying a red paper umbrella. The hundreds of monkeys living in and about the shrine were so enraged by the colour of this umbrella that they launched an attack on her like bulls. I had to beat them off with a walking-stick. Vicious little brutes they were, quite certainly descended from the monkey warriors in Hanuman's army.'

The Khun Ying wouldn't hear of my going until after lunch, which turned out to be a typically Siamese meal flavoured according to the manner of the family into which she had been born. The actual dishes were very familiar, but the flavours were quite special. I remember that we had *mi grob*, or chopped-up noodles fried so crisp that they crackled when you bit them; they were cooked with red chillies, garlic, minced pork and some sort of vegetable. Then there was a *gang phet*, or hot curry, consisting of diced meat in a thin pungent gravy which nearly burnt the skin off my mouth. There was also a dish of crisply fried *pla tu* (a fish tasting similar to bloater). We seasoned this common, cheap, but delicious fish with lime-juice and pepper adding these at table. For soup, there was a *dom yam*—a peppery fish soup made with coconut milk.

We ate the meal with spoons and forks from European-style plates—cutlery and this sort of chinaware having supplanted eating with the hand so widely that, as with many objects of foreign origin in Siam, one has come to think of them as native to the country. I have never understood or liked the modern affectation that eating with the hand is somehow disgraceful, though I can quite appreciate that spoon and fork are preferable to many people. What giants like Gandhi-ji and Jahawarlal Nehru are not ashamed to do cannot be so shocking after all. I introduced this subject as tactfully as possible into my chat with the Khun Ying, interested to discover her reaction. She did not disappoint me. If ever she felt ashamed of something it would be a matter of real importance.

'I quite often do eat with my hand,' she replied. 'I use a spoon for the more liquid things and my hand for the drier ones.'

This otherwise trivial remark seems worth recording because the simple sincerity of those Siamese who live naturally within their tradition, accepting change but not forcing it, strikes me as more noble than the attitude of those who rush to adopt Western customs regardless of suitability or real value.

I left the Khun Ying with considerable regret. After saying good-bye, I caught a glimpse of children racing through a rose garden behind the bungalow and stopped a minute or two to watch. How charming life in that house must be, with a genial, intelligent mistress, and lots of young people and children occasionally working but more often gambolling happily among the rose bushes. Yet there was a seemly orderliness, too. I noticed that, though the children were breathless

from running and laughter, they did not shout or raise voices above a pleasant, cheerful hum of noise. Probably most of them help about the house and garden without wages, except those who are regular servants; but I fancy that, if I should try to tempt them away with a promise of regular pay, they would laugh and run back to the pretty little huts behind the main bungalow, where they live so much more like children of the family than servants.

My next call was made at the house of Madame K—, known to me by report as one of Bangkok's Ultra-New Women, a type that I find unattractive for several reasons, but especially because they stand for lace window-curtains and other ridiculous aspidistra-like marks of pseudo-refinement. As I had feared, the entrance to her pretentiously smart bungalow was encumbered with a doormat —a sure sign that she had abandoned the graceful Thai custom of removing shoes on entering a house as being too 'uncivilized'! Surely enough lace curtains did adorn her windows, despite verandahs so wide as to make them entirely unnecessary, unless as banners of Culture and Progress. She received me without rising—another mark of 'Advanced Culture,' sat with legs crossed in defiance of Siamese convention, and dazzled me with the brilliance of her scarlet lips and of nails like talons dipped in blood. Her 'o's were as rounded as an Oxford curate's

'O-o-oh, Mr. Blo-o-feld, how *good* of you to come all this way to inform me of Ratana's being called out of town.' This use of the Princess's first name without title or honorific would have sounded obnoxious to most Siamese ears. 'I must say it is *very* inconvenient. Dear Ratana is somehow *never* on the spot when you —but, there, there, we must be *charitable*. *Do* let me offer you a dish of tea. It's *no* trouble, I assure you.'

There is no way to convey the chill horror of this parody of Mayfair refinement coming from the lips of a woman who, but for her crossed legs and blood-dipped talons, might have been one of the charming, modest Siamese ladies from whose ranks she had so deliberately drawn apart. Incredible or not, when the tea arrived, she actually drank with her little finger inanely pointing away from the rest. This was not even mock-Mayfair, but a parody of Surbiton or Croydon.

My hopes of getting away quickly were dashed. For half an hour and more, I was treated to a monologue on the New Culture, and the paramount place of the New Woman. She informed me, too, that a certain cousin of the Princess now studying in London had committed an unforgivable sin, the dreadful scandal of which had reached all the way from England to Siam. This stupid girl, asked to give a lecture on rural life in Siam, had actually dared to disclose that there are still some Siamese farmers who *eat with their hands!* Oh woe! Oh horror!

'Don't you *see*, Mr Blo-o-ofeld, that though I dare say the farmers *do* eat with their hands, it's so *wrong* of her to *talk* about it and give the dear people in England the impression that *we* are not *civilized*. You will be glad to hear that a Thai lady on the spot gave her a very sound scolding; the pity of it was that the *milk* had been *spilt*.'

The poor girl who had committed this fearful crime happened to be a great friend of mine, but I did not dare admit it. When something else that Madame K— said provoked me into a brief defence of Siamese traditions in the arts, she could hardly stifle her yawns.

'Oh *really?* That's very interesting, of course, but then you talk like that because you are being polite to us. We more cultured people find all that old stuff *dreadfully* stuffy. We *must* change all that, you know, otherwise you foreigners will be laughing up your sleeves at us. As I often tell the other ladies in our group, we are *warriors* fighting for a better future. We, the wives and mothers of the Thai race, must *mould* our husbands and sons to forget the past. We must make ourselves into *new brooms* to sweep all the mediaeval *cobwebs* away.'

She stretched out her hand for an American cigarette, allowed me the privilege of lighting it, but did not think to offer me one, and continued:

'Some of our group wanted rather to concentrate on So-o-ocial Welfare and all *that* sort of thing, but I have explained to them that our first duty is to the *upper* classes. Those dreadful unmarried mothers, deserted wives, and so on, have only *themselves* to blame, don't you think so, Mr Blo-o-ofeld? It is upon *us* that the eyes of the world are fixed. And there's *so* dreadfully *much* for us to do. We must teach our husbands to respect us more, don't you think? And we must try to make them see that really *nice* people need refined houses and gracious living. I've done quite well with *my* husband, as you see, but I don't think he really appreciates all my efforts, Why, he even smokes *cigars* in my drawing-room, the naughty man. Don't you find it charming?'

She swept her hand round the hideous room and complacently awaited my verdict. There were curtains on all the windows, all adding their quota to the stifling room temperature; dreadful steel chairs looking like rain-proof garden-seats; sofas covered with floral chintz—improbable scarlet blooms with sickly yellow leaves; thick tasselled tablecloths and a glass case full of deplorable china figures —emasculated scarlet and black dogs, actually meant to be smiling; clumsy shepherdesses with their legs in the wrong places and the most absurdly coy smiles; and a woe-begone dragon contentedly submitting its head to St. George's sword. There was absolutely nothing in the room to remind me that I was in Siam—not even one tiny relic of the lovely past. For a long, long while I was afraid to meet her eyes, not knowing what to say, until at last I looked full at her and said truthfully: 'I congratulate you. I doubt if there is a living-room in all Siam—I mean Thailand—which better illustrates the principles for which you stand.'

This remark must have delighted her, for she actually forgot her New Woman's dignity sufficiently to see me, a mere male, to the door!

As I drove to the next house, I tried to recall what Madame K—'s servant had looked like and had a vague recollection of a sulky girl who, of course, did not do anything so 'frightfully mediaeval' as to kneel to her mistress, but who almost certainly wore no gold chain. She had been, I seemed to remember, rather gaudily but cheaply dressed. After all, Madame K— could not be much interested in the welfare of mere servants when she had so much to do uplifting the upper classes in general and her own 'naughty man' in particular. One thing I distinctly remember is that her house is not cluttered up with retainers, who would surely be too old-fashioned to appreciate Progress and Culture.

The third and fourth ladies on whom I called were out, so I left brief notes detailing the Princess's various requests and passed on to the fifth. Mrs Supannee is an intellectual of the calibre of Acharn Boonlam, but married and the mother of ravishingly beautiful daughters still at high school. Her house was quietly furnished in the Western style, devoid of family heirlooms on the one hand and of china shepherdesses on the other. The walls were decorated with coloured chalk rubbings of some of the Ramayanic episodes engraved on stones in the Temple of the Reclining Buddha; and there was a smiling likeness, taken in his fourteenth year, of the boy-king, Ananda Madihol, whose tragic death by shooting occurred shortly after the Second World War. I noticed that the photograph was signed

in the King's own hand—a very rare circumstance, as the hundreds of thousands of royal photographs displayed in houses and shops from end to end of the country are usually exhibited as tokens of loyalty by people who never so much as seen a king or queen. Khun Supannee explained that her sister-in-law had for a short time served the late King in some sort of gubernatorial capacity, perhaps as French or English teacher—I do not quite remember.

In this house, as though typifying the family's medial position between old and new, the servants did kneel to present drinks and cigarettes, but omitted the preliminary crawling. Both practices are symbolic of the immense importance attached by the Siamese to the concept of seniority. Although kneeling and crawling were officially abolished as far back as King Chulalongkorn's reign, they are still performed to a greater or lesser extent, though not at public ceremonies, where a modified form of European etiquette has supplanted them. Sudden changes in a traditional way of life brought about by the stroke of a ruler's pen have a way of fading out. For example, in 1932, with the introduction of constitutional government, it was announced that all titles, distinctions and privileges of rank would be abolished, a decision in which one of the future premiers heartily concurred; yet several ladies informed me that, during that premier's term of office, they felt it advisable to approach his wife on their knees. It seems that change must win the concurrence of both sexes to be effective. Thus, when occasionally some of my girl students fall to their knees to hand me something or receive something from my hand, I do not protest. Most Siamese deprived of means to show traditional respect to elders and seniors would feel uncomfortable.

Khen Supannee, after listening to the Princess's message, seemed disposed to chat. So, presently, I said:

'As it happens, I have just come from the houses of two very different ladies, Madame K— who is busy with Progress, and Khun Ying Manimai who tends a little towards the past. You, Khun Supannee, by standing somewhere between the two, are more representative of contemporary Siamese womanhood, so I wonder if you would give me a few pointers on the subject for my book?'

'Oh dear, what can I say? Couldn't you narrow the subject down to something less amorphous?'

I sat for a while, biting my thumb-nail and staring out at the tubs of frangipani on the verandah. At last I asked her to tell me what changes were and were not desirable in the position and general way of living of Siamese women.

She looked up with a quick smile. 'That's better. I'm preparing a lecture on that very subject, which stresses the point that our whole future as a race having significance for the rest of the world will depend on how wisely we blend the new Western notions and customs with our basically oriental culture. Wait while I get my notes.'

What follows is a digest of what she told during a conversation lasting the whole of the rest of that afternoon. The discussion was limited to middle- and upper-class urban women.

Siamese women have never been subjugated like Moslem or Japanese women. They have never worn veils; they have long owned their own property and been traditionally rather more active in commerce than the men. For example, foreigners renting houses in Bangkok discover that, more often than not, the contract is signed by a woman, even though she may be living with her husband. Girl children have never been allowed to feel less wanted than their brothers; and parents often leave house property to their daughters, on the assumption that the boys will make their own way and acquire houses

of their own. In many families, Mother is the real arbiter of everyone's destiny; daughters prepared to marry in defiance of a father's wishes hesitate to defy their mother: and even young matrons have a considerable say in family affairs, often directing their husbands in matters of business, though seldom able to prevent the wealthier men from having mistresses outside. The old Chinese dictum, 'One teapot, many teacups,' is tacitly accepted, at least among the more old-fashioned Siamese. In social life, the women play a much bigger part than anywhere else in Asia, excepting Burma. On the other hand, though there are now plenty of women in the Civil Service, few if any ever rise to the top posts. There have been no female ambassadors or cabinet ministers. In general, man is supreme until he crosses his own doorstep, where he must be careful to remove his high hat. It is amusing to find Siamese wives paying their husbands just that sort of surface deference once paid to women by Victorian men who knew perfectly well they exercised absolute authority over their womenfolk.

Khun Supannee informed me that the objectives still to be gained by well-educated Siamese wives are limited to two. They would like the recent law against concubinage to be supplemented by a change of heart on the part of the menfolk which would reduce the number of mistresses separately housed by the wealthy and the number of hours spent by the less wealthy in the company of the many sorts of pleasure-girl. Beyond this, nothing requires adjustment except the current male determination to retain the highest official posts in their own hands; for already some women have achieved something like parity with men in commercial leadership.

In Siam, it is the unmarried girls of the student class who differ most widely from their Western counterparts; and this, in spite of their having received modern-style high-school or even university education. A young girl is expected to be seen and not heard. Generally she is never allowed to go out unchaperoned with a young man even in broad daylight and is only rarely allowed out at all after dark, unless with her parents. Even office girls follow those rules as closely as circumstances permit and, if a few of them do have private lives, they are well hidden. At parties and public functions, young girls look wonderfully decorative, the Siamese being a delicately constructed people seldom unshapely in body and with an extraordinary high percentage of pretty or even beautiful girls among them. But looking decorative is about all. They never raise their voices; never sit, walk or stand in even vaguely immodest or ungainly positions. They seldom venture a remark to their elders, being content to smile or murmur agreement with whatever is said to them. Doubtless girls reared in a less rigid tradition would find this life unbearable, and think such delicate charm bought at too great a cost in self-effacement. There is, in Khun Supannee's opinion, no doubt that such a life is intellectually unstimulating, besides precipitating girls into marriage with no more knowledge of the ways of men than the bashful heroines of Victorian novels. The system can, however, be defended on two counts: first, that these modest and yet quietly provocative creatures are immensely attractive; and, secondly, that they often show every sign of being genuinely happy. People capable of giving pleasure to others and extracting great enjoyment from life themselves are not so common in any society that one should seek to change the system which produces them without great caution.

