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# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PO CHÜ-I

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# PREFACE

THERE have been short notices of Po Chü-i's life, but never a full biography. The longest of these notices, that in the *Old T'ang History*, covers only twenty pages, about half of which are occupied by extracts from his prose works. But the absence of a biography has not been due to lack of material; indeed so great a quantity of his work has been preserved and so much of it is autobiographical in character that my chief difficulty has been to reduce this book to a reasonable length. Another difficulty has been to avoid confusing the reader by crowding my stage with too great a number of persons. Chinese names are difficult to remember, particularly when the bearers of them cannot be very definitely characterized. For this reason I have put in the foreground those of Po Chü-i's friends and relations whom it seemed possible to bring to life as individuals, and have played down or eliminated a host of others whose personalities are harder to differentiate, particularly the seven or eight members of the Yang family, his wife's relations, of whom, despite the mass of anecdote that clings to them, I find it hard to get a clear or interesting impression.

My book is simply a history; I have invented neither incidents nor thoughts, and when on rare occasions I speculate about what Po's unexpressed thoughts or motives may have been I make it quite clear that I am only speculating. The novelistic style of biography, even when it refrains from inventing fictitious incidents, has great disadvantages. The imaginary thoughts and self-interrogations that it attributes to its characters ('What course should he now pursue? To hesitate would be fatal', and so on) tend rather to reflect some odd melodramatic backwater of the biographer's own mind than to help us understand the character he is seeking to portray. In the main my account of Po's life is founded on his own writings, both prose and verse, with their 'titles' and prefaces. A Chinese 'title' (*t'i*) is often a description of the circumstances under which a poem or essay was written rather than a mere heading, and prefaces (*hsu*) give an even more extensive account of these circumstances, so that solid biographical data can often be got from an

author's poetical works, of a kind indeed sometimes more reliable than those supplied by the official notice of his life in the history of his period, though this does not of course mean that we can take every statement in his poems literally.

A large proportion of Po Chü-i's poems can be dated either exactly or to within a year or two. One reason is that more than any other Chinese poet he has the habit of mentioning his own age. Again, the accounts of reigns (*pên chi*) in the *Old T'ang History* are particularly full and detailed at this period, and from them we can discover the exact day upon which his friends received the titles by which he alludes to them. But his *Works*, though arranged in rough chronological groups, are subdivided into a number of further categories depending on metre, subject and so on, so that the work of any one period is usually scattered about in several different places, and it is only after a considerable amount of card-indexing that one can read the whole collection in an approximation to chronological order. I have tried not to pin poems down to a particular year without good reason; but one gets tired of continually saying 'at about this period' and 'now or a little later', and I may have occasionally said, for example, 'in 824' when it would have been more accurate to say 'in 824 or 825'.

There are certain questions, very interesting in themselves, which I have deliberately avoided. Without being able to quote passages in the original it would be useless to discuss Po's metrical technique and its relation to that of the poets who preceded and came after him. I have also not dealt at any length with the question of his reputation as a writer after his death and down to the present day. To do this in a satisfactory way it would not be enough merely to discuss what was written about him; one would also have to explain who the critics were, what sort of society they lived in and how it was that they arrived at their estimate of Po Chü-i's writings. A rough indication of his position at any period could be obtained, it might be thought, from the space devoted to him in anthologies, and also from the frequency with which his works were reprinted. But many of the earlier anthologies no longer exist, our knowledge of printed editions is incomplete, and in no case do we know how many copies of an edition were printed.

I have also dealt in a rather summary way with his relation to Buddhism. His *Works* are indeed one of our main sources of knowledge

about the history of Buddhism in his time, and the subject is one in which I have to some extent specialized; but owing to the extremely technical character of Buddhist terminology it is one that is difficult to discuss in a book intended chiefly for the general reader. Again, though I have called this book *The Life and Times of Po Chu-i* I have not attempted to give a continuous account of political happenings during his lifetime, but only to supply so much political and social background as was necessary in order to make the story of his life intelligible.

I have elsewhere (in *Chinese Poems*, 1946) translated about a hundred of his poems, and in the present book I have tried so far as possible not to use poems that I had translated before. But in a few cases where poems previously translated furnished biographical material that was hard to dispense with I have ventured to reprint them. Chapter I appeared in the *Cornhill* and part of Chapter XI in *Ballet*, and I am grateful to the editors of these magazines for leave to reprint.

I wish to thank Waseda University and Miss Honor Tracy for sending me the *Nyūtō Kōki* from Japan.

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# CHAPTER I

Po Chü-i was born on the twentieth day of the first month A.D. 772, at the house of his grandfather Po Huang, in Hsin-chêng, a small town in the part of Honan that lies just south of the Yellow River. Po Huang died in 783 and it was probably then that the family moved to Jung-yang, about 20 miles to the west of Hsin-chêng. Long afterwards he speaks of himself as having 'grown up in Jung-yang' and left it when he was 'ten or eleven'. It must then have been in 782 or 783 that he was taken to his next home, Hsia-kuei, a small place on the Wei River, about 30 miles east of the great city of Ch'ang-an, which was at that time the capital of China. His great-grandfather Po Wên had lived at Hsia-kuei, and Po Chü-i probably went to live with a great-uncle or with cousins. Who brought him to Hsia-kuei we do not know. His father at this time held a post at Hsü-chou, far away in Kiangsu, and his mother was presumably also there.

It was a time of great political disorder. North-Eastern China was in revolt against the T'ang dynasty, and in 782 four local commanders set up independent administrations and took the title of 'king'. At the end of 783 an army sent from the north-west frontier to fight a fifth rebel commander, in Honan, mutinied owing to discontent with its commissariat when encamped outside the Capital, Ch'ang-an, and burst into the city. The Emperor fled to the west and the Palace was jointly sacked by the mutinous troops and the inhabitants of Ch'ang-an. A brother of one of the 'four kings' proclaimed himself Emperor, and it seemed (as it had seemed twenty years before, at the time of the An Lu-shan revolution) that the T'ang dynasty was at an end. But by the autumn of 784 the rebellions (which were not ably led) had almost fizzled out, and the Emperor was able to return to Ch'ang-an.

In these disordered times Po Chü-i was beginning to be a poet. He tells us that at the age of five or six he was already learning how to write poetry, and that at nine he had 'mastered the tones and rhymes'. In his *Works* there is a group of poems which he marks as dating before the second month of 800. One of them, written when seeing off a certain Mr. Wu, who was returning to Ssechwan, dates obviously from the time (783–785) when he was in Shensi. It is a conventional little poem of parting, which begins:

*When flowers fall and birds sweetly sing*
*This southward journey suits your rustic mood.*
*The moon will be full when you cross the Ch'in-ling,*
*And spring in its beauty when you go along rivers of Shu.*

The last line is: 'The rest of us envy your departure in this glorious season.' And well they might! For Ch'êng-tu, to which Mr. Wu was going, lay far away from the factions and disorders that were devastating northern China. To the same period may belong 'Thoughts on a chilly night', which in the *Works* stands next to the poem just quoted:

*A keen wind blows on my pillow and mat;*
*The white dew wets my jacket and skirts.*
*This of all nights is a night for intimacy,*
*When the clock drips slow and the air of the sky is cold.*

It is necessary to explain that skirts were not worn exclusively by women, that the clock was a water-clock, and finally that the poem is certainly not a love-poem.

Harvests had been bad for several years running. In the summer and autumn of 785 came the great drought which dried all the wells of Ch'ang-an. It was probably in 786 that in consequence, as Po says in a poem written somewhat later, of 'bad times and famine' the family split up, 'some East, some West'. He tells us himself that when he was 'thirteen or fourteen' he was taken to Soochow and Hangchow, far away to the south-east, in the Yangtze delta region, as a refugee from the troubles in the north. He was in this region ('South of the River') when he wrote his first dated poem, 'Seeing off a visitor from the North and giving him a message for my brothers in Hsü-chou'. The word 'brothers' also covers paternal cousins and the cousins in question were probably the children of Po Chi-yin (his father's younger brother) who was Prefect of P'ei, near Hsü-chou, in Western Kiangsu.

*I am shut off from my old home, to long for it is no use;*
*The waters of Ch'u and the hills of Wu lie league on league between.*
*But to-day I am able through this kind friend to send to my dear brothers*
*Several lines of home-sick tears committed to a single wrapper.*

The last line is a well-worn *cliché*, which occurs almost verbatim, along with other phrases used here by Po, in a poem by a minor poet of the period, Li Tuan (732–792), who held a post at Hangchow at about this time. The next dated works are two little poems on a traditional theme, that of Wang Chao-chün. The story goes that one of the early emperors of China had portraits made of all the Court ladies. The others bribed the painter to make them more beautiful than they really were; Chao-chün alone was confident of her beauty, and did not bribe the painter, who in consequence was so cross that he made her hideously ugly. Soon afterwards the Khan of the Huns asked for a Chinese wife, and looking through the portraits, the Emperor felt that he could very well dispense with Chao-chün. So she was packed off to the Khan's Court. Only when it was too late did the Emperor

discover that he had lost the most beautiful lady of them all. This is one of Po's two poems, written when he was 16:

*Full in her face, the desert sand; full in her hair, the wind.*
*Her pencilled brows have lost their black, the rouge has melted*
*from her cheeks.*
*Grief and pain and bitter toil have left so deep a mark*
*That now in the end she is very like what the painter made her*
*in his picture.*

The only other poem in this early group to which Po gives an exact date is called 'Written when ill' (789):

*For a long time the business of getting a living*
*Has kept me from learning the Art of Guarding Life.*
*My years are few, but my diseases are many;*
*How can I hope to last till old age?*

'The Art of Guarding Life' means what we should call 'taking care of oneself' or more grandly 'Hygiene'. What exactly did Po mean by 'toiling at livelihood-things', which is what he literally says in the first line? He may of course be merely alluding to preparation for the provincial examinations. But the family was very badly off and we know that, after a generation of civil war, prices had risen threefold. It is not at all unlikely that at this period Po had to work as a copyist or minor clerk in some local office.

