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LAO SHE

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**THE YELLOW
STORM**



YILIN PRESS



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Lao She at Beibei, Chongqing, in spring, 1946,
when he was writing *The Yellow Storm*



Lao She in the United States in 1947 when he was working on the third part of *The Yellow Storm*



Lao She in the United States in the late 1940s



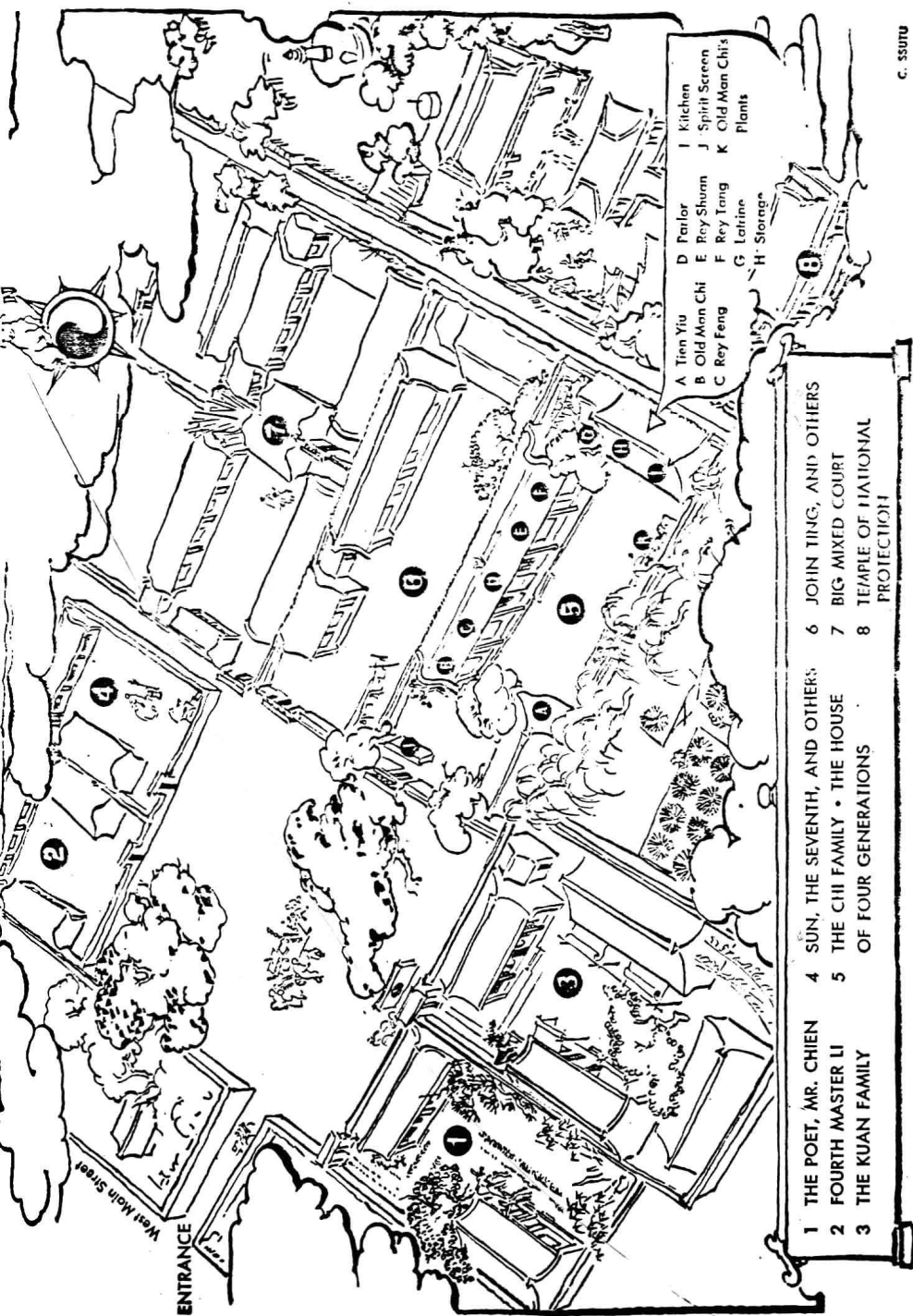
Lao She at Beibei, Chongqing, in 1945 (a sketch by Zhou Hui)