As to peasant girls, they have changed very little in recent decades, with the important exception that many of them are now educated enough to be able to read the lighter kinds of novel and magazine, *if* anyone in the family can afford to buy them. They are naturally gay,

warm-hearted, and far less shy than their middle-class sisters. In most parts of the country, there is still a premium on pre-marital virginity, but with many of them, marriage is a simple matter. A couple just begin to live together and declare themselves married — a practice which, though economical, unfortunately leaves the young mothers of babies peculiarly vulnerable to desertion. Having failed to register her 'marriage,' a deserted wife cannot hope for much assistance from the law.

Here, in Bangkok, one gets the impression that such desertions are all too common, as the wretched girls come here, with or without their babies, in search of work; but this impression is probably exagerated as Bangkok is a centre for deserted wives from all over the country. The more fortunate majority live out their their lives like peasant women everywhere, looking after husbands, children and the elders; giving a hand in the fields almost as often as the men; and attending sermons at the temples with greater regularity than their husbands on four holy days each month. They join with zest in the preparations for the great festivals, as well as taking active parts in the feasts and processions marking marriages or the entrance of youths into the monastery. Gambling is one of their chief amusements; spinning, weaving, embroidery, the fashioning of complicated floral decorations for the temples, basket-making and mat-weaving are among the occupations of their leisure hours. Women in the country age more quickly, of course, and seemingly old crones, with backs bent at right-angles to their legs, hair cut short like a brush and teeth stained jet-black with betel juice, who look about seventy, often turn out to be scarcely more than fifty. All the same, village dames are generally cheerful old gossips always ready to display their blackened teeth in friendly grin. Their lives have been hard, but, on account of the country's rich soil, seldom too hard. Cold and hunger are both unknown to them; their easy-going religion instils no terror of hell, but makes them kindly and tolerant. In Khun Supannee's opinion, country women in England, though much better off economically, are or at any rate *look* far less happy. Her reference to England made me ask:

'I suppose I vaguely understood you had been to England. I don't really know much about your history, though. Would you like to tell me?'

HER father had been a teacher in a government school in what was then still part of the suburbs. Inevitable his salary had been so small that her mother had had to go out to work too, until, a few years after her widowhood, her married children began to support her by their joint efforts. In Siam, as elsewhere in Asia, it is a disgrace not to support one's elderly parents in, at the very least, as much comfort as the grown-up children themselves enjoy. Khun Supannee's two brothers are considerably older than herself and most of her schooling was paid for by them. Indeed, her elder brother put off his marriage, although a love-match, for five whole years in order to make sure of his clever little sister's being able to finish her education. Both the brothers were teachers then and the sacrifices they had to make for her were so severe that one of the boys was twice reprimanded for coming to teach in clothes shabbily unworthy even of a poorly paid teacher.

From high school she won a Siamese state scholarship to England, and crossed the sea to pass six years in relative luxury. While there, she even managed to smuggle a little of her scholarship money back to her mother. Presently she entered London University where she obtained a good degree in education.

During her last year in England, while she was acquiring practical knowledge of teaching-methods and child-psychology,

she met and instantly enchanted a rich Siamese boy who was idling away his time in the West at his parents' expense, too lazy or too busy with girls ever to be able to pass the entrance examination of any university. Supannee soon changed all that and set the young man to work at his books by politely hinting that she could never marry a man of inferior education to her own. I can picture the scene so well—a charming, bashful little girl who looked if she couldn't say 'Boo' to a goose and who probably giggled nervously every time she was spoken to; yet with enough steel underneath the kitten-fluffy surface to transform a self-willed and over-indulged youth into a respectably hard-working student. He even obtained secon-class honours in modern languages at Cambridge.

On their return ot Bangkok, they were married at a lavish ceremony (his father's last splurge before his sudden bankruptcy), at which five hundred guests were given a twenty-four course Chinese banquet with unlimited Scotch whisky to neutralize its richness. Three months later, after the crash, Supannee's husband felt wonderfully grateful to her for inspiring him to become a sufficiently good translator (French-English-Siamese) to get a well-paid job in a foreign embassy. Meanwhile, Khun Supannee taught in a school for a time and then turned to writing newspaper articles, novels, and text-books for use in the government schools. She has since become one of Siam's foremost women intellectuals, an adviser to a government ministry and chairman of innumerable committees. Now that her own mother and both her parents-in-law are dead, she and her husband are able to live in considerable comfort and to concentrate a great deal of energy on bringing up their three daughters.

Before I left early that evening, one of the daughters came home, the other two having been detained by their weekly music lessons.

'Hallo, Khun Malinee,' 'How's your English getting along?'

She giggled, of course, and whispered in barely audible Siamese: 'Not too badly, Acharn, thank you,' but I knew I should never get a single word of English out of her. Here she was, exactly the kind of girl who had misled me for years—giggling, absurdly shy, with nothing in her manner to suggest that she was outstanding intelligent. Seventeen years old, beautifully formed, and lovely enough to turn any man's head, her every movement a joy to watch, she behaved to strangers like a coy little mouse. Yet I had just been hearing from her mother that she already read Dickens and Jane Austen in the original English for her own amusement; and that she had an excellent chance of getting a scholarship shortly to be competed for by five hundred pupils!

I am sure that when some Siamese youth looking for an exceptionally beautiful but preferably unmasterful wife comes across Malinee, he will first lose his heart to her and then, when it is too late, discover that he has put himself into the hands of someone who will rule him for the rest of his life.

'I suppose your daughter takes after you in spite of seeming so shy,' I said as Malinee had slipped out of the room.

'She does,' answered Khun Supannee modestly, but from the way she smiled I think she meant: 'There is a surprise waiting for some lazy fellow. I've taken good care of that.'

'And the other two girls?' I asked.

'The same,' she answered and dropped her eyes to veil a *flash* of triumph.

Intimate Travel Notes (II)

First Impressions of England

by A Modern Marco Polo

COMING back after 33 years to find a material improvement far beyond his remotest expectations MMP's first impressions were naturally rosily exaggerated. He saw a wonder land in this old country, its face seemingly lifted, its citizens in a state of relative affluency: 'they've never had it so good' appeared true.

A Drive Through the West End

The drive that first Sunday morning through Hyde Park, on the left the dewy green of Kensington Gardens stretching to infinity, to the right the blue of the Serpentine crowned in the distance by the fairy pinnacles of Westminster. Spick and span cars crowded the roads as the citizens of London took their Sunday air, fragrant with spring. Bayswater and Paddington revealed clean streets and neatly clothed pedestrians; only one young pair in strange dress noted, perhaps this tribe did not rise early. Marble Arch more congested than ever. The Oxford Street and Regent Street shops fabulously beautiful, great expanses of plate glass displaying fantastic luxury goods: what wealth and opulence in a refugee year. Piccadilly Circus unchanged; nostalgic Eros strangely presiding over the centre of a phlegmatic capital, a forlorn figure now unadorned by flower-sellers. Down Piccadilly, rich tones further mellowed the English dignity of its famed houses and Aladdin caves. The Park on the left with its tall trees and lush green grass rightly merited its name; a haven of rest, balm and salve for tired eyes and angry minds, if any.

The bewildered MMP rather felt like being suddenly planted into Morris' 'News from Nowhere.' He rubbed his eyes but it was all real. Had he been away too long, having lost touch with a former world? How long would China take to catch up this gold mine of frippery consumers' goods? or does she want to? One must remember, however, that this magnificent heritage could not have been achieved without half-a-millennium's effort and consolidation under the most favourable circumstances that history had ever granted any nation. All this gushing forth on MMP's part—could it be excused as a temporary imbalance from one finding an old house thought bombed and broken transformed into a blaze of glory? Protesting vehemently that these were but hurried prolegomena, MMP was unceremoniously bundled into hospital.

From a Hospital Bed

NOW to be able to spend a few weeks in a large London teaching hospital is at once a privilege and rare experience; MMP welcomed the chance. His pleas-

ant impressions increased in Gorge Ward where he shared in the communal life of its other 30 and more inmates. All fear and anxiety evaporated on entry. Contrary to previous observations made here four decades ago, he found a new hospital-patient relationship. The patient was now the honoured guest of the 'hotel,' to be smiled upon and his every permissible whim gratified. Everyone took pains to make him feel 'at home'; every sentence addressed to him began with 'What can I do to help you?' and of course it maintained a 24 hour service.

Yes, hospitals in England had quietly undergone a thorough rational revolution. In direct contrast to the former order of importance—doctors, nurses, other staff, patients—the latter were now placed at the head in the new oligarchy in a complete reversal of the time-honoured scheme of things. Such had come to pass in the welfare state that the doctors and students now performed their duties unobtrusively, almost furtively and apologetically. MMP could recall vividly the erstwhile pomp and solemnity when Sir Hector, frock coat and all, took his teaching 'round' in the same ward, attended by a full retinue of medical staff and students and every nurse in the ward from Sister downwards; the boring proceedings might consume 2 precious hours. Of course doctor's orders were still law and obeyed to the last stroke. Another change for the better was the improved comradeship among nurses of different grades, the once down-trodden probationers (new student nurses) could now work with a freer air, at last holding up their heads as independent human beings. Remember this was the premier nursing school in the world, maintaining the classical pattern, celebrating its centenary already this year, one of the glorious gifts to mankind that England had ever made. Naturally its standards, with a medical school as companion, were still formidable, irrespective of resources at disposal.

The old religious observances were maintained, ward prayers morning and evening at 8, two services by the padre a week. The newspaperman comes round twice a day, the tuck-shop girl likewise to attend to one's small purchases with her cheery entrance 'Good morning, Boys!' the library offers as many books as wanted, the post comes round and gets collected, the telephone brought to the bedside and of course the ubiquitous radio earphones.

Night life in the ward fascinates. After evening prayer, presided over by Sister when every nurse flops down on her bare knees onto the bare boards, and the handing in of nursing reports, official day ended with Sister's 'Good-night.' Busily the night shift sets to work with before-bed administrations. The hot drinks come in and the ward hums with chat and banter in a general post. Then suddenly the whole place quietens down about 10 o'clock. Lights are dimmed but in the semi-darkness one can hear the quiet whispered workings on some serious case; sometimes the house physician would be sent for but always the calm, purposeful and confidential manipulations. Now and again the silence is broken by a call for water or 'Nurse' which gets responded to immediately. Soon the ward is bathed in a sea of snorings and funny noises that the old and sick make in their sleep. The silence intensifies, once becomes unaware of what little noise from the traffic across the bridge or even the regular tollings of Big Ben across the dark tide. Waking up in the night, one's thirst can be quenched at once from a wide choice—tea, milk, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, Ovaltine, Horlick's, Bovril, Marmite, etc.

WITH the morning light, every body greets every other. The day starts with the early morning tea at 6, usually handed out by volunteers from those patients well enough to do so; a very cheerful function it is with jokes cracked

at every bed-side. But MMP had been up long before that. Night-nurse would exasperatingly exclaim 'Mr MMP, you do get up early!' but she does not know that he has an appointment with Mr William Wordsworth at the Bridge. As dawn breaks and the first rays of sunshine pick out the golden rim of the Great Clock, MMP lapped in a luxurious bath in full view of the Houses of Parliament agrees that 'Earth has not anything to show more fair . . .' Soon the first notes of a thrush or blackbird and the gentle voices of doves. Towards evening the footfalls of the younger nurses becoming heavier and heavier (O varicose veins and unshapely ankles!) informs him of the end of day, not untinged with compassion that their course of training should be so tough and stringent.

The food to his delighted surprise proved the best traditional English cooking MMP encountered in London, another rewarding fruit of the revolution.