Many of the pieces in the early group are poems of parting. One of these, unlike the rest, was not written when actually saying good-bye to a traveller, but was an exercise in verse, composed on the theme: 'The grass on the Old Plain; a poem of parting':

*Thick, thick the grass grows in the fields;*
*Every year it withers, and springs anew.*
*The prairie fires never burn it up;*
*The spring wind blows it into life again.*
*Its sweet smell carries to the old road;*
*Its green haze touches the crumbling wall.*
*Now that we are seeing our noble friend on his way*
*Its close verdure fills our parting thoughts.*

There are several poems about the deaths of friends and several about the sad Lenten season ('Cold Eating') when all fires and lights were put out:

*At the highway side I passed my Lent, not a soul stirred;*
*The sadness of Spring was mine alone, there at the highway side.*
*Riding now I trail my whip, too sad to speak,*
*While wind blows from a hundred grasses the wild fragrance of*
*the fields.*

The first allusion to Buddhism in Po's *Works* is perhaps a poem about the Chinese peony, addressed to a monk called Chêng-i:

*To-day the scarlet peonies that grow in front of my steps*
*Are many of them beginning to fade, yet others are only in bud.*
*When they first open one cannot grasp that their brightness is a phantom flare;*
*Only when they fall do we comprehend this beauty, frail as ours.*
*From my own life the Gate into the Void is many lands away;*
*Let me with these last-left flowers in my hand come to you and have you for my guide.*

He wrote another poem addressed to a monk when staying, during the course of a journey, at the Ching-k'ung Monastery at P'êng-ch'êng (Hsü-chou):

*To shut it off from contact with the world of men*
*The temple's gates open towards the hill.*
*At the evening bell, the crying birds flock;*
*In the autumn rain, the sick priests are idle.*
*The moon hides beyond the cloudy trees;*
*The firefly flits between the cloister eaves.*
*What bliss to lodge in this paradise of flowers*
*And be able for a while to calm my thoughts and looks!*

The 'sick priests' were, I suppose, suffering from malaria, which was very prevalent at this period.

A common theme in the early poems is his separation from brothers and cousins. His 'flesh and bones' (his kindred) were 'scattered, East and West', were 'cast abroad upon the highways'. The same theme pervades the poems of another poet much of whose work (though he was some forty-five years older than Po) dates from just this time. I mean Wei Ying-wu, who was Prefect of Soochow when Po arrived there in 785–786; 'I was too young and too poor to meet them socially,' he writes many years later, speaking of the Prefects of Soochow and Hangchow, 'but I fully realized what distinguished people they were.' Books had a limited circulation and it is quite likely that Po did not read Wei Ying-wu's poems till much later. But he must certainly have heard some of them recited. Wei Ying-wu's 'At Lent; to my younger brothers' is very like Po Chü-i's early poems:

*The lights are out. At this darkened festival*
*I think of the absent, with sombre thoughts, alone;*
*And seeing the flowers spring in every field*
*My heart is set on the road to Tu-ling.*
*When shall we all go riding together again?*
*Mine, when I look, is a face already old.*

There are no happy poems in the early group. Once while drinking with an unknown friend called Ts'ui Ts'un-tu at the guest-house in T'ung-lu, in North-Eastern Chekiang, he 'forgets his plight', but only for a brief space:

*Homeless both, we drift together amid the streams and lakes,*
*A jar of wine made each for a while forget his sorrowful plight.*
*Long after dark we woke to find our sorrows still there:*
*Rain dripping from the kola tree—autumn at a country inn!*

A poem by Po Chü-i which he marks as having been written when he was a refugee in Yüeh-chou (the modern Shao-hsing, about 40 miles south-east of Hangchow) speaks of his having already spent ten years in the coastal region, though in his 'dreams at night' he was 'back again in the Ch'in' (the old name for Shensi). The 'ten' can only be a round number; for in 793 he was at Fu-li, some 400 miles to the north-west, apparently staying with cousins. The splitting up of large patriarchal families which had resulted from years of civil war had at least the advantage of giving to travellers a *pied-à-terre* in many different parts of China.

In 794 Po's father Po Chi-kêng died at Hsiang-yang in Northern Hupeh, some 200 miles south-west of Fu-li. To die as an assistant-governor at the age of 65 was to be a failure; but Po Chi-kêng had once had his moment of glory. When rebels, 20,000 strong, advanced from Shantung and attacked Hsü-chou in 781 he raised a volunteer army of 2,000 local officials and peasants, and held off the enemy for 42 days, till Government troops arrived. The fact that the modern province of Kiangsu juts out oddly into Southern Shantung is possibly due to this episode; for the Hsü-chou district remained permanently separated from the rebellious Tung-p'ing commandery, with its centre in Western Shantung.

We do not know whether Po Chü-i was at Hsiang-yang when his father died. There is no mention of this place in the early poems, nor of Ch'u-chou in Western Chekiang, where his father worked before he was appointed to Hsiang-yang. We know indeed nothing of Po Chü-i's relations with his father, of whom he must in any case have seen very little. We do, however, know from the *Ch'ueh Shih* of Kao Yen-hsiu, a book written about thirty years after Po Chü-i's death, that when Po's father died his mother was left in extremely bad circumstances: 'Po Chu-i and his younger brother had nowhere to live and had constantly to go seeking for rice and begging for clothing in various neighbouring towns.' This sounds as though they begged from strangers, which is not, I think, what really happened. The two brothers (the younger, Po Hsing-chien, was born about 774) continued no doubt to be buffeted about from one set of relations to another. Where Po Chü-i

spent the period of mourning (which lasted just over two years) we do not know. We lose sight of him altogether till the spring of 799, when we find him staying with his elder brother at Fu-liang in the north-east of Kiangsi. Before the end of the third month he set out for the eastern capital, Lo-yang. On the way and apparently when he had almost reached Lo-yang he wrote a *fu* ('description') called *Sorrows of a Distant Journey*. It is in stilted, conventional language, and has very little merit as poetry, but it supplies a good deal of information about his life at this period. We learn that his mother, now mentioned for the first time, was lying ill at Lo-yang and one of the objects of Po's journey was to bring money to her, so that she could be better looked after. The elder brother, Po Yu-wên, had furnished this sum by drawing on his own 'meagre salary'. Po Hsing-chien, the younger brother, was with his mother at Lo-yang and was doing his best, but 'it is not as though I were by her side'. He feels certain that she has been worrying about him ever since he 'went on service'. From these last words it seems clear that at this period too Po Chü-i was in minor employment of some kind.

There is a poem called 'The Swallows', which seems to be an allegory in which he justifies his departure from home. He asks the parent-swallows not to resent it if their young ones leave the nest, but to remember that there was once a time when the old birds too did the same thing. Po was one of four children and the mention of *four* young swallows makes it practically certain that the poem applies to him and his brothers. For the parallel to have been complete it would, however, have had to be written before his father's death.

On his way from Fu-liang to Lo-yang he seems to have made a detour to Hsüan-chou in Central Anhui, where he went in for the Provincial Examination in the autumn of 799. His connection with Hsuan-chou was perhaps the fact that his father's cousin Po Chi-k'ang held a post at Li-shui, nearby. In this examination he had to write a *fu* on 'Hitting the Target square in the middle', and a short poem on 'Distant Peaks seen at the Window'. Both of these are preserved. An examination-*fu* was a curious affair. Along with the subject of the composition a sentence was given out, and each word of the sentence had to be brought in as a rhyme-word. In the present case the sentence was: 'The various lords set up the admonitions; the many knights understood their instructions', which in the original is said in eight words and is no doubt a quotation. Po's *fu* consists only of eleven printed lines; but he manages to drag in all the eight words as rhyme-words.

The subject upon which Po had to write a short poem was extremely appropriate to the occasion. 'A row of distant peaks at the window' is a line from a poem by Hsieh T'iao (A.D. 464–499), who was Governor of Hsüan-chou *c.* A.D. 490 and wrote many poems both about the

views seen from his official residence and about his wanderings on the Ching-t'ing Mountain, which lies to the north of the city. Po would of course have been ploughed if he had not recognized the allusion. But it was not difficult for him to do so, for the poem is included in the *Wên Hsüan*, a sixth-century anthology that was the main stand-by of examination candidates. Po's poem ends with the lines:

*Their grey is tenderest just after the sky has cleared;*
*Their form is clearest when they catch the evening sun.*
*Here, from the Governor's parlour at Hsüan-chou*
*One may still look out on the scene that he saw of old.*

He satisfied the examiners and was consequently entitled to compete in the Metropolitan Examinations at Ch'ang-an in the following spring. Candidates sent up by provincial governors ranked officially as 'tribute', and were on the same footing as the lychees, oranges, ivories and so on that were sent to the Capital as provincial tribute. The merchandise was indeed displayed to the Emperor at New Year before he inspected the human 'tribute', at any rate during the earlier part of the T'ang dynasty. There is one poem in the early group which is marked as having been written at Lo-yang and must date from the time when he was just about to start for the Capital. It is called 'Shown to Min-ch'ao on a winter night':

*The fire in the stove is almost out, the lamp is burning low.*
*Face to face, through the long night, grief piled on grief!*
*If somewhere else, in other days, we chance to meet again,*
*Let us not forget what we felt to-night, sitting beneath the lamp.*

The formation of Min-ch'ao's name suggests that he may have been a member of the Yang family, into which Po was ultimately to marry.

He tells us in a later poem that 'he set out alone, in tattered furs, on a lean horse', and arrived in Ch'ang-an when the curfew was sounding:

*Dong, dong went the sound of the drums; through darkness and red dust*
*At evening I came to Ch'ang-an, with no one to take me in.*

In the last days of 799 (when it was 'almost spring') he wrote a poem about the newly erected tomb of General Ma Sui. Ma had played a leading part in suppressing the revolts of 781–785. When he died in the autumn of 797 the eunuchs cajoled his son into handing over the family house and grounds at Ch'ang-an to the Emperor. They eventually became the Fêng-i Gardens, so often used by ninth-century poets as a symbol of the transitoriness of worldly possessions and glory. 'His body', says Po (I will not attempt to put the poem into verse) 'lies in the new tomb, out on the plain. Who are these people that are occupying his old home in Ch'ang-an? His music-room and guest-hall will never see him again; but the prairie-grass and mountain flowers once more

are verging on spring. All his retainers can do is to offer their mead of grateful tears; standing in the wind amid the white poplars they soak their handkerchiefs.' It is not very good poetry, even in the original, but it is of interest as being Po Chü-i's first political poem (it is definitely an attack on those who have taken away Ma's home from its proper owners) and his first assault upon the eunuchs.

It was not considered in those days that a candidate had much chance of success unless some influential person brought his name before the examiners. On the first day of 800 Po sent the following letter to Ch'ên Ching, an elderly statesman chiefly known as the final authority upon the proper disposition of Imperial tombs:

'On this New Year's day Po Chü-i, a candidate sent up by his home-town for examination, respectfully sends his page-boy with a letter to your Excellency the Supervising Censor. I know that your Excellency's doors are thronged not only by would-be visitors, but also by the bearers of innumerable letters. But the purpose of those who thus obtrude themselves upon you, numerous though they are, is I believe in every case the same. Their one and only aim is to obtain your Excellency's commendation and patronage. My object is a very different one. The reason that I do not attempt to see you in person and instead am sending you this letter is that I merely wish to furnish you with evidence upon which you may decide for me a point about which I am in doubt. . . .

'The ambition of a candidate who has decided to take the Literary Examination, whatever his merits, is naturally to pass successfully and make a name for himself. In this respect I cannot claim to be any exception and for that very reason I have devoted myself unreservedly to the most painstaking study of literature for ten years, and was at last sent up by my home-town for examination.