(一)

祁老太爺什麼也不怕，只怕慶不了八十大壽。在他的壯年，他親眼看見八國聯軍怎樣攻進北京城。後來，他看見了清朝的皇帝怎樣退位，和接不斷的内戰。一會兒九城的城門緊閉，鎗聲上炮聲日夜不絕。一會兒城門開了，馬路又飛馳着得勝的軍閥的高車大馬。戰爭沒有嚇倒他，和平也逼使他這樣。逢節他要過節，過年他要祭祖，他還是個安分守己的公民，只求消停，怕過着不熬吃穿的日子。即使趕上兵荒馬亂，他也自有辦法。他的家裡老存着全家夠吃三個月的糧食與鹹菜。這樣，即便炮彈在空中飛，兵在街上亂跑，他會關上大門，再用裝滿石頭頂上，腹足以消災避難。

為什麼祁老太爺只預備三個月的糧食與鹹菜呢？這是因為在他的心理上，他認為北平是天底下最可靠的大城，不管有什麼災難，到三個月必定災消難滅，而後禍事大告。

Part of The Yellow Storm manuscript



Preface

This collection includes selected works of five writers, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, Lao She and Shen Congwen, all literary giants in Chinese new literature. By “new literature” it means that it differs from the traditional, classical literature. The year 1919 was the demarcation line. On May 4th of that year the students and professors in Beijing, then the national capital, staged a huge demonstration calling upon the people to stand up against the corrupt government and pool their strength to build up a new country. It was provoked by the peace-makers at Versailles after conclusion of the first world war. They treated China, theoretically a victor in the war, as a defeated nation by transferring the territories and privileges wrested by the Germans from China before the war to Japan, also a theoretical victor. The movement soon spread all over the country. The impact was tremendous. In the field of culture it generated a new cultural movement known as Chinese Renaissance. New literature was an offshoot of this event.

The main feature of the traditional, classical literature was poetry with essays as accessories couched in a language unintelligible to the laymen. The popular novels such as *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *Romance of Three Kingdoms* were regarded as mere entertainment with little literary value since they were originally coined as prompt books by village story-tellers who were supposed to be uncultured. The new literature for which Lu Xun laid the foundation with Mao Dun and Guo Moruo as associates adopted the vernacular as literary medium, the kind of language akin to that of the story-teller. Thus literature was brought closer to the people. There was, however, a difference. The subject matter centred on the life of the people and the nation. “Literature for the sake of life,” for the sake of the people, for the promotion of reforms in politics and social life and scientific advancement, so pronounced the members of the then very influential “Literary Study Society” headed by Mao Dun. Advocates of the new literature took the great realists of 19th century European

literature as their models. They had indeed produced brilliant writings, of which the works of Lu Xun, Mao Dun and Guo Moruo stood out as monumental and started a new tradition in Chinese literature.

Lao She, Ba Jin and Shen Congwen came slightly later to the scene, i.e., when the new literature had taken deep root in the cultural life of the people. Like their immediate predecessors they excelled in prose, in the forms of stories and novels, although occasionally they also wrote familiar essays and sometimes plays, Lao She for instance. Their common trait was also realism à la 19th century European masters. But each had his specific characteristics. Lao She was a quiet but keen observer of Chinese social life. The collapse of the last Manchu Dynasty, the civil wars among the warlords in the twenties and miseries of the people throughout the country he succeeded in describing masterfully, with irony, and sometimes in tears. But when the people became united and independent heading for reconstruction of their life in the People's Republican days, he poured out his love for the rebirth of the nation without reserve.

Ba Jin, as far as his temperament goes, could be poet, because he has great passion for life, for justice and progress. But he prefers to express himself in fiction and essays. He harbours great affection for the down-trodden and the humiliated, and deep hatred for the oppressors and the social system which serves their interest. His inspiration derives from the maltreated and the suffering who yet dare to fight against their conditions for a better future, and to them goes his admiration and love. His trilogy *Family*, *Spring* and *Autumn* illustrate his propensity as well as his art of story telling.