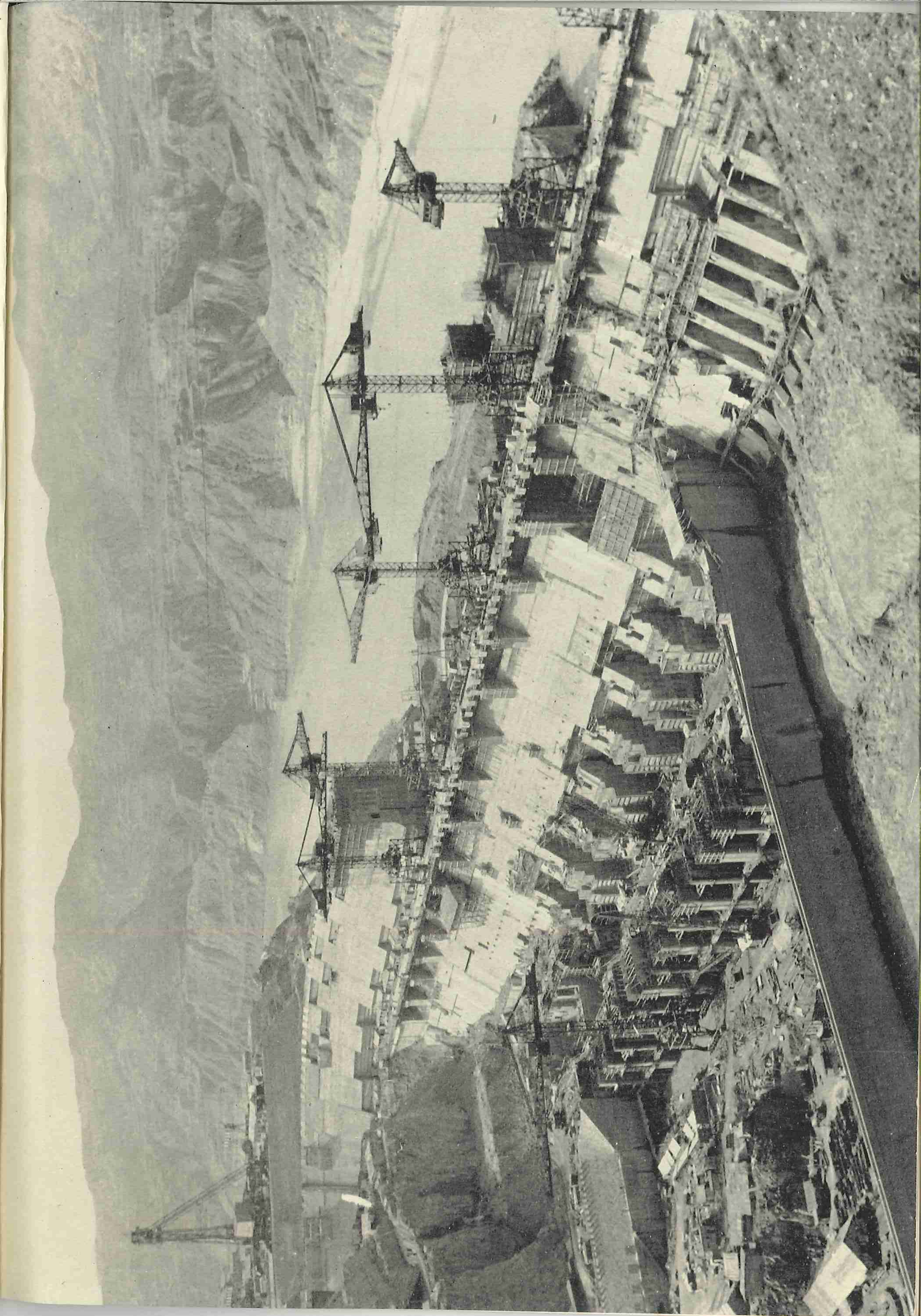
Finally an enumeration of the administrations one had within the 24 hours: food or drink including the 3 principal meals every 2 hours; bath on one's own or in bed by a nurse twice; beds made twice; temperature and pulse-rate taken at least 4 times; backs and heels rubbed with lotion and oil 4 times; 'bottles' changed night and day; visits by day sister twice, night sister once, chief night nurse twice, matron or deputy frequently; of doctors, the chief or specialist at least twice a week, the registrars twice and the house physician three times a day; the clerk (student) once or twice; then medicines and/or injections 4 times; special treatments and examinations as soon as ordered; visitors from outside once; the padre twice a week. In fact the patient is never left alone for more than ½ an hour at a time and the pleasant thing is that each of these occasions brings an exchange of cheerful chat. That the nurse-patient relationship in the nature of things should be perfectly frank and healthy never came into question at all and it was particularly distressing to overhear a fellow Asian in the next bed trying to make 'conversation' of the expresso café—ye gods! could someone not apply the gag!

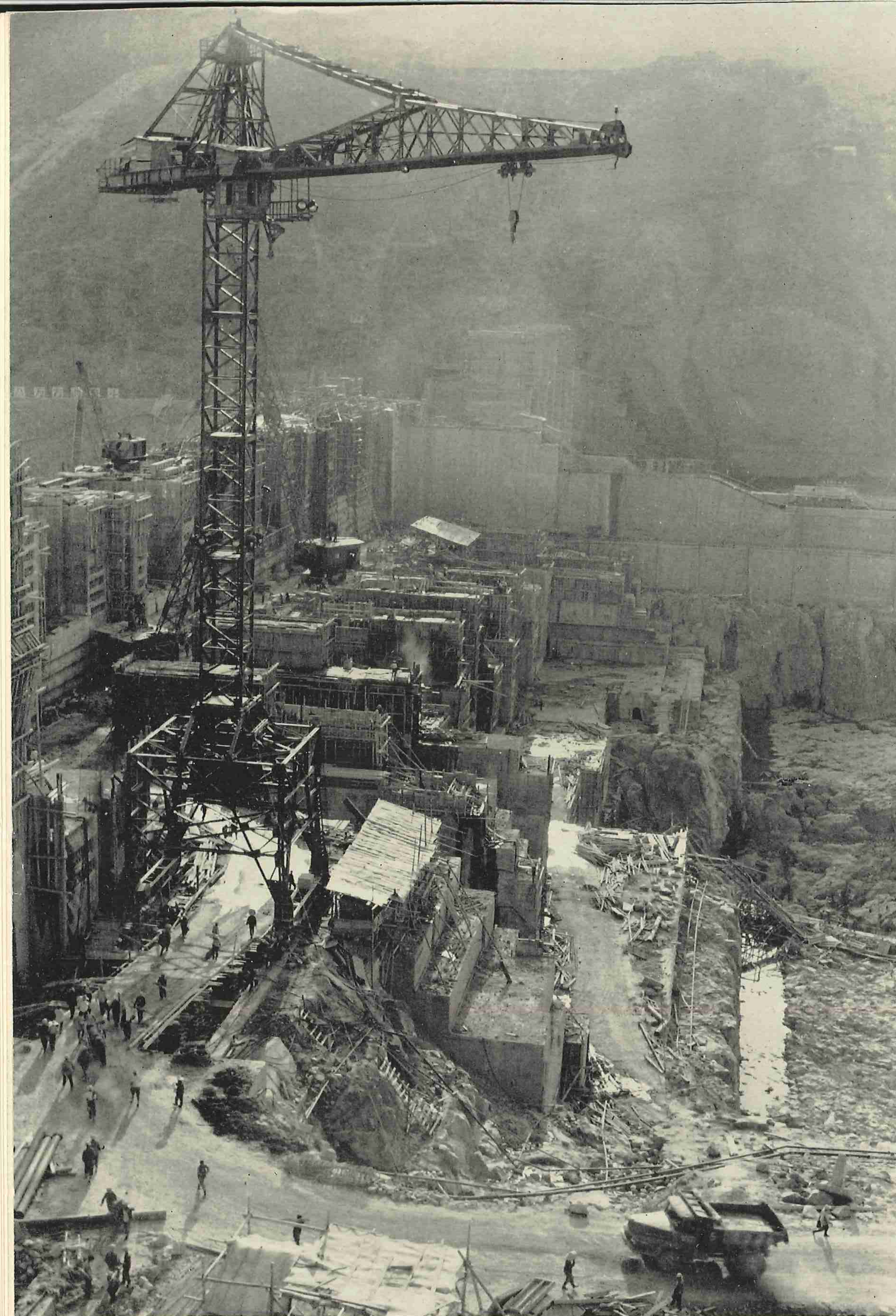
Mistaken Identity and the Lost Accent

Idle speculation in the ward at first identified MMP as a Doctor of Divinity, inspired perhaps by his beaming smile. It was no surprise therefore when a young Scots patient came to his bed to hold a serious talk, at the end of which he thanked MMP that he felt greatly honoured to have conversed with such an eminent man. Much to his disappointment MMP for once failed to rise to the occasion and give him a blessing. However, it proved most instructive to live in this very mixed company and a friendship especially enjoyed was with a farmer from the Fens, tillers of the good earth remain essentially the same the world over.

In the heart of Charlie's Lambeth, stronghold of the Cockney accent, MMP could not find such a thing, at least far from the full beery flavour with its rich fruity tang. He listened for it among the local visitors to the ward and found only its shadow or ghost, like the 'Lost Chord' it had almost vanished into thin air, its peculiar sound waves and phrases scattered and scared away by 30 long years of sustained assault of 'Oxford English' that the B.B.C. had ruthlessly inflicted upon the Southern regions of the Thames. With the shattering of the Accent or Dialect, personal adornments and garb had lost their character; no more the Edwardian Lambeth get-up of the 'chair' or 'pub' lounger but ladies and gentlemen emulating the best West-End styles. The greatest advance, however, lay in the clearance of the slums and MMP is left 'palely loitering' by the banks of the great river searching for the accent, the slums and the old familiar sights.

(to be continued)





TAMING THE YELLOW RIVER *At San Men Gorge, a gigantic water conservancy project, comprising a reservoir, a dam and a 1,100,000-kilowatt power station, is nearing completion and will be in operation this year*

Taming a Dragon

Nigel Cameron

NOT long ago there were three big dragons in China. Now there are only two.

Number 1. dragon was called Starvation. He is now extinct—and plump Chinese children are romping on his grave.

Number 2. dragon is called Illiteracy. He is the hundreds of millions who still can't read or write. But he is taking a beating from thousands of new schools, romanised Chinese script and a nation-wide education drive.

Number 3. dragon is a different species. He is three thousand miles long, ferocious even for a dragon, and wily as they come. His name is Hwang Ho, which means Yellow River. But millions of Chinese rice-farmers who have to live with him generally call him Hundred Sorrows.

They have every reason. In 3,000 years since their ancestors began to plant crops, the Yellow River has been rampaging through their land. Over 1,500 recorded floods have devoured their produce and their families. I don't mean little local stretching a few miles, such as we have in England. I mean sheets of deep water covering hundreds thousands of acres, sometimes costing up to a million human lives.

This is the nature of the beast—the sort of dragon the Chinese are taming now. In many senses it's a historic task, for Hwang Ho is the same river that the first recorded Chinese Emperor, Yu, tackled some three millenniums ago. As every Chinese schoolboy knows, he cut the three channels in San Men Gorge, hoping thereby to control the flow of water at flood times.

When I first wen to San Men just over two years ago to see the giant dam they are building, a Chinese writer said to me:

'For us Chinese this is a folktale come true.'

At that time work had just begun. The liquid yellow dragon still poured through the San Men—or three gates—with a roar which must be the voice of water dragons, for it doesn't resemble any other noise I've heard. It shook the air almost as much as the blasting they were doing on the two islands. I crossed those frightening chasms on swaying bamboo bridges, edging past streams of Chinese carrying gelignite, pneumatic drills, bowls of rice for their meals, blueprints and slide rules. Down river, where they planned to build a road bridge, were the old Yellow River boats, their traditional cargoes now replaced by apparatus for measuring the flow of their old enemy. The scenery was much as it always had been, and only a small scar had been made by the work.

TODAY I returned to San Men. The car rounded the last bend. I recalled the marvellous view, celebrated in songs and poetry, of the rich yellow dragon tearing its imperious way between the rocks of the Gorge.

Today the view had disappeared. A concrete wall 200 feet high rose sheer in front of the windscreen. The whole face of it bristled with machinery. It was alive with men as small as flies. Fire giant cranes like metal birds stood on top of the wall, turning their heads this way and that. The Gorge seemed as if it would burst with noise—the noise of machines and not the old dragon's roar. Nothing but the dam itself stood still.

'You see,' said the young engineer with me, 'we have begun to get the better of the river!'

For me it was exciting. But for the Chinese it's more than that. It is something they've dreamed of for thousands of years. The folktale beginning to come true.

'We've squeezed the whole river over to the far side,' the engineer went on. 'And when we have finished this part of the dam we can quite easily divert it over here, and do the other bit.'

It was strange to *walk* over the bed of the river with the dam towering on one side and the cranes dangling their loads hundreds of feet above. It was so easy. I remembered the old boatman on my last visit who told me how they used to go to the temple on the hill to pray before they attempted the passage through this Gorge. He had lost four sons—'swallowed up by the river' as he put it. I remembered the deep grooves on the rocks of the island cut by ropes as the boatmen of several thousand years hauled their craft upstream. The islands have disappeared.

This year the dam will be finished—years ahead of schedule. The lake that will form behind it will be nearly two hundred miles long and will hold 35,000 million cubic metres of water. Six million acres of arid land will feel the touch of water for the first time in history. The increase of crops—wheat and cotton—will be about enough to supply the needs of a population about the size of Britain. It is a big scheme.

BUT that is only half the picture. Half a mile of dam 300 feet high containing two million tons of cement, is only the lasso to catch the dragon. It can't then escape. But you still have to make it work. That is the other half.

The problem is more complicated than mere storeage of water. San Men is the biggest of six dams now under construction on the Yellow River. Each has its reservoir behind it. But there are also more than 30,000 smaller reservoir being built on the tributaries far away to the west in that wild and wooly country by which Marco Polo arrived in China. Many of them are small and can be built by the local communes.

The reason for this immense effort is not only to get irrigation water. They went to take the yellow out of the river.

This is not some special Chinese fad. For the yellow is silt—about a million tons of good earth—carried away each year and deposited in the lower reaches of the river. Every year this disastrous river raises its bed by a few more inches as it flows through the rice-plains. Every year the peasants have added a few more inches to the thousands of miles of dikes on its banks. Every two years on average the river used to win, and a national flood disaster followed.

One of the first tasks of the present government was to make huge additions to those dikes, and since the revolution there has been no big flood.

But this is no final answer. That yellow silt is still piling up. Only by many small dams, by lining all gulleys where rain comes down to the river, can you begin to remove that beautiful but deadly yellow. Even then you have to plant millions of trees and great areas of fodder crops on the bare hillsides to retain the soil that is otherwise continually washed away. As a Chinese newspaper recently put it: 'Not only the dragon's body but also his limbs must be tied down.'