'Among those in like case there are some who have obtained their degree at the first attempt, and their example stirs my ambition and encourages me to push on. But I see that there are others who fail even at a tenth attempt; and this makes me wonder whether I can stay the course and had not better give up. . . . Your Excellency! Everywhere under Heaven literature owes much to you, and in our own day there is no finer critic. That is why, without regard for my humble position and origin, I make bold to open my heart to you. I am a man of undistinguished birth. At Court I have no powerful connections to help me on; at home I have no influential friends to commend me. Why then have I come to the Capital? In the hope that my powers as a writer will serve me. I am dependent therefore on fair treatment by my examiner. Fortunately Kao Ying, of the Board of Rites, is to be the examiner, and there is no juster man than he. But is my talent for

literature of a kind to justify me in taking this examination? I have not the least idea, and it is this question that I want your Excellency to decide. Can your Excellency refuse? . . .

'I am sending you herewith twenty pieces of miscellaneous prose and a hundred poems. I entreat you to recognize the sincerity of my request. The matter is trivial and I am myself of no account. Do not for that reason ignore it, but in a moment of leisure from public business cast a critical eye on these writings. If they justify me in going forward, I beg for one word to that effect; in which case I shall make every effort to polish my dull wits, whip up my nag and forge ahead. If on the other hand you tell me not to stand, then I will give up my plans, retrace my steps and content myself with a life of obscurity.

'For days past this conflict has been warring in my breast. I beg for a single word to resolve it. I shall hope for an answer within ten days. If I hear that you have deigned to glance at my shabby productions, I shall be as one "robbed of breath and ravished of his soul". But I must be brief. Chü-i respectfully twice prostrates himself.'

This letter makes a painful impression. Despite Po's protestations to the contrary it is difficult to believe that it was not written partly in order to obtain patronage. The tone of the letter, too, strikes us as unpleasantly fawning and servile. But we must make allowance, I think, for the conventions of the time. These were the terms in which a young and unknown man was expected to address an important personage and a letter less abject and less toadying would have been regarded as ill-mannered. What reply, if any, he received from the Supervising Censor we do not know, but it is unlikely that it was a very encouraging one, to judge by the last poem written before the examination began, presumably on Po's twenty-eighth birthday:

*The awninged coaches, the singing and the flutes fill the City with*
*their din;*
*One there is, in the midst of them all, who 'stands facing the corner'.*
*Sad at midnight when he draws the blind and moonbeams fill the room,*
*Weeping at dusk when the green hills make him think of home.*
*The spring wind blows the fields, new buds break;*
*The light yellow of the willow-branches is wet with a sprinkling of rain.*
*My youth is gone, I am almost thirty and know that I have missed*
*My last chance in this life to be young and happy in the spring.*

To 'stand facing the corner' means to be, as we should say, 'left out in the cold'. Under what circumstances Po was living at Ch'ang-an and where he had contrived to find a lodging we do not know.

Some weeks later he wrote an ode (*sung*) on the Chung-ho festival (the first day of the second month) which had been kept as a public holiday since 794, having been substituted for the holiday on the third

of the third month, which had the inconvenience of often coinciding with the Cold Eating day:

*Glorious our T'ang, majestic our Emperor,*
*Ninth in succession to illumine the world with his splendour—*

and many lines more of conventionally patriotic encomium.

Of the various examinations which existed in theory at that time two only were currently taken, the Classical (*ming-ching*) and the Literary (*chin-shih*). The former included tests in five Classics; the latter demanded knowledge of only one Classic, but included the composition of *fu* and ordinary poems. In both examinations essays were written on general moral principles and on current administrative problems. The number of candidates who went in for the Classical Examination was very small. Only the officially recognized interpretations of the Classics were accepted, so that this examination was largely a test of memory. The Literary Examination on the other hand was regarded as a test of talent and originality, and those who passed it successfully looked down upon Classics men as mere drudges. Both Po's father and his grandfather had taken the Classical Examination, but it opened up very limited prospects of advancement, and Po Chü-i himself naturally chose the Literary Examination, which gave scope to his talent for writing verse. The theme of his *fu* on this occasion was *Analects* XVII. 2: 'By nature near together; by practice, far apart.' The motto which gave the rhymes was of only six characters; but the rhyme-words had to be in the order in which they occurred in the motto; whereas at Hsüan-chou they could be in any order. The length was to be 350 words or more.

The theme for his poem consisted of five words, which translated literally mean 'Jade water record square flow'. It is the first line of a poem by Yen Yen-chih (A.D. 384–456) and means in its context 'Jade-bearing waters may be recognized by their rectilinear ripples'. There were, however, numerous ways in which candidates who did not know the poem from which this line came might easily have misunderstood the sentence. For example, Jade Water is the name of a river in Shantung; it might well have also been the *nom de plume* of someone who lived near this river. Again *fang*, 'square' also means 'local' and a perfectly possible translation of the line would be 'Mr. Jade-Water makes a record of local water-courses'. However, like the line given out at the provincial examinations, this too comes from a poem that is included in the *Wên Hsuan* anthology which Po no doubt knew practically by heart. His poem, in the main untranslatable, contains some pretty couplets, such as:

*The shallow pools seem as though stirred by a breeze;*
*A semblance of moonlight falls on the limpid stream.*

Five essays had to be written. The first four deal with questions of general principle. Although thorough knowledge of only one Classic was expected in this examination, the subjects for these four essays were given out in so allusive a way that no candidate without considerable knowledge of not only the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of History*, the Confucian *Analects* and so on, but also of the Taoist Classics, could even have known what to write about.

The questions are framed from the point of view of old-fashioned Han Confucianism (roughly first centuries B.C. and A.D.) which accepted Lao Tzu as the master of Confucius and attempted a synthesis between the metaphysical system of Lao Tzu and the ethical system of Confucius. Candidates were expected to know how to smooth out the contradictions between these two doctrines. Thus Po was asked how it was that Lao Tzu said, 'Get rid of learning and you will be happy', whereas Confucius said that 'without learning' one was bound to 'come to a fall'. His answer takes the expected line: Lao Tzu's words are intended as a warning to pedants; those of Confucius as a warning to those who 'ignored the teachings of the Sages'.

The Taoist view of Nature was a mechanistic one, especially as put forward by Wang Ch'ung (first century A.D.) in his encyclopaedic work, the *Lun Hêng*. 'Heaven and Earth', says the examiner, 'have their fixed way, the sun and moon have their fixed measure, water and fire, plants and trees have their fixed nature.' How comes it then that Tsou Yen (fourth century B.C.) made a cold valley warm by playing on his flute, that when the duke of Lu-yang waved his spear the evening sun turned back in its course, that the man in Chuang Tzu's story could tread the rapids of Lü-liang as though he were walking on dry land? Po in his answer, with all popular tradition on his side, entirely rejects the mechanistic view. Heaven and Earth, he says, have no 'fixed heart'; they too are subject to 'the heart of man', who is 'of all creatures most magical'.

Another question concerned the lines in the *Book of Songs* (No. 142):

*Very clear-sighted was he and wise;*
*He assured his own safety.*

How is this to be reconciled with the statement of *Analects* XV. 8 that one should not 'seek life at the expense of goodness'? Our answer would be that the two passages cannot be reconciled. Chung Shan Fu, the subject of the Song in question, in the ninth century B.C., was according to the standards of the time a good man because he made the proper sacrifices to his ancestors, who in their turn rewarded him by their protection. The conception of general principles for which one should be prepared to die was of much later date. Po's answer could not, of course, take this form. The line he takes is that Chung Shan Fu

lived under a virtuous ruler and had no need to die for his principles; moreover, in any case, to sacrifice one's principles in order to remain alive is, in effect, to be dead, and to die for one's principles is to gain imperishable glory and, in effect, to 'be alive', which seems to us a very unsatisfactory answer.

Another question (actually the first of the five) has a closer connection with concrete affairs. A passage in the *Chou Li* (Ritual of the Chou Dynasty)[1] seems to ignore the existence of trade and commerce, whereas the passage in *Analects* XX. 2 about 'letting the people take advantage of what is profitable' was interpreted as approving of commerce, and the *Book of Changes*[2] says that the culture-hero Shên-nung instituted daily markets for the exchange of products. The candidates were asked to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the *Chou Li* on the one hand and the *Changes* and *Analects* on the other. Po's answer is that stock-breeding, agriculture, the rearing of silkworms and the spinning of hemp are universal occupations; trade consists in exchanging products confined to one locality. That is why the *Chou Li* finds it sufficient, in a warning against idleness, to name merely the standard occupations. Po Chü-i might well have complained that the question was a rather senseless one. At the beginning of the *Chou Li* traders are duly enumerated as the sixth among the nine classes of society, and the *Analects* passage refers to 'profit' or 'advantage' in general, and not specifically to trade. There was therefore no clear-cut conflict of texts, nor was there any current controversy about the part that trade should play in national life; the governing classes, who used their position to secure various trade monopolies for themselves (for example, the sale of wine), were united in their hostility to the merchant class and in the view that unofficial trading ought to be discouraged and repressed.

The final question definitely concerned current affairs. In 736 a system called Harmonizing (or as we should say, 'stabilizing') Purchase was introduced. The Government bought grain at above the market rate in years of good harvest, when the peasants were suffering owing to the low price of grain, and sold it below the market rate in bad years. The examiner asked whether the candidates would be in favour of reviving this practice. Po, who at that time had no administrative experience, shows himself thoroughly in favour of such a measure. Years afterwards he realized, as we shall see, that if sale to the Government was obligatory and if the Government paid in media of ambiguous value (such as rolls of stuff which, although of the specified length, might be in such bad condition as to be worthless) Harmonizing Purchase easily degenerated into being a camouflaged form of unauthorized taxation.

[1] Ch XXV

[2] *Hsi Tz'u* B

The first four questions throw an interesting light on the intellectual life of the period. A number of books, ranging in date over a whole millennium and reflecting many different stages of social development, were accepted on the same footing as repositories of complete wisdom. These texts, when confronted, naturally showed embarrassing contradictions. More and more the need was felt for a unified system of thought. One solution was to find within Confucianism itself, long obscured and overlaid by compromises and heresies, an underlying 'orthodox tradition'. But the case was rendered more complicated by the fact that Buddhism had now so strong a hold over all classes of society that any system of belief that did not incorporate the fundamental ideas of Buddhist metaphysics had no chance of general acceptance in China, and one party of reformers was already attempting to make the synthesis between Confucianism and Buddhist philosophy which culminated later in what we know as Neo-Confucianism. Po Chü-i, as we shall see, had some contact with these movements; but he remained always on their fringe, and tended more and more towards a complete acceptance of Buddhism.

Owing to his father's death and the difficult circumstances in which the family was left, Po went in for his examination some eight years later than was usual. In this he was lucky, for hitherto the results had for many years past been determined largely by favouritism and lobbying. But in 800 the chief examiner, as we have seen, was Kao Ying (A.D. 740–811), a man of high courage and scrupulous honesty, who was determined to put a stop to the 'visits to high places' and the various forms of self-advertisement practised by the candidates, including the circulation of literary composition beforehand (in which respect Po had himself not been quite innocent). In 800 for the first time for many years a poor and friendless candidate had a reasonable chance of success.