Shen Congwen, Ba Jin's contemporary, similarly renowned as a master of prose, but more restrained in his handling of emotion. He excelled in creating a language at once lively and refined which, combined with his profound attachment to the life of the people, brought a freshness and an elegance veiled in modesty to his narrative. *The Border Town* is a typical example. The scene is unadorned, but imbued with an ingenuous affection and poetry of the life of the simple and artless people. It gives great delight to both the plain or sophisticated reader. Shen was a professional raconteur,

with a great artistry in style.

The works of these writers, diverse as they are in ways of presentation, have nevertheless one feature in common: their faithful reflection of life, thought, sentiment and aspirations of the Chinese people in a turbulent age. All sorts of characters, the insignificant as well as the illustrious, strike their poses on the stage of history to form a panoramic picture of the country in the present century. They have lived and will live indefinitely in the annals of Chinese literature as witnesses of a great literary era, the era of realism.

Chun-chan Yeh

The Yellow Storm

Translated from the Chinese by

IDA PRUITT

Preface

If everything goes as planned, *Four Generations Under One Roof* will appear according to the following scheme:

1. Words: one million
2. Chapters: one hundred, each consisting of ten thousand words
3. Volumes: three—the first with thirty-four chapters, the second and third with thirty-three each

Though originally there was no plan to divide the intricately connected parts, a division is now deemed necessary for convenience in publishing and circulating. As a consequence of such partitioning, subtitles must be given each of the volumes: "Apprehension," "Ignoble Existence," and "Starvation." In the future, after *Four Generations* is finished, illustrated, and bound in cloth, the subtitles will no longer be used.

Moreover, each volume will comprise two sections, for a total of six parts. The work will be published as it is being written; that is, when the word total reaches about 150,000, one installment will be issued. When the second part is distributed, the first part may be joined with it, both under the subtitle of "Apprehension," the first section of *Four Generations*. In all likelihood, the second and third volumes will appear in a similar manner. After the whole story is finished, a decision will be made concerning whether to use lithographic or block printing. For the present, however, there's work at hand to be done.

Ambitious planning is one thing, of course, but the carrying out of those plans quite another. Suffering both mentally and physically, I cannot guarantee completion of the project. Furthermore, even if I am fortunate enough to finish the work, its quality may be questioned. Not only that, but the judgment of a person who would set himself to write one million words in such a year may also be questioned. So be it. I'll say nothing more.

Lao She (with malaria)

Beibei, April 1, 1945

Chief Characters

HOUSE NUMBER ONE

Chien Mo Yin, *the poet; and Mrs. Chien*
Chien Meng Shih, *their son; and his wife and the baby*
Chien Cheng Shih, *the second son*

Their relatives who live outside

Father of young Mrs. Chien — Wang the Third

Brother of old Mrs. Chien — Scholar Yeh

HOUSE NUMBER TWO

Fourth Master and Fourth Mistress Li and their family and neighbors

HOUSE NUMBER THREE

Kuan the Morning Lotus *and his wives, Big Red Pepper and Peach Blossom*
Kaodee *and Meydee, daughters of Morning Lotus and Big Red Pepper*

HOUSE NUMBER FOUR

Widow Ma

Cheng Chang Shun, *her grandson*

Little Tsui *and his wife, Little Mrs. Tsui*

Sun the Seventh, *the barber; and his wife*

HOUSE NUMBER FIVE
THE HOUSE OF THE FOUR GENERATIONS

Old Man Chi
Chi Tien Yiu, *his son; and Mrs. Tien Yiu*
Chi Rey Shuan, *the eldest grandson; and his wife, Yun Mei*
Chi Rey Feng, *the second grandson; and his wife,*
 Fat Chrysanthemum
Chi Rey Tang, *the third grandson (Old Three)*
Little Precious, *the great-grandson and*
Niu Niu, *the great-granddaughter,*
 children of Rey Shuan and Yun Mei

HOUSE NUMBER SIX

John Ting *and his wife*
Little Wen, *the Duke; and his wife, Sunset Glory*
Master Liu, *the shed-builder; and his wife*

OTHER CHARACTERS WITH MAJOR PARTS

Sergeant Pai *of the police force*
Lan the Eastern Sun
Dr. Kao
General Barren Hill Li