BUT even that doesn't end the tale of the Yellow River. All the big dams and some smaller ones will have hydro-electric stations. At San Men they had just begun to build the first of eight turbine generators. The slogan in red Chinese characters on top of the dam read: 'We must go all out to get it working by National Day (Oct. 1st 1960.)' The combined power generated by all the stations on the river will be about 23 million kilowatts—which is 35% of the total power available in China now.

There's a human story in the building of those dams—a special one in San Men whose lake will drown 970 villages. A third of million people have lived in them for longer than history relates. In fact the archaeologists, on my first visit, were digging up the villages of stone-age Chinese people and tombs of princes who lived two thousand years ago. This is the cradle of Chinese life. In those tombs were buried the ancestors of the people I liked so much in the villages. People living even today in caves tunnelled into the compact yellow earth. Soon they were going to move. Of course they had some regrets. Peasants hate to leave their land, even if it is poor. And some old ladies were not too sure that the brick houses they will have on the nearby communes would be as warm in winter as the snug caves they were used to. I tried to tell one old woman that our grandmas kept warm in brick. But I was the first European she had ever seen and I'm not sure she believed me. Though she invited me to share her lunch.

The younger people were enthusiastic. It's not really much fun living in a cave, even with some modern amenities. They knew what life was like in the communes and were perfectly ready to move. All of them understood the necessity of the dam. It isn't hard when you have been intimately connected with poverty and hopelessness, such as their life was before the revolution—to try something new. Especially as the cost of the move in all details will be borne by the government.

Back on the resounding dam the twenty thousand workers were striving, as they put it in their posters, to beat their own targets. One small team had just done so. With a girl carrying a banner and a couple of lads with drums and Chinese cymbals they were having an impromptu march among the cranes and concrete to tell the others what they had achieved. As I watched them, all those maddening stories about slave labour came back to me. I talked to many people from all over China who work on this dam. I have talked to hundreds of other on all kinds of work all over China. I have never found one who wasn't there of his own free will. The reason they do most jobs ahead of schedule is—as they tell you: 'We know we're building for ourselves.'

ANYONE who goes to China and uses his eyes will agree with me. It's time some people in Western countries stopped fooling themselves by believing that the Chinese regime is unpopular. It isn't. It is the most popular government I have ever experienced.

The Chinese have suddenly realised they can do everything we can. They know they can eventually link the Yellow and the Yangtse Rivers with that net of canals which they project. They know they can make all the electricity and irrigate all the land they want to. They know they can grow—already—more than enough food for all increases in their enormous population. Every enterprise they have attempted in the last few years

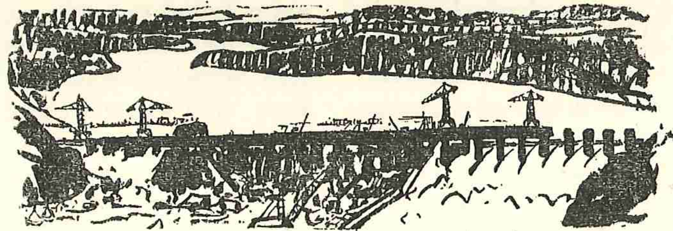
has proved it to them. And I mean to the average man.

Life here has become a sort of epic. The Chinese were always good at epic work. Now they have organised themselves they are even better.

Looking round at the landscape surrounding San Men—hills stretching into the distance, and all of them terraced into the shapes of wedding cakes by generations of Chinese farmers—I thought again that almost nothing could possibly beat this people.

The river was flowing tamely at their feet—that voracious beast of old was as meek as could be.

Even dragons come to heel.



Letter from Peking

Peking Duck in September

14 September, 1960

TURNING the pages of a New York paper I see the following jingle entitled 'No Peking Duck':

Already scientists can see
The cosmic age unravel;
And soon the spatial lanes will be
Our corridors of travel.

And we shall sit on Venus' shores
To spend a summer's day,
Or roam around like meteors
Along the Milky Way!

And when we fly from Earth's green sod
Upon a Martian liner,
It's going to seem just mighty odd
That we can't go to China.

I sympathise with the writer, for of all places in the world it seems to me, September in Peking is the loveliest. Then, of all times in the year, Peking Duck the sweetest.

This year, in addition to bright, sunny days, the city has had all the excitement of welcoming the first great African head of state to come to China. The visit of Sekou Toure was an epic one, judging from the intense interest it caused, and as full of meaning for the people of China as for those of Africa. Guinean flags of red, green and orange flew thick alongside Chinese national flags on the crowd lined streets. The bunch of young hopefuls from the compound where I live dashed down the street to the corner of Changan Boulevard to get a glimpse of the passing cavalcade of cars, and I went along behind them, infected by their enthusiasm. Bands were playing at intervals down the borders of the wide street, flags were streaming and firecrackers exploding. 'Here he comes, here he comes,' shouted the children, as an African standing up in a car waved greetings as he passed. The older children were lugging the younger ones up high so that they could see. The afternoon was full of radiance and warmth, which I, along with everyone else around it appeared, could not help feeling.

In the evening there was a big dinner in the hall of the People's Congress—political leaders, civilian and army heads, as well as prominent workers and ordinary privates and seamen. I introduced a Canadian radio correspondent to a commune labour hero, with rows of medals pinned to his blue cotton tunic. There were people of all kinds—a cross section of the community. As we left, I noted a couple of white bearded Taoist priests, who had come representing their religious group, picking up their printed menus and putting them away carefully in the folds of their wide sleeves as keepsakes of the occasion.

Towards the end of the African President's stay, there was a reception to him of some hundred thousand people in the Worker's Sports Stadium—a brilliant spectacle under threatening evening clouds which however, despite a bit of bluster, did not dissolve into rain. Sekou Toure made an extemporary speech in French, in easily understood terms, talking of man's ascent, his hopes and the dangers that lay in his path. The things that he felt simply had to be cleared away before peoples could work together in a peaceful, decent way. When, for instance, he talked about the struggle between justice and injustice, liberty and slavery, progress and reaction conducted by people who had become conscious of the issues against groups motivated simply by selfish interests, and how no matter how long that struggle took there could be only one victory—the victory of the forces of the people, a great burst of applause swept through the stadium. A gust of wind from the storm that eddied around picked up the dust and threw it at those sitting in the arena, but the big Kleig lights that shone through it on the sea of upturned faces, showed them to be

intent on the words of the speaker, and alive with appreciation. President Sekou Toure has certainly won for himself a place in the hearts of the people of Peking.

All great people's movements in China get their impetus from Peking, and the stress this Autumn is on gaining better agricultural returns—promoting measures that will go through the whole land and make for higher yields. There have been two seasons now in which weather conditions have had to be struggled against, and the consciousness of the need for continuing this fight has been brought home to the urban population by starting the movement to cultivate bits of waste ground, no matter where they be, even that beside footpaths in city streets. Consequently, one can see cabbages and onions, turnips and carrots, growing in all kinds of corners—in compounds, by canal banks, in back yards—everywhere. This will mean a good many thousand tons more food for the early winter, but even more important than that it makes city folk realise something of the struggle that goes into making a good crop grow. In a western suburb last night, I watched a bunch of lithe, brown legged youngsters, shirts off in the evening sun, weeding crops, carrying water to them, evidently proud of what they were doing, and feeling it to be important.

Last year the most beautiful building to be added to the new Peking was for me that called the Minorities Palace. This year, now emerging from its scaffolding is the sweeping outline of the Art Palace, down by Wang Fu Ta Chieh. It is a truly lovely piece of architecture, white marble and golden tile, done in the best Chinese classical manner. Not far from it is the tall modern building of the National Airways, which has been built with prefabricated blocks in a mechanised way.

With the Autumn term starting, the Peking portion of the ninety odd million of the primary school children of China, are back at school. They look well after the Summer holiday, and it is a pleasure to see them livening up the streets and parks, with their beauty, before the oncoming colder weather puts them into long winter clothing. As September advances, there begins to be preparations for the National Day in October. Going with a Northwest friend, come on holiday to Peking for the first time in his life, we stood for a while and watched the precision of the groups of massed bands, practicing in the park of the Temple of Heaven. An old student of mine, he is a mechanic in a motor repair works, and was much impressed with this kind of technique so different from that he is used to seeing away out on the Tsaidam Basin of Chinghai where he works. Peking must have many hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the country each year, for so many of the lads who have been with me in the Northwest have at one time or other been here for a holiday and a look around. They all go to Tien An Men, the Museums and all the other sights, and all are keen to buy picture post cards and little mementoes to take back with them. Peking is very close to the hearts of the youth of China throughout its whole vast hinterland today, for it represents so closely the thing that is in their hearts. The way of living, the aim of living, the glittering challenge of it all. Up in a Mongolian pastoral Commune last week on the grasslands north-west of Peking, I asked a young staff worker how many times he had been to the capital. 'Only once,' he said but adding quickly, 'I want very much to go soon again.' And the little bunch of listeners who crowded around all smiled as if echoing the thought themselves.

Autumn, and the Peking stage is filled with interest. Surely it is one of the most fascinating in the world in its colour and variety. Just now, 'Third Sister Liu' a new opera of the Chuang people in Kwangsi, is in the lead for appreciation. Then there has been the Vietnam Film Week, and the performances of the Bulgarian Song and Dance Group. The old opera of the 'White Snake' has been adapted as a dance drama for the ballet, under the title of 'Leifeng Pagoda.' For the old Pekinese and for many a visitor too, Peking Opera in the old style is still playing to big and appreciative audiences, with new titles coming out all the time.

Whereas in New Zealand it would be All Black football scores, in Australia or England, cricket, in China it is the total for the national drive for steel that counts. No matter how many other totals are forgotten, that for steel everyone knows, and successes on that front are eagerly commented on. It seems now that the eighteen million tons aimed for this year, will be gained easily enough. I was impressed last week after visiting the modern big scale plant at Paotou, to see the line of furnaces of cities and communes that have sprung up along what was surely one of the most poverty-stricken areas in the world, all throwing out a strong red light as our train sped through the night. The steel that is strengthening the hands of the people for peace is becoming a reality allright.

Rewi Alley

Letter from Singapore

Culturomania and Alsatian Dogs

14 September, 1960

The main topic of conversation in Singapore today is not unemployment, unrest, industrialisation or even Culture, although at the moment Culturomania is sweeping all of us, and we shall have a Culture day and a Culture week every year, to get Singapore's multi-racial peoples to understand each other better. Even Culture takes second place to kidnapping. The subject of kidnapping, kidnappers, and kidnappees, who was kidnapped and for how much . . . there is little talk of anything else in the coffee shops, and even consular cocktails discuss the matter with unaccustomed energy.

Kidnapping in Singapore is an old industry, but a boom occured this year. The kidnappees are wealthy men, locally known as *towkays*: bankers, rubber plantation owners, businessmen, merchants. At first fitful and irregular, kidnapping soon became a regular occurrence, settling down to about one a week, with at least one murder as the result.

The effect on potential victims, that is, the Chinese of Chamber magnates, the rubber and tin tycoons, and the bankers and merchants of Singapore, was panic. Rumours circulated that everyone worth over half a million (and there are quite a few such) had been kidnapped, or paid up on threat. Naturally, every time it was added: 'of course, they refuse to talk about it.' The salary of bodyguards went up steeply; windows and doors became hermetic with iron bars and sliding gates; Alsatians of ferocious appearance barked by the brace in every garden, the Chamber of Commerce held urgent conferences to demand the death penalty for kidnappers when caught; a lot of businessmen went for health trips abroad, or stayed at home, neglecting their offices, testing the bolts and the locks, and refusing to answer telephone calls.

The Police, at first seemingly paralyzed, rallied laudably. In a neat swoop they discovered four hideouts of a gang, astonishingly enough, not in Singapore itself, but across the straits, in the neat, staid little town of Johore Bahru. Johore Bahru has recently been growing rapidly from a fifty thousand population townlet to a get-rich-quick factory town, and ever since Singapore went socialist and puritan, Johore Bahru has had a boom of call girls and massage parlours, but that the kidnappers should have operated from there was surprising. In inconspicuous, leafy roads, no less than four houses were discovered; used as private dwellings, inhabited by women playing the radio very loud and mahjong even louder, each house was fitted with an underground barred room where the trussed and gagged victim was kept in cold storage till the family produced the ransom money.

The Police's efforts to trace the gangs was hindered by the reluctance of the victims and their families to cooperate. 'It would mean death for me and for my family,' said one man who had paid 100,000 dollars on a mere threat by telephone. Faced by a gallery of portraits, the kidnappees refused to identify their assilants or even describe them. In view of this total non-cooperation, the government began considering measures against the kidnappees or their families who wouldn't speak up.

For the last fortnight, after the hideouts were discovered, things have been quiet, although rumour has it that fear is such that a mere phone call asking for money can elicit a successful response. Lately the Police staged a mock kidnapping to test the public's spirit. In broad daylight, near a famous hospital, a prosperous looking man was assaulted and dragged into a car. The crowd looked on. No one stirred. No one lifted a foot or raised a shout. This apathy is reported to be a sore point with the forces of the law. How can you expect to root out gangsterism if the public does not help? they say.

Meanwhile the cost of Alsatian dogs, bodyguards, and iron gates and bars is at an all time high.

Alamah

Poems from Indonesia

Asrul Sani

MOTHER'S MESSAGE

Go to the wide world, my dear son,
go to live a free life.
As long as the wind is blowing,
and morning sun shining on leaves,
in the forest and green fields.

To the vast sea, my dear son,
go to the free region.
When the day is not gone,
when evening is yet red,
when the time for shutting the door is not yet.