The diffidence and depression in which he had lived for so long were not readily shaken off. For some days after his name appeared on the list of successful candidates, Po was 'obsessed by the thought' that his own 'mean and humble origin' would make it impossible for him to 'confirm the wisdom of my lord Kao's choice'. On the tenth day after the results came out he wrote a 'self-admonition', in which he says: 'I swear that till my dying day I will continue to repay what my lord has done for me, and repay him in this sense: that I will strive to do only what he would wish, that I will further his plans. . . . I must make all my actions conform to a strict standard and all my writings must inculcate the highest principles. I must make a practice of studying at set times and never be idle or put study aside. As to advancement in the world, I must let it come at its own pace and not go out of my way to force myself on. . . . I have obtained a First Class in the examination

and have in so doing made a name for myself; but that is no reason to be puffed up or self-satisfied.'

There was at this period a strong bond between successful candidates and their examiner. They became, so to speak, his political retainers and were expected to put at his service any public influence that they obtained in later life. They constituted in fact a political investment. There is a story that when Po's friend Ts'ui Ch'ün (772–832) was asked by his wife why he did not, like other successful people, invest in a landed property, he replied, 'I have just made a far better investment', alluding to the batch of young men he had recently passed in the Literary Examinations. Needless to say, the bond that held together the examination-mates themselves was equally strong, and tended to form the basis of political factions and intrigues.

A few weeks later Po Chü-i set out for Lo-yang. The poem 'Parting from my fellow-candidates . . .' closes with a sudden flash of exultation the unbroken gloom of his early career. We must, of course, take the word 'parents' in a wide sense; for his father, as you will remember, had died in 794:

*For ten years I never left my books;*
*I went up . . . and won unmerited praise.*
*My high place I do not much prize;*
*The joy of my parents will first make me proud.*
*Fellow students, six or seven men,*
*See me off as I leave the City gate.*
*My covered coach is ready to drive away;*
*Flutes and strings blend their parting tune.*
*Hopes achieved dull the pains of parting,*
*Fumes of wine shorten the long road . . .*
*Shod with wings is the horse of him who rides*
*On a Spring day the road that leads to home.*

# CHAPTER II

SOON after Po started for home his grandmother (his mother's mother) died at Ku-fêng, near Hsü-chou. In the inscription which he wrote in later years for her tomb he speaks of her as having 'brought up' himself and his younger brother Po Hsing-chien. His other grandmother, it will be remembered, died in 777 and his mother (at any rate from 780 onwards) was with his father in Kiangsu. Shortly after the grandmother's death troubles of a kind very common in China at this time broke out in Hsü-chou. In the summer (800) Chang Chien-fêng, who had commanded the local garrison for twelve years, died and a temporary commander was sent to take charge till a definite successor could be appointed. The temporary commander, fearing trouble with the troops, tried to strengthen his position by adding to the garrison some other troops who were passing through on their way from the east. The original garrison mutinied, killed the temporary commander and set up a commander of their own[1] whom the Government was ultimately forced to accept as Governor of Hsü-chou. It was just after these events that Po wrote a poem on 'Passing the Liu-kou Monastery after the Mutiny':

*In the ninth month at Hsü-chou the fighting has just stopped;*
*But the winds of anguish and the spirit of slaughter fill the river*
*and the hills.*
*Only at the temple of Liu-kou where it stands at the mountain foot*
*Around the gates the white clouds gather as they gathered of old.*

It was a common thing for young men who had passed their Metropolitan Examinations to be asked for as assistants by provincial commanders or by high civil officials who were in general charge of large districts. It was certainly in the hope of obtaining such a post that at about this time Po addressed a long poem to Ts'ui Yen (*c.* 730–805), who was Inspector-General of a large area which included Hsüan-chou. After praising Ts'ui Yen's administration under which:

*Your tranquillizing rule has abolished all law-suits;*
*Your staff has been disciplined into scrupulous honesty,*

Po calls attention to the fact that though he has just passed the Provincial and Metropolitan Examinations with high credit, he is still without a job, and is unable either to provide properly for his mother or set up a home for himself. Nothing seems to have come of this appeal.

Early next year, on his twenty-ninth birthday, when according to

[1] Chang Yin, the son of Chang Chien-fêng.

Chinese reckoning he became thirty, he wrote a poem called 'Under the flowering trees, urging myself to drink wine':

*Wine is here; when you fill your cup be sure to fill it to the brim!*
*There is blossom on the tree; look quickly! It will soon be lying on the grass.*
*Do not pretend that a man of thirty still counts as young,*
*Of three parts that make a hundred one is almost gone.*

In the spring of 801 an older second-cousin ('brother' in Chinese parlance) to whom Po was deeply attached died while on a journey, in a remote place where 'neither herbs nor the stone (for acupuncture)' could be procured. He had begun and ended his career in a small post at Fu-li. He was buried 'amid the spring grass, on the southern bank of the Sui River' near Fu-li. His house was so small and his means so limited that no proper funeral reception could be held. Probably this cousin was a son of Po Chi-k'ang mentioned above and a half-brother of Po Min-chung, who was to become Po Chü-i's great pride in later life. At about this time he got to know a monk called Ming-chun and while upon a journey sent him the following poem:

*The sun is down, sky and earth are dank;*
*The rain has cleared, river and hill are cold.*
*A settled wind comes blowing out of the west;*
*Its long note wails through plant and tree.*
*Seeing a year move so swiftly to its close*
*And the things of summer woefully stricken to their doom*
*Who is there who would not feel oppressed?*

Po goes on to ask for some method, 'easy to practise', that will enable him to escape from the agitations of his own mind and prevent fresh *kleśa* (suffering) from arising.

Gurus do not much like being asked by would-be disciples for a method 'easy to practise', and it is not likely that Po received an encouraging reply. Ming-chun (who was later associated in good works with the same Ts'ui Yen to whom Po had applied in vain for a post) was known chiefly as an authority on the right kind of stone to use for the engraving of Buddhist inscriptions, so that they might last unimpaired 'till the coming of Maitreya', the Future Buddha. Upon this subject he received supernatural guidance from the Quarry Spirits, who visited him when he was in Meditation. It was not, however, this inspired technician, but a monk called Chih-ning at Lo-yang who became Po's first instructor in Buddhism. Writing early in 804 he says that 'three or four years ago' he studied with Chih-ning and asked him for a *hsin-yao* or summary of mental discipline, and was 'given eight words': Vision, Perception, Concentration, Wisdom, Perspicacity, Penetration, Salvation, Rejection. Vision, according to Po's own definition, means

looking at the outside world with the Inward Eye. Hence arise perception of the difference between the inner and the outer worlds and the conviction that the inner world alone is real. This realization leads to 'fixity of meditation', and fixity in turn leads to supra-normal intelligence, just as a jewel shines more brightly (or so Po says) in a bowl that is held quite still. Perspicacity is the state in which the mind 'reflects' the things of the outside world, but without response to them, just as a mirror is unaffected by the successive images which it shows. This 'perspicacity' intensifies till it becomes Penetration, a state of unimpeded mental freedom or emancipation. In this state the mind develops great compassion and it, the One, compasses the rescue of the Many from their misery. Last comes Rejection, which means the casting aside of compassion, in the ultimate realization of the fact that 'suffering too is only an illusion and that consequently among all things that have life there are none who need to be rescued'.

This book is not a treatise on Buddhism and I cannot here enter into all the implications of this spiritual ascent and of the order in which its stages are reached. Humanity is still divided into those who think that the miseries of the world can be remedied by sensible economic arrangements and those who believe that no real progress can take place except upon the spiritual plane. Whatever the merits of these two doctrines, it is not surprising that someone living on the alms of the public and lodged in a pleasant monastic retreat should easily, perhaps too easily, accept the latter view. Po Chü-i for his part never succeeded in attaining to Stage Eight. In no Chinese poet's works does compassion for human suffering play so large a part. The works of his maturity—the ballads, satires and petitions—are largely grounded on pity, and even at the close of his life, when indifference is apt to set in, we find him in the hard winter of 838 ashamed of the comfort of his stove-side when he remembers that at that very moment 'somewhere soldiers are marching to mount guard, travellers are trudging through the snow, strangers are stranded far from home, without food, without hope; prisoners are shivering in unlit cells'. In the autumn of 801 Po set out once more for Ch'ang-an, writing on the way there a number of travel poems very similar to those of the early group.

If successful candidates at the Literary Examinations merely let events take their course years often elapsed before they received an official appointment. Those who were not content to wait could go in for what I shall call the Placing Examination, which was held by the Board of Civil Office. The candidate was obliged first to satisfy the authorities that his father was not a merchant, artisan or convicted criminal. Five[1] metropolitan officials must vouch for him, of whom one must know

[1] See Additional Note, p 221

him personally, and he must submit to being enrolled with four other candidates in a band of five, all mutually responsible for each other's good conduct. Those who passed were immediately given official posts. There were various forms of test from which the candidates could choose. Po chose to be tested in the composition of 'judgments' (*p'an*). The candidate was asked to decide on three issues which might be legal, moral or ritual, or might again be merely matters of minor social etiquette. The answer had to be couched in a special style called *p'an-t'i* ('judgment form'). Highly antithetical, stilted clauses, archaic vocabulary and various other obligatory mannerisms combined to make the 'judgment' the most pedantic and artificial of all Chinese literary forms. It is not surprising that Liu Nai (*c.* 725–784) in calling for the abolition of this type of test, ventured to ask what sort of figure Confucius would have cut if he had been made to go in for an examination of this kind and torture his precepts into the grotesque conventions of the 'judgment style'.

It would be quite impossible to give in translation any idea of what this style is like. Our own legal jargon bears no relation to it, for the diction is of a literary, quasi-poetical rather than of a technical kind. China had of course a technical, legal vocabulary; but it is not used in the *p'an*. Nor can our Norman French technicalities (the inheritance of a foreign legal vocabulary) compare in any way with the archaisms of the *p'an*, which are derived from the whole body of archaic Chinese literature. The best I can do is to devise a rough English parallel. Some illustrated periodical used to run a series of 'Social Dilemmas' which (barring the archaism) a little remind me of the *p'an*. The problems were somewhat of this kind: A, when staying with B, misses her ring. That night at dinner she sees it on B's finger. She thinks of sending for the police; but Miss C dissuades her. The answer, in *p'an* form, duly archaized and rhythmized, might be something like this: 'Never synne sarer than reving of high prys, ne thraldom near than bindeth heath to hearth. What will my shiner on thine hand's extremitie? Shall town-watches then be cald? Nay, in sooth, *Rites* helpen B, but *Code* wardeth A. So straitly stood, liefer me were to bide by C her consaile. Thus is my point published.' Only of course there would be ten times more of it.

One of the three 'judgments' he wrote at this examination has been preserved. The problem is as follows: 'A professor at the university for the sons of grandees teaches the young men to adapt themselves to mixed society. The Director of Studies contends that this is contrary to the principles of education and disapproves. What do you think?' Po, in a rigmarole of archaisms and allusions which utterly defies translation, came down heavily on the side of the professor.

Eight candidates passed. One of them was a young man called Yüan

Chên (779–831). He was a descendant of the Wei Tartar Imperial family who reigned over Northern China in the fifth and sixth centuries. This connection with a deposed foreign dynasty did not enhance his social standing, nor on the other hand did it mean that he was regarded as an outsider. The Wei Tartar families who remained at Lo-yang when the dynasty fell in 549 became completely Chinese and were regarded simply as 'men of Lo-yang'. Yüan Chên's circumstances were much the same as those of Po. His father rose to somewhat higher rank than the father of Po Chü-i, but died when Yüan Chên was only seven years old, leaving his widow in difficult circumstances. Yüan was a precocious child and passed his Metropolitan Examinations at the age of 14, the earliest at which candidates were accepted. Unlike Po he went in for the Classical, not the Literary Examination. He began to write poetry when very young, taking daily lessons from the famous poet Yang Chü-yüan (*c.* 760–832), and at the time when he met Po at the Placing Examination, at the age of 23, he had already written 'several hundred poems'. The friendship that sprang up between Po and Yüan is perhaps the most famous in Chinese history. They were both given the post of Collator of Texts in the Palace Library (*Pi-shu*). The salary was small—16,000 cash a month, which might represent something like £5. But there was also an allowance of grain, and attendance at the library was only expected twice a month. The collators, in fact, of whom there were ten or more, formed a 'pool' of gifted young men, retained for future use. It was probably about this time that he composed a collection of a hundred 'judgments', documents in the curious style described above. He may have written them partly as preparation for the Placing Examination. But we are told that they were 'on sale at the book-shops'. It is often said that in ancient China authors were not paid for their books. In a general way this is true. The rewards of authorship were usually indirect; literature was deeply reverenced and it was thought discreditable to the Government if an author of standing was not given suitable public employment. In this way authors rose through their books. But there were also cases in which they wrote in return for payment. For example, it was common for the family of someone who died to get his tomb-inscription composed by a well-known author. This practice is often mentioned; we are told that when a certain Li Su died in 812, his family sent money (*pi*) to Po Chü-i's famous contemporary Han Yü (768–824) asking him to write a tomb-inscription. Poems too were sold; for example, two writers of this period, Li Ho (791–817) and Li I (died *c.* 827) used regularly to sell their poems to the members of the Music Academy, who set them to music. It therefore does not seem unreasonable to suppose that Po sold his *Hundred Judgments* to a bookseller. We know that he set out for Ch'ang-an in

801 'without a penny in his pocket', and it may well have been partly as practice for the examination and partly to keep himself in the period before he began to receive an official salary that he wrote these *Judgments*. Not a single poem appears to belong to 802, and it seems possible that the laborious compilation known to-day as *Po Shih Liu T'ieh*, which means something like 'Mr. Po's Short Extracts', also belongs to this period. As he only worked at his office two days a month, he clearly had ample leisure for such a task. It is a literary encyclopaedia in thirty scrolls arranged, as is usual in such works, under a series of headings, beginning with 'Heaven' and ending with 'plants and trees'. Most of the passages come from the Classics; but many other works, some of them lost to-day, are also quoted. Po no doubt helped himself by the use of existing encyclopaedias and had very likely never seen many of the obscurer books that he quotes. It is intended as an aid to literary composition. For example, if you are writing a poem about the phoenix you will want to allude to famous passages in which the phoenix has been mentioned and may not be able to remember them all. But if you look up the section on birds in Po's encyclopaedia you will find the 'Oh phoenix, phoenix, how sadly you are fallen' of *Analects* XVIII. 5; 'The phoenix is in flight; clip, clip go its wings', from *The Book of Songs* (No. 252), with other classical references to this bird. You have now only to drag into your poem allusions to as many of these as possible, and you will pass for a man of learning and refinement, with the literature of the past at your finger-tips. It is not at all surprising to find Po devoting his energies to a mechanical task of this kind. Owing to the custom of cramming both poetry and prose with recondite allusions there was a great demand for such works. Po's friend Yüan Chên produced a formidable compilation, the *Yüan Shih Lei Chi* ('Mr. Yüan's Classified Collection') in no less than 300 scrolls! It does not seem to have been much in demand and did not survive into the next dynasty. Po's book was more fortunate. It continued to be a standard work of reference. A supplement to it was made by Shêng Chun about 860 and in the twelfth century K'ung Ch'uan, the forty-seventh descendant of Confucius, made another supplement, which included extracts from more recent literature. The original and K'ung's supplement are now usually printed so as to form one work. Since the eighteenth-century scholars editing old texts have found in the encyclopaedia a source of variant readings. The book was also immensely popular in medieval Japan and is often quoted in commentaries on such works as *The Tale of Genji*.

A book of this kind was sometimes 'presented' to the Emperor and, if it was approved of, the author was rewarded by official promotion. But the Emperor Tê Tsung was old and tired. His one desire at this

period was 'not to be bothered', and Po was probably wise in not 'presenting' his encyclopaedia. We are not specifically told that he gave it to the booksellers, but unless he did so it is difficult to see how it got circulated; for he could hardly have afforded at this time to pay scribes to copy it.

Up till now Po had lodged in the Hua-yang Kuan, a Taoist monastery founded in 777 in memory of Princess Hua-yang.[1] In the spring of 803 he hired a pavilion in the grounds of a house that had belonged to Kuan Po (719–797), a former Chief Minister. It lay in the eastern part of Ch'ang-an, to the east of the quarter known as the Eastern Market. In Po's time there was very little market left, business had shifted to the Western Market and the so-called Eastern Market had become almost wholly residential.

Ch'ang-an was a city of about a million inhabitants. It measured about three miles from north to south, and slightly more from east to west. The many gardens that we read of must therefore have been quite small; even so, such density of population would be hard to parallel in Europe. The city was divided into two halves by a broad boulevard. On each side of the boulevard were some fifty 'wards' (*fang*, or *li*), walled enclosures, the gates of which were closed at nightfall. Po's pavilion lay close to the eastern city wall, and directly to the north of the Serpentine (*Ch'u-chiang*), an ornamental lake that was the chief pleasure-resort of the Capital. In the Chao Ching-kung Monastery nearby was a famous wall-painting (a dragon) by Wu Tao-tzu (*c.* 700–760), the most famous of all Chinese painters. In the Ling-hua Monastery was an ancient brass image from Khotan. It was a quiet situation, rather far from the Government offices, which lay in the Palace precincts, to the north of the city, but conveniently near the Ch'un-ming and T'ung-hua Gates, through which the roads went that led to his ancestral home at Hsia-kuei. The day after he moved in he found at one corner of the pavilion the pitiful remnants of a bamboo grove. An old man who had been in Kuan Po's service told him that it had been planted by Kuan with his own hand. But when after Kuan's death the place was let to strangers, most of the bamboos were cut down to make into baskets, brooms and the like. Only a score or so of miserable stumps remained, so overgrown with weeds and choked by undergrowth that they were hardly recognizable as bamboos. Po set to work and soon 'when the sun came up they were yielding a cool shade; when the wind blew, a quiet tune, that sounded happy and trustful, as though they felt confident that at last a better fate had befallen them'.

Po too began to sound in his poems a happier note:

[1] The fifth of the Emperor Tai Tsung's eighteen daughters.

*In the Royal City, field of glory and gain,*
*At the first cock-crow men are up and abroad.*
*Only the slothful lingers still in his bed*
*Till the sun is high, with head not yet combed. . . .*
*But small talents are difficult to use*
*On great matters; the humble collator of texts*
*Goes to his office only twice a month*
*And has plenty of time to nurture his obdurate sloth.*
*A thatched room of four or five mats,*
*One horse and a pair of serving-men,*
*A salary of 16,000 cash*
*And monthly rice that is always more than enough,*
*An end to all concern about food and clothes*
*And very little in the way of business ties—*
*All this has at last made me young*
*And each new day is a day of happy ease. . . .*

This poem was addressed to Yüan Chên and several other friends, some of whom had sat with him in the recent examination. Two of them, Wang Ch'i (760–847) and Ts'ui Hsüan-liang (772–833) were to remain friends through life, and the latter will figure largely in my later chapters.

In the summer of 803 Po visited the studio of a painter called Chang Tun-chien and wrote a note about the pictures that Chang showed to him. In it he says, 'There were about a dozen rolls, and in them landscapes, pine-trees and rocks, clouds and rainbows, wild beasts and people from strange parts, horses and cattle, musicians, flowers, insects—whatever moves or grows, big things and little were all rendered with the utmost competence . . . to look at them closely was like looking at images reflected in a pool of water. . . . Concerning the perfection of his brush-work and the correctness of his style I ought not to speak, for I am no painter. But this much I can see for myself—the forms he shows are true and whole, the spirit that inspires them is harmonious and complete. So lively, so like are the things he portrays that they seemed to stand out in front of the picture. He is only about twenty and has not long perfected himself in his craft. I for my part do not doubt that he had "innate knowledge" of it and that when as the years go by his art grows to ripeness his pictures will be such masterpieces as occur but seldom in a generation, and will be taken as models in times to come.'

Po, as you will have noticed, speaks as though the sole aim of painting were (as we say in connection with portraits) to 'catch a likeness'. In doing so he is taking the view that was usual at his time. He does indeed say of Chang Tun-chien's work that such 'likeness' cannot be achieved merely by dexterity but demands also a 'technique of the

heart'. He does not, however, take the further step that was taken by writers on art a few centuries later: he does not say that the painter, in the course of imitating Nature, also expresses 'the motions of his own spirit'.

It is in any case clear from Po's *Works* that he was chiefly interested in paintings either as records—records above all of himself at different ages—or as objects of Buddhist devotion. To calligraphy, an art which figures so prominently in the works of many T'ang writers, he hardly refers at all.

It seems that in the autumn of 803 he went on leave. His uncle, Po Chi-chên, had recently been moved from his post at Hsü-chou and promoted to be Prefect of Hsü-ch'ang in Central Honan. The prefectural office had been burnt down in the civil wars at the end of the eighth century and the uncle had just rebuilt it. Upon this occasion (and presumably on the spot) Po wrote (803, tenth month) an account of the rebuilding, together with a eulogy of his uncle's administration. Early in 804 he was at Lo-yang, and at about this time he dined at Hsu-chou with the Governor of the district, Chang Yin.[1] 'His Excellency Chang had a favourite singing-girl called P'an-p'an, who had a good voice, danced well and was also unusually graceful and refined. At the time when I was a Collator and was travelling in the Ssu-chou[2] and Hsü-chou districts he gave a banquet for me and when we had all had a good deal to drink he sent for P'an-p'an to make us merry. And merry we certainly were. I gave her a poem in which I compared her lovely but helpless movements (for she had drunk heavily) to the swaying of a peony in the wind. . . .' Po goes on to say that years afterwards he heard of P'an-p'an again. 'When Chang died (in 806), it seems that P'an-p'an went to P'êng-ch'êng (near Hsü-chou) and lived in a house that once belonged to the Changs in a small tower called the Swallow Tower. She could not forget Chang's fondness for her and refused to marry. She has now been there for about ten years, living all alone and seeing nobody.'