If the shadow is diminishing,
the sea hawk winging to its nest,
the wind blowing towards land,
the mast dried,
and sailors know the way,
then come back to me.

Come back to me, dear son,
come back when night approaches,
if your ship anchors near the beach,
we will talk about
'Love and this morning's doing.'

THE SEA HAWK

A hawk flies across
an evening sky,
pink and red.
The sun is dropping
back to its nest.

Does she know,
that the calling of love
cannot be stopped by mist
that yawns in early morning?

Her cries die away
gradually,
while near the coral reef
a white nest
become visible.
Now she is tired and sweating,
but the storm is roaring and roaring,
opening a wide new world.

The sea hawk falls,
falls to the blue waters,
appearing no more.

The grey mountain yonder
is silent too.
One by one they fall
to earth, the fledgings,
falling noiselessly.

Now only a dog
wailing at the moon
that hangs on the silent vault.
Her voice comes
down to the beach,
then all at once,
is heard no more.
When a fisherman says,
'The dog is hearing the dead',
the sea hawk disappears
into the dread darkness.
The storm asks not
whither has she gone?
The fledgings that fall beneath
the tree, will not say
'Our mother returns no more'.

(Translated by Y. F. *Liaw)*

Courting with Pantuns

Bujang Abadi

Time turns padi into hay,
Rivers suck away the rain.
Whither came thou, whence away?
When will we two meet again?

This is a *pantun*, one of the traditional verse forms of the Malay people. The first two lines, containing a pastoral observation, appear at first to have no connection with the last two, which contain the poet's thought; and are then seen to have a subtle, truly poetic connection.

In the example above, the poet is concerned to convey the sorrow and misgivings felt by lovers upon parting. This message, clearly expressed in the last two lines, is enriched and enhanced by the rustic imagery of the first two.

The first line implies that love, like the green padi stalks, can decay with the passage of time. The second hints that dear ones, like the life-giving rain, may disappear never to return.

Though very ancient, the *pantun* is still very much alive in Malaya today. It gives wealth to the conversation and beauty to the life of the rural kampong folk. New *pantuns* are constantly improvised.

There is a story of how a British civil servant posted to a rural area came to find out how *pantuns* were constructed. A fastidious young bachelor, he returned home one day to find the floor unswept and his bed unmade. He admonished his Malay housemaid with the words. 'When the cat's away the mice dance on the table.'

Not long afterwards, he heard her singing a pantun:

A planter lives a life of toil,
He goes to town whene'er he's able,
It seems that when the cat's away
The mice will dance upon the table.

He recognized the last two lines, but wondered where the girl had found the first two. Then it struck him. Nearby there lived a planter who occasionally made business trips into town and the civil servant usually slipped over in their absence to see whether their pretty daughter had stayed behind. The connection between the opening and closing lines was embarassingly clear!

The pantun is said to have originated as a love lyric. It is now employed to express a wide variety of simple philosophical thoughts, but its romantic role is very much intact. In some parts of Negri Sembiland *bertandang* (or courting a girl with *pantuns)* is still in vogue.

I shall go on to describe one of these trysts, but first let me say a few words about the boy-girl relationship in the Malay *kampangs*. Up to the age of 13 or so, boys and girls are allowed to mix freely but as soon as a maiden reaches puberty she is kept under strict surveillance.

She is seldom allowed out of the house and, on the few occasions when she is, she is chaperoned by sharp-eyed matrons. If she should encounter a childhood boyfriend she must show no sign of recognition, but modestly avert her eyes. The *selendang* (shawl) which all young women must wear is there for a very good purpose!

But the strictness of the old folk is tempered by sound rustic commonsense. Knowing that human feelings can never be completely damned, and realizing that small safety valves can do much to avert rebellious explosions, the elder occasionally allow the young some small release of their passions.

This is done through the *bertandang*.

I once attended one of these trysts as an aide to a friend. He was courting a lass in a neighbouring village and wanted me to be on hand to supplement his inspiration. I told him I would bring along a book of famous *pantuns* and whisper some to him should he weaken.

We set out after the *maghrib* prayer. My friend was dressed in his best *sarong*. In one hand he carried a *mar-wash* (a musical instrument like a tambourine), in the other a chicken.

On arrivel we were greeted by the girl's mother and served with coffee and cakes. My friend handed her the chicken. If he won the *pantun* contest, he would be invited to eat it with the girl, if he lost he would leave hungry and might never see her again.

At her mother's summons, the girl appeared. She was dressed in stylish *baju labuh* and a matching Samarinda *sarong*. Her hair, done up in a becoming bun, was garlanded with melati blossoms.

She was lovely and I felt a little envious of my friend as she took her place at the far end of the *serambi*. She sat with her back to a flowery curtain through which we could see the silhouettes of five or six girls. They were there to help her, just as I was there to help my friend!

A girl engaged in a *bertandang* contest will resist to the last in the interests of modesty even if she is fond of her suitor. If she does not favour him, she becomes almost invincible, thanks to the help of her friends.

My friend finished his coffee, looked steadily at the girl until she flushed with embarrassment, then beat the tambourine and sang:

The soaring swallow is swift in flight,
Into the skies it sweeps with grace.
But dare a beetle to alight
On the jasmine blossom's fragrant face?

To this she replied:

The sky is lofty and eternal
For graceful birds a worthy setting.
But jasmine blooms will surely wilt
Would beetles want such ugly nesting.

She was parrying my friends compliments most cleverly. She went on to declare that she was really very unattractive. My friend protested at the injustice she did herself. She continued to parry his praise. Suddenly he changed his line of attack.

The monkey drops from its perch in the trees,
To the pool below to wash its feet;
It's an ugly creature in the sight of most,
But mine find the beast enchantingly sweet.

The competition grew warmer. The girl sang that she would turn into a bird and hide in the clouds if he did not stop pursuing her. He answered:

Shingles split atop the roof,
The mushroom is felled with an axe's stroke.
If you seek refuge in the sky
I'll chase you down with a cloud of smoke.

She countered:

Shingles split atop the roof,
A mat of thorns at the foot of the door.
If a cloud of smoke disturbs this bird,
Straight down she'll dive to the ocean's floor.

My friend fashioned a net to drag her from the sea; she hid behind a stone. My friend uprooted the boulder. Finally, she had no where else to hide. My friend was getting the upper hand and he pressed home the attack:

A scamp climbs up the sandalwood tree,
The myna mourns from cotton-tree top,
If my loved one's hand eludes my grasp
I feel my breath will surely stop.

He had now declared his love. The girl betrayed her pleasure with a blush, but she was not yet ready to surrender. After all, it was not yet midnight. My friend laid bare his soul with increasing passion. She grew more and more breathless. Her companions began to whisper desperately. I closed my book and looked at my friend. His face was calm, his voice steady. Finally, the girl made a last effort to protect herself:

A maiden bends to pluck a bloom;
Beetles speed from the sun's hot blast.
If the matter has come to such a state
'Tis well this breach should be your last.

She sighed with relief, thinking that this direct request to him to stop the assault would leave him stuck for a retort. But my friend smiled quietly and his fingers beat a confident rhythm. I could feel his excitement as he sang:

In the cotton-tree the myna sings;
On the morning's face the sun will shine.
But how can I decide to stop
When the breath of my sighs is yours,
not mine?

I opened my book again. It was far from being over yet. They argued about vows and fate till she was again cornered. Grasping for straws, she saw me reading my book and composed another *pantun.*

The bachelor crushes the sugar cane
And pours the sap into a bowl.
I know you well from the way you croak
But this other bird is a voiceless fowl.

Hurt by her jibe, I looked at my friend. He grinned and replied:

The mangosteen fruits are sweet inside;
One each for every girl and boy.
This cockerel here is our pride and joy
A favourite bird you mustn't annoy.

She smiled and hit back:

The raja's son is decked in jewels;
Ravenous termites could kill the tree.
I too am thought a favourite bird
What right have you to bother me?

With this *pantun*, the girl got up and left without glancing back. Before my friend had a chance to answer, the contest was over. Her helpers came out of hiding and left. My friend beat his drum a while, then struck it a loud blow, followed by a muted beat.

He put it aside and casually remarked that he was going fishing the next day. In a few minutes the girl reappreared, gathered up the empty coffee cups and non-chalantly said:

'Abang, it is time for us to eat.'

Golden Cow in the Soil

H. R. Arthur

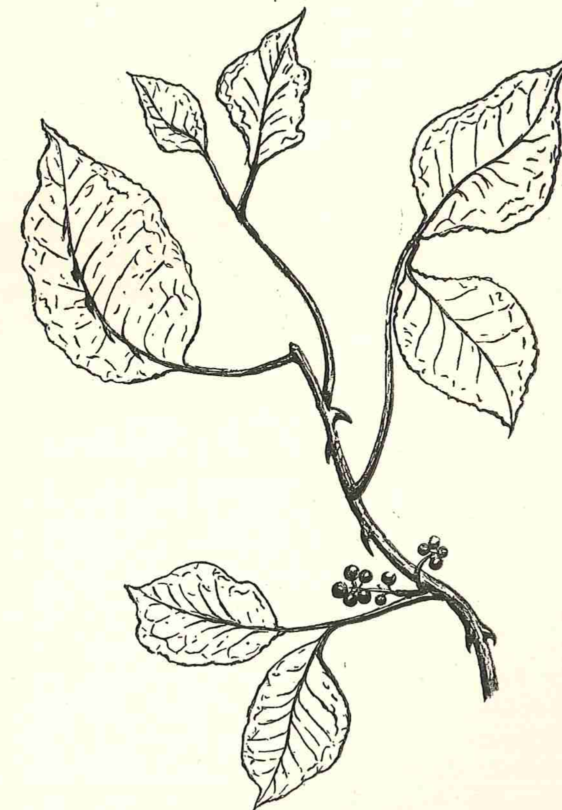
FAIRLY widely distributed in Hong Kong is a woody climbing plant which has thorns along its stem and a line of thorns set centrally on its lower wavy-edged leaf. In January, February, and March, it produces small white flowers, and looks altogether lovely as it scrambles above the undergrowth or clambers on the rocks by a shaded water course.

If my translation of 入地金牛 is rendered correctly in English as 'golden cow in the soil,' then this Chinese plant of many personalities is appropriately named; for its twisted yellow root looks, to my way of thinking, very like a cow's udder.

Two very close relatives of Golden Cow in the Soil, which is known to botanists as *Zanthoxylum nitidum*, also grow in Hong Kong, the commoner being *Zanthoxylum avicennae*, the one 'upon which the eagle will not alight' (鷹不撲) All three as well as their North American cousin, *Zanthoxylum americanum*, colloquially known as Prickly Ash, are members of the same plant family, a large one—the Rutaceae— to which also belong the Citrus species: orange, lemon, and pumello.

I recently heard a story that Indian people sometimes clean their teeth by rubbing them with the root of Golden Cow in the Soil. There seems to be a very good reason for the custom, if the story is true, for in 1953, some Chinese scientists discovered that the root has the power of stopping from multiplying, germs of a type which can be found in the mouth.

The chopped or powdered roots of



Golden Cow in the Soil, which can be bought for a mere few cents from any local herbalist, have been found efficacious in treating a variety of ailments. An infusion of the root, prepared by boiling it with water, when held in the mouth, will alleviate tooth-ache; the same infusion when drunk will alleviate sore throat. For the treatment of sprains and bruises a liquid extract in Chinese wine, made from the powdered root, is externally applied to the hurt, as sometimes is the root itself in admixture with other plant powders. And I must here confess that it was not so much its plant-poetry as its therapeutic uses which first directed my colleagues' and my attention to Golden Cow in the Soil.

By devious laboratory methods in the course of a few years' work we have learned that the root contains five complex chemical substances, three of which have likewise been obtained from other plants of the Rutaceae family; the other two substances, before our work was accomplished, were quite unknown to science. Both of these are 'alkaloids' and so fit into that class of chemical substances obtained from plants and noted for providing many valuable drugs, a class to which belong the anti-malarial quinine, obtained from *Cinchona* bark; the tonic substance, strychnine, obtained from *Strychnos* plants; and the modern tranquilliser, reserpine, obtained from *Rauwolfia* bark. Early tests have shown that one of the alkaloids of the Golden Cow has mildly sedative properties, the other has pronounced and drastic effects on the action of the heart. Whilst neither of these for various reasons may be useful as new drugs, they are both interesting to chemists as representatives of a very rare type of alkaloid.

We have also found a new alkaloid in *Zanthoxylum avicennae* but rather think it is not the alkaloid which prevents the eagle from alighting! That perhaps is due to the prickly nature of the plant, or perhaps to the content of the strongly smelling volatile oil present in the leaves. But I am just not sure about eagles.

The Boy who Moved a Mountain

K. A. Abbas

THE jackals howled through the dense blackness of the night. A fierce cold wind from the not-too-distant Himalayas blew through the long line of puny hutments of the workers on the Rihand dam. The roof of Govinda's tin-shack, where a nail had come off, rattled with eerie persistence. And from the distance came the muffled roar of the river trapped between the gorges, and the metallic gurgle of cranes that worked round the clock to life the buckets of cement and concrete and pour it down the ever-hungry jaws of the dam site.

Govinda heard all this and heard it not. In the flickering light of a wick floating in the little earthen oil lamp he sat in a corner gazing steadily with unseeing eyes at a framed picture of Hanuman the monkey-god hanging by a nail on the wall. He was brooding upon the eternal problems of pain and sorrow and love's first disappointment, and he knew not that down through the ages, greater minds and stouter hearts than his had wrestled with tense problems and admitted defeat.