In the last month of 803 Kao Ying, who had passed Po Chü-i in the Literary Examination, and Chêng Yü-ch'ing (748–820), who had been in charge of the Placing Examination, simultaneously became Chief Ministers. To congratulate them Po wrote a *fu* entitled 'Afloat on the Wei River'. In the preface to it he says that in the spring of 804 he went to live on the Wei River, meaning no doubt with his relations at Hsia-kuei. In the *fu* he again refers to the fact that he only has to report at his office twice a month. Under these circumstances it was clearly not necessary to go on renting his pavilion in the Ch'ang-lo Ward at Ch'ang-an. Hsia-kuei was only half a day's ride from the city

[1] See above, p 25

[2] In Northern Anhui.

and he could always, if belated, spend a night at the Hua-yang monastery.

The *fu* describes the idyllic existence that he leads, continually boating on the Wei, which is only one hundred steps from his door. He works in some flattery of the Emperor Tê Tsung, who has brought about 'perfect peace at home and abroad'. It is true that 804 was a remarkably quiet year. But things were not everywhere so idyllic as on the Wei River. Only a few months before, after a bad harvest in 803, the people had had to 'strip the tiles off their roofs' in order to be able to pay their taxes. An actor[1] called Ch'êng Fu-tuan, who had made a bitter allusion to this in one of his performances, was arrested and beaten to death. The famous writer Han Yü was banished to Yang-shan in Kwantung for suggesting that the winter taxation should be deferred.

In 804 Po's friend Yüan Chên was a good deal of the time away in Lo-yang. Hitherto he has simply figured as one among many acquaintances made at the Placing Examination and at the Palace Library. But by the spring of 804 he was beginning to occupy a special place in Po's affections. There is a poem of this period called 'By the Serpentine; thinking of Yüan Chên':

*Companionless since spring came I have taken few walks;*
*From every pleasure, without you, more than half is gone.*
*To-day, above all, in the Apricot Garden, I found it hard to bear;*
*Everyone in the world seemed out for a walk—everyone except you.*

There is another poem of 804 called 'Thinking of Yüan Chên when the peonies were in bloom at the Hsi-ming Monastery':

*Where a year ago we both wrote our names*
*To-day I come once more to look at the flowers.*
*Still at the same post in Honey-bush Hall*
*I have thrice seen the peony-flowers unfold.*
*It is not only the fate of the flowers that I mourn—*
*I on whom bodings of age and darkness fall.*
*And the more, since he with whom I sought the flowers*
*Went to the Eastern City and has not come back,*
*Little knowing that, for all the perfume and blaze*
*Of the closing spring, my thoughts are far away!*

'Honey-bush Hall' was a name for the Palace Library. 'Darkness' refers, I think, to trouble with his eyesight, of which we hear much a few years later. To the same series belongs the 'Poem for Yüan Chên' of 805:

*Since I left home to seek official state*
*Seven years I have lived in Ch'ang-an.*
*What have I gained? Only you, Yüan;*

[1] Or perhaps one should say 'variety-artist'. There were no regular dramas at this period.

*So hard it is to bind friendship fast. . . .*
*We did not go up together for Examination;*[1]
*We were not serving in the same Department of State.*
*The bond that joined us lay deeper than outward things;*
*The rivers of our souls spring from the same well!*

In the first month of 805 the Emperor Tê Tsung died at the age of 63. He had reigned for twenty-five years—a big slice in T'ang history—and Po can only dimly have remembered the time of his accession. His reign had seen on the one hand the abolition of miscellaneous *corvées* and the setting up of a general system of taxation, reckoned on a money-basis—the emergence in fact of China from fiscal medievalism; and on the other the vesting of the eunuchs with decisive military power and their consequent political domination. His reign was followed by so strange an interlude that its end marks a definite break in T'ang history and fittingly closes a chapter in Po Chü-i's life.

[1] He is speaking, of course, of the Literary Examinations. No particular bond united those who went in together for the Placing Examination.

# CHAPTER III

FOR some years before his accession the new Emperor, Shun Tsung, had fallen under the influence of two men who were not members of the governing class, but had come into prominence owing to their special talents. One was the calligrapher Wang Pi, who came from Hangchow and spoke with a strong local accent; the other was Wang Shu-wên, a champion *wei-ch'i*[1] player from Yüeh-chou. The latter used often to tell the Prince about the 'grievances and sufferings of the common people'. In the late autumn of 804 the Prince had a stroke; he permanently lost the power of speech and was 'unable to make decisions', which implies either that he was also unable to write or that his mind was affected. Consequently when he came to the throne early in 805 he could not deal with public business and all real power fell into the hands of the two Wangs. They were, however, wise enough not to invest themselves with high office, but instead to rule through a certain Wei Chih-i, a man of good family and reputation, with whom Wang Shu-wên had been on friendly terms for some time.

The governing classes, who had by now come to take the domination of the eunuchs[2] almost for granted, were outraged by the sudden rise to power of these two talented plebeians. Almost everything that we know about this reign is ultimately based on the official account of it written by Han Yü. This account is a piece of lively invective against the Wangs and all who sided with them and is intended as a warning against allowing 'small men' (as opposed to the hereditary official class) to have control of public affairs. But even in this and other hostile accounts there are certain indications that Wang Shu-wên at any rate, and perhaps his colleagues also, had a real desire to improve the lot of the class from which they themselves came. A member of the Imperial family called Li Shih, who was Mayor of Ch'ang-an, had become notorious for his cruelties and extortions. To the delight of the populace he was now dismissed. On his way to exile he had to be smuggled out of the city by devious routes in order to avoid being waylaid by angry crowds. Another scandal was that of the Imperial Falconers, who had been in the habit of going round extorting money from the people of Ch'ang-an by spreading bird-nets over the doors or wells, and refusing to let them be removed till paid to do so. They also

[1] A difficult and complicated form of draughts, played on a board with 361 'points'.

[2] See below, p. 56.

crowded into taverns, ate and drank heavily, and then went away without paying. This type of Palace racket was now suppressed. Wang Shu-wên, we are told, held that finance was the key to political power. He made Tu Yu (735–812), a veteran statesman who was generally trusted, Commissioner of Finance, reserving for himself the post of Assistant-Commissioner. He also succeeded in wresting the command of the Palace armies from the eunuchs and put them under Fan Hsi-ch'ao (born *c.* 740; died 814), a regular army officer with a long and distinguished record. He did this no doubt in order to secure his own position; but in the eighth month a combination of eunuchs and upper-class statesmen succeeded in procuring the abdication of the invalid Emperor. His eldest son, to be known as the Emperor Hsien Tsung, ascended the throne; Wang Pi and Wang Shu-wên were banished, as were also all their collaborators. There was one exception; the Chief Minister, Wei Chih-i, had it to his credit that he had recently been at loggerheads with Wang Shu-wên, and he was also the son-in-law of Tu Huang-ch'ang (738–808), who had prominently opposed the Wang regime. But Wei knew that he was only enjoying a short reprieve and 'every footfall that he heard filled him with trepidation'. He had always had a premonition that he would end his days in exile 'south of the Ranges', and there is a story that when he became Minister he found a map hanging prominently on his office wall. For some days he could not bring himself to look at it. When at last he did so he found that it was a map of Yai-chou, almost the most southerly point in the Chinese Empire.[1] This was sinister, for it was to Yai-chou that high political offenders were generally exiled. He survived the fall of the Wangs for three months, and was then duly banished to Yai-chou, where he died shortly afterwards.

Wei Chih-i became Chief Minister on the eleventh day of the second month of 805. On the nineteenth day Po wrote the 'Letter to a Chief Minister, composed on behalf of someone else'. The 'someone else' may of course be a fiction; the Chief Minister in question is clearly Wei Chih-i. The anonymous correspondent 'has been in Ch'ang-an barely ten years'. This was now Po's seventh year (counting from 799) and 'barely ten' often stands in Chinese usage for seven and upwards. The letter quotes the wording of Wei Chih-i's Decree of Appointment, in which the Emperor says, 'We would have you speak for us and look confidently to your good help', thus clearly referring to his own affliction. The new Minister is urged not to shut himself off from advice, but to 'use the ears, eyes, hearts and knowledge of all under Heaven'. 'Formerly Ministers made it their business to keep in contact with lower officers; nowadays they have contact only with their own

[1] In the island of Hainan, opposite the coast of Kwantung.

hangers-on and dependants. Formerly they valued the reputation of keeping open house; now they shut themselves in behind locked doors.' He will soon find out, if he takes the trouble to keep himself informed, that 'the number of soldiers is daily increasing, whereas the number of tax-payers is daily decreasing. The peasants drift from village to village or go into the towns, and show no sign of returning; they put themselves on to military registers or become monks, and there is no getting them back. . . . Fresh land is not put under cultivation, but the quantity of grain to be surrendered is daily increased. New mulberry-orchards and hemp-fields are not started; but the price of silk and hemp-cloth daily sinks. The Board of Civil Office accepts huge numbers of candidates, but has not enough posts for them, and this abuse continually grows. As for the Imperial Commissioners, what they hand over to the Exchequer is insignificant, but what they keep as "surplus" is immense, so that their extortions become every day more unendurable.' 'I do not know you by sight,' the letter ends, 'and you have probably never heard my name. You must therefore wonder why I should address you, and I imagine you will regard me as a very impertinent and interfering fellow. I am well aware that suddenly to inflict a long letter of this kind upon a person in authority is a rash undertaking. But if by my humble observations I can add one part in a thousand to your Excellency's stock of wisdom, or again can save the life of one out of ten thousand of those who are at present in mortal straits, I shall feel well content. But that is for you to decide.'

How Wei Chih-i reacted to this letter we do not know. There is one poem of Po Chü-i which, though it may have been written some years later, certainly refers to Wei's fall:

*I was going to the City to sell the herbs I had plucked;*
*On the way I rested by some trees at the Blue Gate.*
*Along the road there came a horseman riding,*
*Whose face was pale with a strange look of dread.*
*Friends and relations, waiting to say good-bye,*
*Pressed at his side, but he did not dare to pause.*
*I, in wonder, asked the people about me*
*Who he was and what had happened to him.*
*They told me this was a Privy Councillor*
*Whose grave duties were like the pivot of State.*
*His food allowance was ten thousand cash;*
*Three times a day the Emperor came to his house.*
*Yesterday his counsel was sought by the Throne;*
*To-day he is banished to the country of Yai-chou.*
*So always; the Counsellors of Kings;*
*Favour and ruin changed between dawn and dusk!*

*Green, green,—the grass of the Eastern Suburb;*
*And amid the grass, a road that leads to the hills.*
*Resting in peace among the white clouds,*
*Can the hermit doubt that he chose the better part?*

Apart from the poem to Yüan Chên, which I have already quoted, there are a few other short poems, some of which I have translated in *Chinese Poems* (p. 121), that belong to 805; but they do not supply us with biographical data. On the second day of the first month of 806 the new Emperor Hsien Tsung proclaimed an amnesty from the top of the Red Phoenix Gate, one of the southern gates of the Palace precincts. An Honours List was read out and grants of food and clothing were made to aged commoners. We do not know whether Po saw 'the thousand officials surrounding the Royal Tower'. Yüan Chên woke too late and went instead for a quiet walk beside the Serpentine with Li Chien and Yü Ching-hsiu, of whom we shall hear more later.