To the lonely orphan boy of seventeen it seemed that fates had been particularly unkind to him. When, after passing through the village primary school, he was hoping to go on to the high school in the town, his father died, leaving the twelve year old boy to look after his mother and the little bit of land which they had got after the abolition of landlordism. But there was rent to be paid to the government, not to mention instalments of interest due to the money-lender for the cash that had been borrowed to give the old man a decent funeral, and to feed the Brahmins and the elders of the community according to custom.

The mother and son were somehow managing when, one after the other, both their bullocks died of the foot and mouth disease that struck their district that year immediately before the monsoon when the animals were needed most for spring ploughing.

Little by little, everything they possessed had been sold and his mother was obliged to take up a job to wash the dishes in the house of the moneylender. This was a cause of mortification and shame for Govinda's peasant self-respect, and whenever he went out in the village street, he walked with his eyes downcast, avoiding any acquaintances who, he was afraid, might mention the indignity he was supposed to have inflicted on his mother.

All this time he continued to wage a lonely and frustrating battle with his little bit of land, working with borrowed bullocks when someone would lend them, at other times dragging the plough himself in a gesture of futile desperation, for the furrows he thus made were just scratches on the hard black soil. When

he sowed the little bit of seed he had, in no time the grains were picked by the big black crows that seemed to have developed an evil fascination for his poor field. And all this time the only friend in which he confined was Hanuman, whose image he worshipped every morning. From his childhood Govinda had loved the story of the Monkey-God, his loyalty to Rama, the righteous god-king, and his prodigious strength. There was one particular legend about Hanuman which specially fascinated Govinda. It appeared that once Rama was ill and needed a particular herb which grew on the slope of a hill in the Himalayas. Hanuman, who could fly through the air, in no time reached the spot but was confused by the different varieties of herbs that grew there in wild profusion. So he picked up the whole hill and flew back with it to Rama to pick the particular herb he needed. If only I had the strength of Hanuman with his powerful arms that could move whole mountains! That's what he often wished and prayed for, but never more urgently than now when he felt so weak and powerless against the immovable mountains of his fate.

He had come to work on the dam with great hopes of doing well, of being able to earn enough to send money home to his mother and to save enough in a year or two to pay off the mortgage on the land, and even to buy a pair of bullocks. But he had soon found that the really good jobs were for educated folk and for those who could handle the big machines. Unskilled workers—and there were thousands of them like him—could do only the simplest and lowest-paid manual labour. For a whole year now, and for a daily wage of a rupee and a half, he had been doing such jobs as breaking stones with a hammer and carrying them in baskets to the mechanical crushes. As for the machines he was scared of going near them. The cranes lifting incredible weights with their monstrously huge arms, the excavators, with their gigantic devil's paws, the bulldozers that were like mad elephants made of steel, and the stone crushers that ground like the devil's own teeth—all of them fascinated him, frightened him and intimidated him. He kept away from them as far as possible, for these machine-monsters had been known to go wild and hurt the men who dared to master them.

It was a dull, heavy, back-breaking work that Govinda had to do. His hands were calloused and bruised from handling the sledge-hammer on the heavy stones. His neck ached from having to carry the heavily loaded baskets. When he returned home in the evening he felt too exhausted to cook anything, he would buy and eat something from the grocer's shop—maybe fried grams and a pinch of molasses—and wash it down with water. Then he would spread his mat and lie down to sleep.

In this dull, soulless routine, the sight of Radha provided the only pleasant interlude. Every morning when he went to work he saw her on the way to school. She was fourteen or, maybe, fifteen, small and slim, with thick shiny black hair braided into a long pigtail that seemed to trail behind her. At first, to look at her was for Govinda only a passing diversion, like the sight of a wild flower growing by the roadside. There is no harm, he told himself, if I just look at her. Early in the morning to see her dressed in her yellow or green or red sari helped him to pass the whole day in a happy mood. And then one day he did not not see her even though, thinking he was too early, he spent nearly ten minutes at the road-crossing near her house. Thus he was late in reporting for work and received a reprimand from the overseer. He was sullen and sulky the whole day and his fellow workers teased him saying he must have fallen in love with one of the dark-complexioned gypsy women who also worked on stone-

breaking along with them. That night he could not sleep.

The next morning he saw her again. She was not walking on the road with her satchel of books but sitting on the parapet by the side of the road overlooking the deep gorges and, tightly pressed between them, the ever-rising dam.

Back in his village he could never have dared to speak to an unknown girl, but here on the dam-site, with thousands of people of many castes and from different villages, even from different provinces, working and living together, seeing romantic films in the tin-shed cinema, and hearing love-songs from films all day long on the radio in the canteen, rather free and easy ways of life were developing. And Govinda, when he returned from work, in the twilight of the evening had seen shadowy forms in pairs huddled behind the rocks or standing silhouetted under the trees, and had even heard brief and furtive whisperings of love. After all, he told himself, it is no crime if I speak a few words to her. And so he went up to where she was sitting and idly throwing pebbles in the valley, said simply, 'Why didn't you go to school yesterday?'

She turned round and for the first time Govinda saw that she had big black eyes shaded by long eyelashes. She said, feigning displeasure, 'Who are you to ask me that?' For a moment he felt that he had been properly rebuffed and he thought of going on his way. But then the flicker of a smile illuminated her smooth dusky face and she said, 'My mother says I am too old now to go to school. I must learn to run the house.'

Govinda understood the situation. It was quite normal. 'So now they are preparing you for your marriage?'

'I don't know,' she lied, modestly turning away her face.

Govinda felt a stab of anxiety in his heart. But he asked seemingly casually, 'Girl, what is your name?'

'Radha,' she answered, turning to look at him.

'Then tell me one thing, Radha,' he said with a boldness that surprised even himself, 'has your father already selected a bridegroom?'

'No,' she shook her head and getting up from her perch ran up the winding lane that led to her house, and the receding jingle of her anklet bells was the sweetest music that Govinda ever heard.

That day Govinda worked with a light heart, swinging the heavy stone-breaking hammer with effortless ease, and even singing some lines from an old folk song he had suddenly remembered—

> *The voice of Radha echoed through the jungle*
>
> *'My Krishna dwells in the chamber of my heart.'*

Also he made discreet enquiries about the girl's father. He learnt that old Chhotoo Ram was an electrician who had already worked on other dam-sites and was one of the experienced and skilled workers who had been specially brought to Rihand on very good salaries. Bhola, the notorious know-all of the dam-site, a fat and jolly soul, who supplied the information, said he would not be surprised if Radha's father got as high a salary as two hundred rupees a month.

For the consideration of five seers of sweets which Govinda promised to present him if he succeeded in arranging the match, Bhola agreed to take the proposal of marriage to Radha's father. According to ancient custom, the proposal always came from the girl's side, and the boy's parents bargained to secure the maximum dowry. Many of the old customs were left behind in the villages when peasants came to seek work at the dam, but Govinda knew that even here eligible young men and their parents always expected and demanded dowry. So he asked Bhola to make it very clear to Radha's father that if he agreed to Govinda's proposal he would not have to worry on account of dowry.

In keeping with the solemnity and importance of the occasion, Bhola put on a new *dhotie*, a clean shirt and wound a bright yellow turban on his head. He put on creaking new shoes which he kept duly oiled in his trunk only for such special occasions. Then, borrowing half a rupee from Govinda for cigarettes and *paan* (betel-nut), he set off to arrange a marriage for his friend.

The hours of waiting which he spent in Bhola's hut were a torture for Govinda. But the longer it took for his emissary to return the more hopeful must be the situation, he consoled himself. He imagined that they must be entertaining Bhola to a sumptuous dinner for having brought such an acceptable proposal. Maybe the delay was due to the fact that after the initial agreement they were now settling the details. 'Whatever date they suggest,' he thought, 'I will agree to it. I only need a few days to call my mother and order a few dresses and maybe a little jewellery for Radha.' He was sure everyone on the dam-site would envy him for getting such a beautiful bride.

And then Bhola limped back looking the very picture of defeat and disappointment. There was a thick layer of dust on his new shoes, his turban was all askew, and there was a tear in the shirt where it had caught on the thorny bushes that formed a boundary wall for Chhotoo Ram's hut.

Slumping down in a corner, Bhola shouted, 'Don't ask me anything. First give me a glass of water. I am dying of thirst.'

Govinda tilted the earthen pitcher to fill a cup and, handing it to his friend, he said in surprise, 'But didn't they give you something to drink? I thought they always offer *sherbet** on such an occasion.'

'Yes, they do offer *sherbet*—provided they are going to accept the proposal,' replied Bhola with some acidity.

'And they didn't accept the proposal?'

Bhola shook his head, 'No, and on top of that Chhotoo Ram gave me a long lecture. "I am not going to marry off my beautiful daughter, who has studied up to seventh standard in school, to a day-labourer getting a daily wage of a rupee and a half. My Radha is going to marry some young man who has a good job and is earning a decent wage—maybe a tractor driver, an electrician like me, or who knows even a crane operator." So there, that was the reply, and not so much as a cup of tea did he offer me, not even a glass of plain tap water. This is the end of my career as a match-maker.'

In the gathering dusk Govinda walked back to his own hut, and as he lighted the little oil lamp he saw a letter that the postman had pushed under the door. It was from his mother, for he recognised the handwriting of the village school master who supplemented his paltry salary by writing letters for illiterate women like Govinda's mother. It was to acknowledge the receipt of fifteen rupees that Govinda sent every month, and to remind him that the annual rent and the money-lender's interest were both becoming due that month and that Govinda must somehow send some more money—at least a hundred rupees.

And so, for hours on end, he had been sitting there gazing at the picture of Hanuman, as the jackals howled in the jungle, the trapped river roared its protest through the gorges, and the cranes on the dam-site sent forth a metallic message that became clear to him only towards the end of the night as sirens blew to announce the end of one shift and the beginning of another.

Shivering slightly in the cold breeze Govinda came out of his hut and looked at the dam-site where the huge cranes, like giants with arms outstretched, stood silhouetted against the rose-pink dawn. Now he knew that the untiring cranes that worked round the clock without a moment's respite were sending forth a message that was at once a promise and a challenge. He decided to accept the challenge, for he had promised to himself to move all the mountains that stood in his way.

*sweetened water.

That day Govinda did not report for duty at the quarry where the day-labourers, most of them illiterate and itinerant, gathered every morning. Instead he went on a tour of inspection. First he stood for a long time near the dam, watching the cranes at work. He saw how a man in a cabin high above manipulated some levers and switches and lifted the heavy buskets, swung it over the dam and then lowered it to pour the cement and concrete at the exact spot where it was needed. He saw welders with their masks shooting jets of flame into the steel girders. Then he walked to the other side where rocks were being blasted and saw men at work with electric drills, boring holes in solid stone as if it was a lump of cheese. He saw bulldozers at work forcing their way through piles of rubble and sweeping everything clear. He had seen all these machines before, but today he saw them with new eyes, he saw not only their power but also their purpose. Once he had been frightened of them but now he marvelled at their precision, their enormous capacity to do the work of hundreds of men, and the tremendous speed at which they worked.

'Eh, you, want to be killed?' A sharp voice jerked him out of his reverie and Govinda jumped to one side just in time to escape being hit by what seemed to be a huge steel arm that was about to slap him.

It was what was called an excavator—a mechanical monster which crawled on its steel belly, slithering over the ground like a dragon-sized caterpillar, and probing whatever came in its way with an enormous arm ending in a paw that could open and scoop up tons of stone or earth. But now Govinda saw that the monster was tamed, that it worked at the command of a man with grey moustaches who sat at the steering wheel manipulating his gears and levers. Fascinated, Govinda watched the excavator-operator, quietly edging his way nearer and nearer to watch the process by which the man could make the monster obey his will.

At one o'clock, as the sirens echoed through the hills, the workers downed tools for lunch break. The excavator-operator who had scooped up many tons of rocks and piled them in trucks to be taken to the stone-crushers, now switched off the engine and walked off to the canteen. Govinda furtively looked round and scooped up the whole pile of rubble. all the workers had gone to the canteen or retired to shady nooks under the trees to open the lunch packets which they had brought with them. The hills, the rocks, the mountains of stone and rubble, the excavators, bulldozers—everything was silent under the pitiless glare of the noon-day sun. The distant gurgling of the cranes and the muffled whisper of the river came as if from another world.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by the roar of an engine being started. It was Govinda who had sneaked into the driver's seat and pressed the starter. To his surprise and joy the engine respond and throbbed with power. Then he pulled another lever and the giant arm began to come down with a metallic clang, down, down, till it touched the pile of stones. Govinda, breathless with excitement, forgot what was the next lever to pull, he tried this and that, and then he was relieved to find the gigantic paw opening, so he set the caterpiller treads in motion and scooped up the whole pile of rubble. A touch of the lever closed the paw and lifted the arm—and Govinda felt a strange exhilaration, a sense of new-found power. I have done it, I have done it! His heart throbbed with excitement and a strange

new thought went through his mind. This is not just a machine, this is the mighty arm of Hanuman that can lift whole mountains and carry them where it wills. And now at last he had in his hands the secret of unlimited strength, this giant-machine that was his servant and his friend, that would help him to move the mountains even as Hanuman the Monkey-god had done it for Rama.

And then, as he pressed yet another lever, there was a strange, grating sound, and the steel arm of the monster came down with a crash. The engine stopped with a gurgling sound that was like the death-rattle of the monster. In the silence that followed Govinda could hear only the pounding of his own heart. Then he was conscious of men who were running towards him, shouting and cursing. And the man with the grey moustache was saying, 'You fool, playing monkey-tricks with such a machine? It will take me two days to repair the damage. Don't you know how dangerous it is? You could have killed yourself. What madness drove you to do such a thing?'

With tears in his eyes, and with folded hands, Govinda said, 'Please, please forgive me, but I wanted to learn to drive this machine.'

'And so you jumped in like a monkey and started playing with the levers! What a wonderful way to learn! Let me tell you, boy, you *can't* learn to drive an excavator—unless *I* teach you to do it!'

SOME months later, as Govinda scooped the last rubble of what was only a few hours before a whole mountain of earth and stone and deposited it in the waiting truck, he felt happy and at peace with the world. The mountain had been moved from its place and would be placed now where it was needed—to close the steadily narrowing gap between the gorges to complete the dam. And the dam, when it was ready, would send the waters of Rihand to the thirsty fields in many thousand villages including the village of Sitaramgarh where Govinda had his land.

Yes, that day's mountain had been moved and now he could go back home with his wife who was waiting for him. She had brought his lunch and since then she had been fascinatedly watching her husband at work with the wonderful machine. Govinda switched off the engine and, on second thoughts, took out the key lest some mischievous boy decide to play monkey-tricks with this gigantic arm of Hanuman.

'Come, Radha, let's go,' he said, jumping down from the machine, and unmindful of what the old gossips and tongue-waggers would have to say about the shameless newly-weds, he took Radha's soft little hand in his, and together they walked into the glorious sun-set.

BOOKS

More about the Asians, Please

To the East a Phoenix

by Nigel Cameron

(Hutchinson, London, 1960. 30s.)

IN 1957 Mr Nigel Cameron visited China and wrote a book about his stay there called *The Chinese Smile* in which he recorded with enthusiasm his impressions of the people and their government. Now in his present book he writes about a number of other Middle and Far Eastern countries and islands he also visited in the same long journey, which took him away from Britain for a year and a half.

'The East,' says Mr Cameron in his preface to *To the East a Phoenix*, 'is two-thirds of the people of the world. I wondered how they were growing up in the battle of the twentieth century. From the awful distance of occidental sophistication I wanted to find out.'

The East, of course, is too big a place for questions of this kind to be answered in one journey, however leisurely. This book covers the Hadhramaut, Kashmir, Ceylon, Singapore, Malaya, Borneo, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Fiji; countries and islands so different from each other, with such varied problems and peoples, that no general conclusions can possibly embrace them all. And the writer seems to realise this well enough, for the chief attraction of his book is a pleasant descriptive style, which gives the same impression of local scenes and customs as a superior travelogue on the cinema-screen, without attempting any deep analysis.

Mr Cameron writes very well and there are parts of the book which convey these impressions in a most memorably vivid way. For instance, on his way through the Hadhramaut, at a village called Hauta bin Zein where they were celebrating the anniversary of a local holy man:

'During the afternoon the crowd deserted the market place and drifted off to the nearby cemetery where the holy man's tomb raised its delightful pink dome from the scattered burial mounds of lesser people, each grave marked by upright stones, two for a woman and three for a man, none for a child. And there, after prayers, a procession formed, the village elder or *mansab* riding a white donkey at its head, a band of men dancing along and playing tambourines and a croaky flute; and they slowly came back to the village. A circle formed, all men, the women standing on walls at a distance. The dancers twirled and hopped in a half-wild little jig, old men and young vying with each other, dancing mostly in pairs with short swords brandishing to the sad and jerky tune. The sellers of goatskins came and joined the crowd, their new inflated skins transparent and bright orange in the sun sticking out stiffly over their shoulders. On the fringe men were examining the teeth of camels with critical eyes and haggling raucously over the price . . .'

Later in the same chapter is a meeting with Dr Eva Hoeck, in the fabulous town of Shibam, with six-storey houses and castles made of mud. The doctor operates on a child who has fallen down a well. The doctor was 'the tallest person, the only blonde one, the sole unveiled woman, the one European woman in several thousand square miles. I was a little in awe of her—of a woman dedicated to helping Arabs in this pocket of sand and disease, the lone European

doctor, a missionary of the antibiotic god in jungles bacterial . . .'

But the world of the Hadhramaut worked more magic on Mr Cameron than his next resting place, Kashmir:

> 'There is probably nothing more boring in the world,' he says, 'than the prolonged contemplation of mountains. Especially those which are snow-capped . . .
>
> 'The trouble is . . . that I am not much interested in mountains and I am passionately interested in people.'

Well, there are people enough in Singapore and Hong Kong and it's in these sections of the book that Mr Cameron really gets down to expressing views which will make some people uncomfortable. He appears to have been in Singapore in late 1956, at the time of the local student riots and Suez (one of the drawbacks of this book is that some of the opinions and the material are several years out of date). He was fortunate enough to stay with Mr Fong, a Cantonese business man 'only very superficially westernised' and there is a very realistic passage on the noises in the block where Mr Fong has his flat, and another on Mr Fong's shop (he imports onions and other vegetables from China). In fact Mr Cameron is happy in Singapore, and in contrast he finds Malaya 'a country without any special flavour,' which will come as a surprise to a good many people who live there.

Such reflections on a country in which the visitor passes only a limited time, are interesting for one particular reason. They echo partly the people he meets. Much of Mr Cameron's time in Malaya seems to have been spent with Europeans, especially the Royal Air Force, to whom the Jungle War was an unrelenting, large-scale operation which saddened Mr Cameron and could not have given him much insight into the life of Malayans. He also, with great contempt, describes a drunken night-out he had with European rubber brokers in Kuala Lumpur. This seems a little unfair on European rubber brokers in general and also unfair on the daily life of Kuala Lumpur and its hardworking multi-racial citizens. A rather dreary modern tradition of European writing about the Far East is emerging; its ingredients are unpleasant Europeans, brutal and unfeeling in contrast with the small, gracious Asians; garish bars where chalk-faced tarts await the drunken sailor in search of sex and the author in search of copy; and poverty.

All this is part of the picture of the East as it really exists, and it is becoming mandatory for a writer to include a good deal of this kind of stuff if he wants to reach anything but a specialised public in a travel-book on the East. But are there not some other things to say? Mr Cameron does say other things, but not with such conviction. He is at his best when flogging the obvious—the poverty of Hong Kong, the wives of the wealthy on the Peak, telephoning their friends and saying: 'Do come to dinner on Thursday week. Isn't it *frightful* weather! We're having such trouble with the mildew on things.'

But did he not (in Hong Kong for instance) meet any young Chinese, the interesting younger generation? Did he not meet any of the younger people in Singapore, the people who have to build the state of tomorrow? A writer who comes to the Far East ought to write almost exclusively about Asians, if he is attempting to give a fair picture of any real value. In Asia *they* are, after all, the important people, not the remaining Europeans. It's the Asians that the reader in the West ought to be told about. But alas, how seldom in travel-books of this kind do Asians emerge as living individuals with good and bad human qualities, likes and dislikes, hopes and fears? Too often they remain a multi-coloured picturesque mass, to be wept over, patronised or deplored according to the political views of the western writer.

In fact Mr Cameron's book, although it is written with great descriptive skill, prompts the question: Haven't we had enough books about the East by western travellers with limited time? Is not the crying need now for more travel books about the West by Asians? Isn't it high time that some factual reporting about western countries, by Asians with no axes to grind, should find its way back to the newspaper and magazine readers of the East? This may well be a unrealisable dream, because of the cost of travel for ordinary people, the need for sponsorship, the difficulties of language. But it is about time something were done to bridge the appalling gap of interest between East and West at the man-in-the-street level. Mr Cameron ought to come to the East again when he has the time, and make himself a solemn promise beforehand to keep away from European and talk only to local people, preferably below the age of thirty-five. Then he might write a more important book.

Henri Davencourt

From a Ming Collection

Stories from a Ming Collection

translations of Chinese short stories published in the 17 century.

by Cyril Birch.

(*The Bodley Head, London. 18s.)*

THE collection of Chinese short stories *Marvels Old and New*[1] or *Stories Old and New*[2] and the three separate collections[3] from which they are formed, *Tales to Arouse the World*, *Cautionary Tales for Everyone* and *Allegorical Tales* have long attracted the translator and single stories and collections have been published in English before, notably *Four Cautionary Tales* by Harold Action and Lee Yi-hsien with a preface by Arthur Waley. This does not mean that there is not room for more translations. The stories are as delightful, fresh and human as on the day when they were first told. The world needs entertaining as well as educating and the appearance of Mr Cyril Birch's book is to be congratulated.

The history of these stories is now fairly well known. Their collector was Feng Meng-lung (馮夢龍) who was born in Soochow in 1594. He was not a brilliant scholar, but enjoyed the life of a man of leisure indulging his literary inclinations among a circle of like-minded companions who lived in that part of Eastern China known as Chiang-nan, 'South of the Yang-tze,' at this time. The end of the Ming Dynasty was near at hand, the north was at war, and it was in this still comparatively peaceful area that a golden age of popular literature flourished, and plays, novels and these examples of the story-teller's art first came to be published. Few of the tales can be attributed to Feng Meng-lung himself, but it was he who rescued these tales from oblivion. Many date from hundreds of years earlier, they were the stock-in-trade of the professional story-teller and existed in written form very often only in manuscript, in what were known as *hua-pen* (話本), prompt books. Feng collected, expanded and edited these, and even perhaps added stories of his own to them, but of the extent of his original contribution we cannot be sure.

Mr Birch has chosen his six stories well, they illustrate the wide variety to be found in the original collection. *The Pearl-sewn Shirt* and *The Lady Who Was a Beggar* are romances, the former with a cautionary note on the unhappiness brought about by an illicit love affair, the latter a love story with a happy ending. *The Canary Murders* is a famous example of the Chinese detective story, not a 'whodunit' in our sense of the word, but an exciting lawsuit story, very cleverly worked out. *The Journey of the Corpse* is based on a true biography in the standard T'ang history. In order to contrast the story in its earlier form with its later embellished version both have been translated.

The Wine and Dumplings is again based on a historical character but one who had a humorous and somewhat eccentric career. *The Fairy's Rescue*, as its name implies, deals with the supernatural.

One of the most attractive features of the book is the translator's short introductory note to each story. This gives its background and literary history, the style of the original Chinese is discussed, interesting parallels and contracts are made and the reader is able to visualize the development of the story and account for its perennial popularity. These notes are simple and clear enough for the ordinary reader and greatly enhance the value of the book, the reader

1. Marvels Old and New, *Chin-ku-ch'i-kuan*, (今古奇觀)
2. Stories Old and New, *Chin-ku hsiao-shuo*, (今古小說)
3. The three collections, *san yen*, (三言), are:
   Tales to Arouse the World (Arthur Waley's translation), *Hsing-shih heng-yen* (醒世恆言);
   Cautionary Tales for Everyone, Ching-shih t'ung-yen (警世通言);
   Allegorical Tales, Yü-shih ming-yen (喻世明言).

will feel he really knows something about China when he has finished it. On the other hand the notes are accurate enough to satisfy the scholar. The student of Chinese might perhaps wish that the edition of the Chinese text used had been noted.

Mr Birch's translations read extremely well, there are no conscious Chinese-isms. In the difficult matter of dealing with Chinese sayings which, without a note, would be unintelligible to the reader who does not know Chinese, such as 'The waiters ran back and forward ceaselessly with their orders for food and wine, as busy as the running horse on a lantern,' I think the translator does right to give the literal translation with the explanation, 'A *tsou-ma-teng* is a lantern on the top band of which are decorative figures, which revolve as the hot air ascends,' rather than resort to paraphrase. Once paraphrases are used, the translator is in danger of intruding on his original text and more and more of its flavour is lost.

A Chinese story-teller could never go on for long without punctuating his text with verses. These seem fit in as naturally in the English text as they do in the Chinese which is the highest praise for the translator I can think of.

Dorothea Scott

Anatomy of a Malayan Poet

I of the Many Faces

by Ee Thiang Hong
(published in Singapore, 1960.)

THE press of the technological age is so much upon us, the practical needs of people in newly-independent countries are so urgent that nearly everyone looks incredulously at the person who says 'I write poetry,' or even merely, 'I write.'

And yet we need our poets, our writers. For their value to us is to compel us to stand back and assess, revise and look at life from new revealing angles.

If you think that this kind of contemplation is not necessary then you're an ant. You are so wholly a participator that you've lost at least one thing which distinguishes men from other forms of life: the capacity to reflect, and thereby to search for value in our daily activities.

Ee Tiang Hong who has recently brought out a book of verse entitled *I of the Many Faces* has this capacity to reflect and to search for value.

The central theme of Tiang Hong's poems is of loss and of powerlessness: loss of self, loss of soul, loss of identity, loss of a loved one; and powerlessness to speak or act or participate.

This mood, however, is not outright *despair*, rather a gentle melancholy that is movingly eloquent.

But perhaps I should first answer a question which many I know think important to ask of a writer's work: Are Tiang Hong's poems *Malayan?*

Well for a start he writes in English, and English at the moment is at a low premium in Malaya. In the eyes of some, therefore, this is a disqualification.

To defend Tiang Hong on this count, one needs to defend in general the use of English in serious writing in Malaya. I hope I can do this on some future occasion.

In what other sense then are his poems *Malayan?*

In the first place Tiang Hong is aware of the immense dangers for the poet of writing in English.

One might so easily echo English ideas, copy English mannerisms, ape English values—in short, become a synthetic English poet of no interest to the English themselves because he is an imitator, and of no interest to Malayans because he is foreign and does not speak for them.