Both Po and Yüan Chên were about to go in for another examination, which was to take place in the fourth month. This was the Palace Examination, consisting chiefly in the writing of a long essay on current affairs, in response to a question (itself of considerable length) which was supposed to be framed by the Emperor in person.

'At the beginning of the period Yüan Ho (806)', writes Po, 'I ceased to be a Collator, and both Yüan Chên and I were preparing to go in for the Palace Examination. We lived together in retirement at the Hua-yang Taoist Monastery where we shut ourselves in for several months and studied the questions of the day. We embodied the results of our labours in seventy-five essays. When the time came, Yüan Chên's name was at the head of the list, with mine next to it. In our answers we did not use more than a small fraction of the material we had collected. But as we took so much trouble it seemed a pity simply to throw the rest away, so I have arranged all these essays, dividing them into four scrolls, with the title *Forest of Essays*.'

I shall refer later to the seventy-five essays, in considering Po's political career. Here I will only deal with the long essays (or 'plans') which Po and Yüan actually submitted at the Palace Examination. Of these examination essays Yüan Chên wrote somewhat cynically four or five years later: 'In discussing the Palace Examination it used always to be said that it was best to humour those in power by refraining from any sharp criticisms. If Lo-t'ien (Po Chü-i) and I, on the contrary, drew attention in our answers to current abuses and expressed dangerous opinions without regard for the ultimate consequences it was in the belief that this nowadays was really the way to get a high "class". Early in my career the present Chief Minister, P'ei Chi,[1] warned me

[1] See below, p. 64

to be very careful not to get into trouble through incautious examination-essays. I was grateful for his advice, but I thought his fears exaggerated, and intending to do the best for myself that I could, I made a great effort to get hold of some previous examination-answers and have a quiet look at them. For several months I had no success. On a former occasion[1] Mu Yüan and Lu Ching-liang had gone in for the Palace Examination and had both been ploughed for excessive frankness. I managed at last to get hold of their essays, copied them out with my own hand and put them in a box. Lo-t'ien, Sun-chih (Li Tsung-min)[2] and the rest used to curse me for keeping things of evil omen in my box, and at the same time laughed at my presumption in supposing that such methods as this would suffice to procure me a good degree.'

The gist of the question, given out in the Emperor's name, was this: 'Since the An Lu-shan revolution and its sequels (755–763) the condition of the country has gone from bad to worse. What can be done to restore the Empire to its former prosperity? What previous mistakes ought to be corrected, what future troubles ought We to be on Our guard against?' Po's answer is that 'the distress of the people is due to heavy taxation, heavy taxation is due to the increase in the armed forces, the increase in the armed forces is due to the number of rebellions and the rebellions are due to defects in government'. No defects of a concrete kind are, however, pointed out and Po proceeds to the usual generalities about the need for the Government to 'be firm' and 'show good faith'; then (familiar expression!) there will be 'a change of heart' and the 'bandits' (i.e. the separatist leaders) will automatically give up their 'violence and sedition'.

One wishes that he had made some attempt to analyse the causes of the numerous separatist movements which had sprung up since the middle of the seventh century and in particular of the permanent disaffection which existed in the north-east of China. It is, however, only possible to find out why people behave in a way that is harmful to us if we can bring ourselves for a moment to stop looking at their actions from an ethical point of view. Otherwise we are likely to attribute whatever they do merely to their wickedness, and our attention will be diverted from the more concrete causes of their behaviour. This, I think, is what has happened in Po's case, and it is for this reason that his argument, at what seems to us the critical point, breaks off into abstractions.

Yüan Chên's answer to the same question was much longer and was certainly more original. He attributes the decline of the dynasty chiefly to the unpractical methods of selecting official personnel, and advocates an entirely new system of examinations. The Board of Rites is to hold

[1] A.D. 785.

[2] See below, p. 134.

two alternative examinations. The first is to be in the ritual, constitution and laws of the T'ang dynasty, with a test in one Classic or in one of the dynastic histories. Those who only show a capacity to memorize are to be put in a low category. The other examination is for those who wish to be tested in literary accomplishments. They may write their *fu*, poems and 'judgments'; but if they pass, they will merely be called 'literary gentlemen' (*wên-shih*), in order that it may be quite clear that they have only proved their literary ability and are not necessarily qualified for handling practical affairs. To both these examinations any one, even 'the humblest dependants' may be admitted; it is not necessary that candidates should belong to the hereditary official class. The Board of Civil Office no longer holds a second examination of its own (the Placing Examination). It merely gives appointments in accordance with the results of the previous examination, and then promotes or demotes officials according to their actual records and achievements in the posts they are given.

It was a revolutionary proposal. It meant (had it been successful) that China would have been governed by men chiefly familiar with the institutions of their own time rather than with those of a semi-fabulous antiquity, and by able men of any rank in society, instead of by the members of a small hereditary caste. It meant that ability to use elaborate verse and prose forms would be regarded as a sign of literary and not necessarily of administrative ability. The history of China might in fact have been quite different if Yüan Chên's proposal had been accepted. And he regarded it as a practical proposal, not merely as an examination-essay. 'I respectfully suggest', he says, 'that this proposal should be submitted to those in office and that if they regard it as of importance, it should be put into actual practice, that the people of your Majesty's empire may say: "The Emperor Wên of the Han dynasty made scholars write essays on government as a means of selecting candidates for service; but until the time of our own enlightened Emperor no one has ever used what was proposed in such essays as a means of saving mankind!" '[1]

Po Chü-i as a result of the examination was appointed to a small post at Chou-chih, some fifty miles west of Ch'ang-an, and began work there in the autumn of 806. Yüan Chên did better; he became what I will call 'Omissioner' in the State Chancellery (*Mên-hsia*). The duties connected with this post were defined as being to 'send up criticisms' of policy. This could be interpreted merely as meaning that he was to be the channel through which such criticisms passed. The name of the

[1] Yuan, as we have seen, hoped that these drastic proposals would secure him a *succès de scandale* in the examination, but there is no reason to suppose that they were not put forward quite sincerely.

office means literally 'picker-up of things dropped', which suggests that the holder was originally intended to call attention to accidental omissions in the documents which passed through his hands. But Yüan Chên made it clear from the first that he regarded himself as entitled not only to criticize policy, but also to frame it. Shortly after his appointment he drew up a ten-point plan for rehabilitating the dynasty: (1) 'More care to be taken in the education of the prince who was to succeed to the Throne.' He points out elsewhere that for some time past the Crown Prince's tutors, advisers and staff had been chiefly aged generals, too deaf and generally decrepit for any other employment. (2) 'Administrative employment to be given to the Emperor's younger sons.' Owing to the disaffection of some of the princes (for example, Prince Lin of Yung) at the time of the An Lu-shan revolution (756), it had for some time past been the practice to keep the Emperor's sons shut up in the Palace. Previously they had often held high provincial posts and so kept the remoter parts of China in touch with the dynasty. (3) 'The Emperor's harem to be reduced; (4) Grants to be made to enable girls without dowries to get married.' (5) 'The Chief Ministers to have constant access to the Emperor'; (6) 'Other officials all to be given Audience in turn'; (7) 'The practice of allowing memorials to the Throne to be presented at Court levées should be revived.' (8) 'Investigations resulting from impeachments should be made public.' (9) 'Presents to the Emperor, except on prescribed occasions, should be forbidden.' Provincial Governors often sent to Court large sums extracted from the people of their province, in order to get promotion when they returned to the capital. (10) 'The Emperor not to go on so many hunting expeditions, in case he should meet with an accident.' Imperial hunts were on a vast scale; they involved heavy expenditure and the use of thousands of peasants as beaters. They also took up time which the Emperor should have been spending on public business. These no doubt were the real reasons for asking him to do less hunting, and Yüan Chên's solicitude about his safety is merely a polite formula. The reason he gives for reducing the harem (No. 3) is that the withdrawal of so much *yin* (female influence) from the country at large causes drought. It was, as we have seen (p. 21), an open question whether Heaven could be influenced by human precautions; but here again (as in No. 3) I think that Yüan Chên is merely trying to justify his proposal on grounds not personally offensive to the Emperor. With some of his other themes Po Chü-i was to deal later, when he occupied the same position that Yüan now held.

The proposals were supported by Pe'i Tu (765–839) and other prominent statesmen, but (according to Yüan) were misrepresented to the Emperor by the Chief Minister, Chêng Yü-ch'ing (748–820). Yüan

was summoned to an Audience and asked to give his own account of how the 'ten points' were to be understood. The Chief Minister was furious, and according to one passage in his *Works* Yüan Chên was arrested and imprisoned. Presumably P'ei Tu and his other supporters intervened, for on the tenth day of the ninth month, only a few weeks after his Audience, we find him at large again, though relegated to a small post at the Eastern Capital, Lo-yang. A few days after the appointment was made his mother died, the usual periods of mourning and seclusion followed, and Yüan Chên disappears from the political scene till the spring of 809.