Tiang Hong shows he clearly recognises this in a poem entitled, significantly enough, 'Dead End':

No more the days I would compel
My heart to make up words,
Waste all my time at singing well
Some mimicry of foreign birds.

How then can a poet use English and yet be Malayan? Certainly not by merely making periodic references to *kachang*, and to Ahmad, and Ramasamy, and Beng Swee. It isn't as easy or as superficial as that.

WHAT then is the way? The answer is depressing: There is as yet none; we are all groping. It is this lack of articulateness, this dearth of a mode (as opposed to a language) which is one kind of powerlessness that Tiang Hong writes of.

Much that is Western sits ill on us, throws us in confusion when we try to express ourselves, or worse, leads us into blind, base imitation.

The new, the *Malayan* way (so far as one can give a meaning to this term apart from the merely *political* one) is not yet.

Thus the poet is at a dead end, longing to speak but unable to strike a chord that would genuinely reflect his personality:

And yet for all the mining pools
The latex flowing all year long,
What power can drive Malaya's pulse
Or tap a rhythm for its song?

How, then, to take what the West has to offer? We cannot reject it entirely; it has been too much with us and for too long.

Yet if we do not break through the 'bitter harness,' as Tiang Hong calls it, the end result is nobody's fault but it is grotesque nevertheless.

The search for a mode of expression, then, is a problematic one and at the moment hemmed in by the threat of sterility or freakishness. And Tiang Hong writes of this.

Of one thing he is certain, however: no amount of legislation alone, and no glib politics or politicians can provide a solution.

So far I have been trying to answer the question: Are Tiang Hong's poems *Malayan?*

My answer is that he goes straight to the heart of some vexing questions affecting all Malayan whatever the political platform or cultural programme of the day.

I have approached him in this way because some people in Malaya think it important that this is the first question to ask of a writer's work.

It is good to ask it because it is one—though not the only—way of securing individuality and not imitation; but sometimes I think that the people who ask it have no clear idea what they want, what it is that will make a piece of writing Malayan; or else they make singularly narrow and excessively political demands of the writer.

Some are so absurd as to ask that the poet should in his poems support entirely the ideals and policies of a particular political ideology, believing that other and topically unfavourable treatment of the Malayan scene are disloyal.

Those who insist on using this kind of criterion to judge the worth of a poet are looking for a propagandist, an Information Officer, not a poet.

Tiang Hong is no Information Officer, he is a poet. And his work shows clearly his commitment to this country. We cannot ask for more.

I have risked doing Tiang Hong an injustice in dealing with his poems in this predominantly political way. It would be error to suppose that therefore he is a merely regional poet with no other appeal.

Let us therefore approach him now as a poet in his own right taking up his two chief themes which I summarised earlier in the words loss and powerlessness.

He does not rant about either, nor does he orate. He does not punch the reader on the jaw with the sheer tumbling weight of words that a poet like Dylan Thomas uses. His gentle melancholy rather tugs the reader's sleeve.

He is not profound but moving; not complex but appealing. His writing is spare, unflorid and gentle; and it has a rainlike clarity that sprinkles directly on the reader.

His verse is sometimes rhymed, more often free. But on no account can he be charged with that stock accusation: obscurity.

He has read the usual English poets like Yeats or Auden or T. S. Eliot, but has resisted the fatal attraction they have for many aspiring poets.

Tiang Hong's talent is for the short poem, the sprint; he is not a marathon runner. His brief pieces are exquisitely simple; unambitious; eloquent.

Nearly all his poems have pattern, plan and an overall unity. I can only mention two here: 'I of the Three Monkeys,' and 'Do not Think I Regret.'

Note the plan, simplicity, the delicate manner in which this Malacca school teacher hits a Malayan note and yet maintains a wider relevance:

Do not think I regret
Failing to go so far
As Kuala Lumpur,
Top post, prestige, bank account,
Big car, big house, friends who count.

Do not think I envy
Such important people as make
Great show:
Top post, prestige, bank account,
Big car, big house, friends who count.

Do not mock my drilling the mud
With hardly a prospect
In Sleepy Hollow.

Seeing the stuff they value
In the capital,
I do not envy.

'Friends who count' means people with influence, or people whose only aim is making money. The two meanings operate simultaneously.

'Friends who count' are the opportunists seeking promotion and also those whose only interest is in finding outlets for their sexual energy.

You will see that Tiang Hong's language is not only simple but subtle as well. There is a ring of genuine feeling, compactly expressed, over and above the literal meaning of words, a feeling which must appeal not only to Malayans but to anyone with ordinary sensitivity.

Sometimes the emotion sinks to a striking humility, to vapid near-despair. In 'I of the Three Monkeys' Tiang Hong presents a picture of the coward shackled by official regulations and conventional values and powerless to break loose of his own accord. It is a bitter, ironic portrait of the fence-sitter which he sets forth, one that should be printed and hung in the office of every bureaucrat:

I hear not
The infectious complaint
Of a sick people
Queuing for dispensation.

I see not
The collected mob's
Retreat from Justice
Purging the streets.

I must mouth not
Grievances or retribution
What I know you all know
Spite of gag, hood and plug.

I of the many faces
Helpless fall
Guilty and penitent,
Assume a mitigation
of what you will pronounce
When the people's court arise,
Of my being a puppet
Of a Government,
Not of the people.

Will you not judge this
Adequate atonement?

The mood of Tiang Hong's poems is not one of outright despair, although he is often close to it.

After all it is the immense loss, of personality and purpose, that has resulted from the impact of alien doctrines and cultures which he is concerned with.

But he takes courage in his spiritual denudation, for surely a true beginning is based on the prior realisation of one's own poverty.

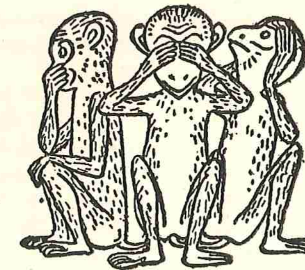
In a poem called 'Storm' the first verse describing a thunder-storm, symbolically implies the moment of self-recognition. But the revelation, far from discouraging him, fills him with a strange exhilaration:

O beautiful enlightenment
Frightening voices of thunder
How you enthrall, show me up dressless,
Wring me to the small,
How you compel my seeing
Sequel in my storm clean naked purge.

It is a note of hope, small but clear. For the individual denuded of racial and religious core; for the shell of a man seeking the kernel of a new identity or impotent from the lack of it, here is a vision stripped of hypocrisy, lying excuses and face-saving political panaceas.

Tiang Hong's search for value bring no positive answer for the simple reason that as yet there isn't any. We've not to wait; and we must be honest. Here is at least a firm foundation to build on.

Lloyd Fernando



Asia through Asian Eyes

Asia through Asian Eyes

compiled by Baldoon Dhingra
(Thames and Hudson, 1959. 28s.)

THIS anthology is probably the first of its kind in the sense that it is both comprehensive and representative. It takes in all the salient features of the Asian cultures, including religion, philosophy, arts, language, government, society, science as well as everyday life. Many sublime, inspiring passages quoted from Buddhist and Moslem scriptures are comparable with the best passages in the Christian Bible. Most of the selections on other features are also highly enjoyable, and may be read with great profit, especially some of the parables which the general reader is unlikely to find anywhere else. It is likewise with the love songs from Indonesia, Cambodia and Kashmir.

Judging by the selections from Chinese sources the translations are excellent and accurate enough. With so many gems of Eastern wisdom pressed into one volume of 296 pages, it seems not too much to say, this is a mine of treasure. Certainly, a careful reading of this book can hardly fail to broaden the mind of the general reader, and help him appreciate the valuable achievements of his neighbours.

However, if one should have to find faults with the book, it might be in the mistaken attribution to some of the sources of quotations. For instance, the passage on 'Cosmology' in page 21 attributed to the *Book of Poetry* actually belongs to the *Book of Ceremonies*, and 'Lion in Decorative Art' in page 58 evidently comes from Japan instead of China, as it is in Japanese that dog is called 'inu.' Again the passageon 'Killing and Punishment' in page 117 can be nowhere found in Mencius (though it may come from some other Chinese classic). Moreover, the passage on 'Nirvana' in page 21 attributed to the *Book of Poetry* is just impossible, as that book was edited by Confucius himself in the six century B.C. when Buddhism was not known in China.

Until recent years what the Chinese know about India has largely come from a classic book written by Hsuan Tsang, a celebrated Chinese monk, from which Mr Dhingra has quoted a number of passages in his book. Despite great perils and hardships, this extraordinary monk went to India by way of the Chinese Turkestan in the year 629; and after a stay of 15 years in that country, travelling and studying with great masters, he brought back an immense quantity of Buddhist sutras. He also gave a full description of the life and manners of the Indian people. Apart from what is already quoted in Mr Dhingra's work, I would further give one or two paragraphs from that immortal work on the Indian people and their social organization. Thus he says:

> The people, though somewhat quick-tempered, are fair-minded and honest. They are just in matters concerning wealth, and modest in dealing with other people. They are afraid to sin against the unknown world, but they comtempt the gains and achievement of this world. They do not practise fraudulence or deception, but trust in oaths.

Again, concerning their social organization he has this to say:

> 'As the government is liberal, public affairs are naturally simple. No registration for the household is required, and no body is liable to poll tax or corvee. The royal land is generally divided into 4 portions—one portion is for the expenditures of the government and sacrifice, another portion is conferred on the ministers of state, the third portion is for the maintenance of the wise, the learned, and the able, and the fourth is for the establishment of charitable land for the 'heretics.'

> The tax is light and labour service is simple. All the people engage peacefully in their hereditary occupation, and everybody is given the amount of 'mouth land.'
>
> Those who till royal land have only to pay one sixth in kind. The merchants pursue profits by the exchange of goods; and after a little tax is paid, the goods are allowed to pass freely through the barriers or ferries. The government, in erecting public works, do not work the people for nothing; but pay them properly according to the worth of their service. For garrison duty, military campaigns, or guard-duty at the palaces, men are recruited according to the need by offering the proper reward. As for governors, ministers of state as well as the numerous officers, they all have land apportioned to them, and they live upon their own feudal land.

The Chinese came into contact with Arabian influence much later (1080–1300 A.D.), but the intercourse has its due effect on both side. It seems only to be regretted that the Chinese scholars in the past did not show more interest in Arabian Culture. Arabian literature is particularly fascinating. Whatever it has to say, on science or religion, or whether expressed in prose or poetry, it is always said with simplicity, directness and forcefulness. Mr Dhingra's work quotes several passages from the *Koran*, the passage concerning science may be taken as an example:

> Hearsay and mere assertions have no authority in chemistry. It may be taken as an absolutely rigourous principle that any proposition which is not supported by proofs is nothing more than assertion which may be true or false. It is only when a man brings proof of his assertion that we say: 'Your proposition is true.'

Again where can we find a better description on the character of the Arabs than the quotation from the Arabian historian, Ibn Khaldun? It runs thus:

> Being naturally wild, they are of all peoples the most reluctant to submit to one another owing to the rudeness of their manners, their arrogance, their high spirit, and their jealousy of authority. Seldom, therefore, are they unanimous. But when they follow a prophet or a saint, they are restrained by something within themselves; their pride and jealousy depart from them, submission and concord are no longer difficult. Religion bring them together: it takes away their rudeness and insolence, it removes envy and jealousy from their heart . . .

However, as Mr Dhingra's book contains little in which the character of the Chinese people is reflected, it may be not inappropriate, I hope, to supply the want by venturing a few lines. Beginning several thousand years ago from the Yellow River Valley, the Chinese people have ever steadily multiplied and spread. Meanwhile they have developed a centralised government and a national culture which has gradually and almost imperceptibly assimilated numerous indigenous tribes and moulded them into one great homogeneous nation.

Since China is situated in the temperate zone of the earth, and consists mostly of plains comparatively free from forbidding mountains, the *temperate* character of Chinese must have been largely moulded by the physical surroundings in which they have lived for ages. Generally speaking, they are of a gentle and generous disposition. They are industrious and frugal, temperate and prudent, flexible and tolerant. But rationalism seems to be the dominant characteristic of Chinese mentality; they are philosophical but not mystic, practical but not materialistic.

It must be mainly on account of this special temperament of the Chinese that foreign religion never made great progress on Chinese soil. Even Buddhahism in all ages has only succeeded in making comparatively few converts. The Mohammedans, in spite of their large numbers among the Chinese, seem to have made still fewer. Only Christianity in modern times claims to have made thousands of converts along the coastal provinces of China, but it ought to be understood that this is closely entangled with the former Western economic influence in China.

Of course, human beings are fundamentally all alike; and if they are not, it is largely due to different physical surroundings and social conditions. One may be sure, therefore, that the transformation now going on in China will finally somewhat modify the character of the Chinese. It will take off much of the individualism and conservatism of the old-fashioned Chinese, and produce a new type of Chinese with a new outlook of life that will make him a positive factor in the progress of mankind.

Lewis Gen

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Sir Herbert Read, the eminent British poet and critic, is the author of many books including *Art Now* (1933), *Collected Poems* (1935), *Art and Society* (1936), *The Politics of the Unpolitical* (1943), *Education Through Art* (1943), *Education for Peace* (1949), *The True Voice of Feeling* (1953), *The Tenth Muse* (1957), etc. Sir Herbert is President of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. He visited China last autumn.

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Asrul Sani is an eminent Indonesian poet—a leader of the 'Generation '45.' The two poems were translated into English by Y. F. Liaw, a student of Nanyang University, Singapore. Today many of the Chinese-educated students in South-East Asia are keenly adapting themselves to local conditions by becoming bi- or tri-lingual. And Y. F. Liaw is one of them.

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