Po's work at Chou-chih consisted theoretically in supervising the work of clerks and minor officials. But shortly after his arrival he had for a long time to deputize for an absent clerk at Chao-yang, about ten miles east of Ch'ang-an, as well as doing his own work at Chou-chih. In a poem sent to Yüan Chên and marked 'to be shown to Li, the Establishment Officer' he confesses that as regards the jobs he is now doing he is a 'lead knife' (that is to say, no good at all), and the sooner the authorities find someone to take his place, the better. Yüan Chên (who was still an Omissioner) tried to comfort Po by saying that it ought to have been the other way round. For him to be at the Palace while Po is working at a country town is like 'putting the crane at the bottom of the pool and the fish on top of the tree'. Po writes to another friend, at the end of the eighth month, that it has been raining unceasingly for three days; 'to live in a country town is always depressing, and much more so if it lies deep among the hills and woods'. It was apparently about this time that he fell ill and so obtained his first holiday:

*I begin to think that people in Government posts*
*Get no rest, except by falling ill!*

Some time during the autumn he was sent on business to Lo-k'ou, south-west of Chou-chih, on the road to Han-chung and Szechwan, and took the opportunity to make an excursion into the mountains:

*Half my zeal in attending to the King's Business*
*Was inspired to-day by the hope of getting into the hills.*

In this excursion he took with him a friend called Wang Shih-fu, who lived at Chou-chih. Wang came of the celebrated Shantung family, the 'Wangs of Lang-yeh', which had produced the great calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih (321–379) and a host of other famous scholars and artists. He carried down into the modern world the 'old style' (*ku fêng*) of taste and culture; the refinement of the 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove'. Wang Shih-fu was again his companion during a visit made that winter to the Hsien-yu Monastery in the Southern Hills. They had with them another young man who lived at Chou-chih—a certain

Ch'ên Hung, who afterwards became a well-known author. The three of them fell to talking about the last years of the Emperor Hsüan Tsung (died 762) and Wang Shih-fu suggested that Po should write a ballad on the subject. 'Lo-t'ien (Po Chü-i) accordingly made the "Song of the Everlasting Remorse" and when he had finished it, he asked me (Ch'ên Hung) to write a prose-account to go with it.'[1]

'The Everlasting Remorse' is a narrative poem of 120 lines in seven-syllable verse. It tells the story of the infatuation of the Emperor Hsüan Tsung (684–762) for Yang Kuei-fei (718–756). When the An Lu-shan revolution forced the Emperor to flee from Ch'ang-an the soldiers of the bodyguard refused to march unless Yang Kuei-fei was executed. The Emperor was obliged to consent; but during his exile in Szechwan and after his abdication and subsequent return to the capital he was haunted by her memory and fell under the influence of a Taoist magician who claimed that he could get into communication with the dead. The wizard ransacks the universe and in the end finds Yang Kuei-fei's soul in one of the Taoist Paradises. She gives him 'certain keepsakes, tokens of their deep love, a blue-enamelled box and a golden hairpin to take back with him into the world of men'.

It was a common thing for several poets to write rival poems on an agreed theme. Po's ballad and Ch'ên's story were written in the same kind of friendly rivalry, and Po put the story into his *Works*, alongside his own ballad, as a compliment to Ch'ên Hung. Translations of 'The Everlasting Remorse' are numerous. The latest of them, in Mr. Soame Jenyns's *Further T'ang Poems*, is easily accessible and there is another by Mr. Witter Bynner in R. C. Trevelyan's anthology *From the Chinese*.[2] The poem is often said to have been inspired by the popular ballads of the day. It is true that long narrative ballads did not belong to the tradition of upper-class literature and that when he wrote 'The Everlasting Remorse' Po probably had in mind ballads of the kind rediscovered in the cave-library of Tun-huang, such for example as 'The Tale of Chi Pu', extracts from which have been translated by Dr. Lionel Giles. But the difference between Po's poem and these works is immense. 'The Everlasting Remorse' is smooth, elegant and tender; the Tun-huang ballads are rugged, homely and robust. Its architecture is carefully balanced; the Tun-huang ballads (some are fragmentary; but 'Chi Pu' is practically complete) merely slog along till the story is finished. What Po lacks is the capacity to arouse interest in his principal figures. The Emperor, his mistress and the wizard never become real to us. The work is skilful and elegant in the extreme, but too completely artificial and 'exterior'

[1] There is a somewhat different version of Ch'ên Hung's story in *Wên Yuan Ying Hua* 794 For some notes by Ch'ên Yin-k'o on the *Everlasting R* , see *Tsing Hua Journal*, Vol. XIV, No 1, Oct. 1947

[2] Oxford, 1945

in its treatment to be deeply moving. It had, however, an immense success. Po tells us that when General Kao Hsia-yü (772–826; noted, incidentally, for his boastfulness, rudeness and vulgar language) wanted to hire a singing-girl, she said: 'You must not think I am just an ordinary girl. I can sing "The Everlasting Remorse"', and put up her price accordingly. The poem certainly came at the right moment. Enough time had elapsed both to allow the romantic legend of the Emperor Hsuan Tsung's last years to crystallize and to make it possible to use the theme without giving offence to the Imperial family; on the other hand it was less than fifty years since Hsüan Tsung died and the events of his reign had not passed into oblivion. To Po Chü-i's opinion of the poem I shall return later, when discussing his views about his own and other people's poetry.

In the spring of 807 we find him occupied with the garden of his small official residence at Chou-chih. He brings a rose-bush from the country and plants it in his courtyard:

*If I shift your roots to a new place, do not wilt away!*
*Out in the country and here in the courtyard spring is still the same.*
*In my little house I have no wife and am lonely in the spring;*
*Rose-bush, when your flowers open, I will take you to be my bride!*

For company and distraction he rode occasionally to Ch'ang-an. We find him visiting and being visited by the brothers Yang Yü-ch'ing and Yang Ju-shih,[1] who lived in the Ching-kung Ward, just south of where Po had previously lodged. He describes how he rode back from Ch'ang-an to Chou-chih one spring day, after several days' holiday, having been copiously plied with drink by his friends in the city:

*Through the Gate of Golden Light*[2] *and past the K'un-ming Lake*
*Fuddled with drink I let my horse carry me home as it pleased.*
*For several days I have not been tied by the fetters of the King's Business,*
*Only when the peony flowers were over did I set out for home.*

In the summer business again brought him to Lo-k'ou, and he wrote:

*This year when I come the summer clouds are white;*
*Last year when I was here the autumn trees were red.*
*Only twice have I come to the hills and each time, to my shame,*
*Had it not been for the King's Business, I should not have seen the hills!*

[1] Their exact dates are unknown, but they were at this time both quite young men who had not been in for their examinations. Po married their cousin, Miss Yang, a year later.

[2] One of the north-west gates of Ch'ang-an.

To the same summer belongs the poem called *Watching the Reapers*:[1]

*The strong reapers toiling on the southern hill,*
*Whose feet are burned by the hot earth they tread,*
*Whose backs are scorched by the flames of the shining sky. . . .*
*A poor woman with a young child at her side*
*Follows behind, to glean the unwanted grain.*

Po asks himself (as he asks himself in many other poems) 'in virtue of what right' he has escaped the toil of 'tending field and tree'. His work at Chou-chih brought him into close touch with the hard-driven and over-taxed peasants. Elsewhere he describes his horror at seeing his own underlings beating up the peasants in order to wring out of them the last handful of requisitioned grain. Later on, when he was in a position to influence Government policy, he did not (as we shall see) forget the common people of Chou-chih.

The local authorities at Chou-chih took their orders from the Municipal Headquarters at Ch'ang-an, and one day when he had been on business there Po wrote another flower-poem, called 'On the lotuses newly planted at the Municipal Headquarters':

*A muddy ditch filled with dirty water,*
*And on the water leaves, disc on disc.*
*The moment I saw them I heaved a long sigh,*
*For I knew they were lotus brought from the Eastern Brook.*
*Up from below comes green slime to foul them;*
*Never again will they smell fresh and sweet.*
*Down from above drops red dust to soil them;*
*Never again will their colour be clear and bright.*
*It is not only things whose nature is thus;*
*In human matters it also must be so.*
*It is better for a man to be utterly cast away*
*Than torn from his roots and put where he is not in place.*
*You in the days when you grew in the Eastern Brook—*
*Your flowers and leaves bewitched the blue stream.*
*Now, wrested from the scene to which you belong,*
*In front of a Government building you wilt and pine.*

In the month of 807 Ch'ên Ching, to whom in 800 Po wrote the letter quoted above (p. 18), made a proposal for the reorganization of the Chi-hsien Tien ('Hall of Assembled Worthies'), a reference department which possessed a large library. His proposal included the restoration to the department of a class of official called 'Collator and Arranger' (*chiao-li*). His suggestions were accepted, and some time later that autumn Po was summoned to the department as a Collator and Arranger, though he continued nominally to hold his post at Chou-chih. One can

[1] See *Chinese Poems*, p 122.

see the sort of work he had to do better by taking a concrete example than by studying theoretical accounts, given in books on the T'ang constitution, of what this department's functions were. In 802 the Emperor asked a question about the origin of the Palace Armies (*Shên-ts'ê Chün*) upon which, for some time past, the power of the eunuchs had rested. No one at the Chief Ministers' office could tell him what he wanted to know. The question was referred to the Hall of the Assembled Worthies and answered in the fullest detail by Chang I (747–821), a member of that department. The Chief Minister Kao Ying (who had presided over the Literary Examinations when Po passed in 800) was much impressed and is reported to have said 'they've certainly got some good men in the Hall of Assembled Worthies'. A few months later—on the fourth day of the eleventh month—Po was summoned to the Silver Terrace Gate, just south of the Han-lin Academy, and told to await further orders. Next day he was told to report at the Academy and made to write five test compositions.

His success was announced (as was usual in such cases) by a eunuch envoy who came to his lodging and told him that he had become a Doctor of the Han-lin Academy.

The chief function of the Academy was to compose documents, such as letters of appointment, letters to foreign potentates, addresses to the souls of the dead, and the like, which were put out in the Emperor's name. The five test compositions by which Po had secured his post were: (1) decree conferring fresh rank on a frontier commander; (2) letter to officers and troops victorious in the recent campaigns in eastern China; (3) letter to Kao Ch'ung-wên, hero of the Szechwan campaign the year before; (4) short memorial to accompany a picture of a peculiarly shaped ear of grain, supposed to be a good omen; (5) Hymn of victory over rebels, to be chanted at the Great Shrine. The first three are all in the high-flown, archaic language in which Emperors were expected to express themselves. Between 808 and 810 Po composed hundreds of similar documents, and they are still preserved in his *Collected Works*. They occasionally throw light on the history of the times; but they do not of course tell us anything about Po Chü-i's own feelings or experiences.

In the spring of 808 he set the subjects for five essays in the Literary Examinations. In the first question he calls attention, as was usually done, to apparent contradictions in the Classics, and asks whether the candidate thinks it is a case of 'secret meanings which have not been properly understood'. In the second question he quotes a series of Taoist paradoxes (on the lines of *Tao Tê Ching*, XLI), such as 'the highest faith ignores promises', and asks 'all you gentlemen' to explain what they mean. The third question deals with a theme which interested Po

very much and to which he constantly returns. He believed (as was generally believed in his time) that in old days there had been officials who went round collecting folk-songs, which they then showed to the Emperor in order that he might know what was going on in people's minds. Po tells the candidates that 'those in authority' were anxious to revive this institution, and asks them to say whether they would be in favour of doing so. His own political songs—the fifty *yo-fu* and the ten *Songs of Ch'in*—with which I shall deal in the next chapter, were certainly intended as examples of the way in which popular ballads might usefully call attention to current abuses. The last question dealt, as usual, with an economic theme. He calls attention to the constant fall in the price of grain and silk and the straits to which the peasants were consequently being reduced, and asks whether this is due to a wrong method of collecting and distributing commodities or to a failure to keep a proper balance between currency and goods. Unfortunately the answers to these questions have not been preserved.

At the end of the fourth month (808) he was made an Omissioner—the same post that Yüan Chên had held—and he makes it clear in his letter of thanks for the appointment that he too claims the right to criticize the policy of the documents that pass through his hands. In a poem of about this period we find that he now has a house of his own in the Hsin-ch'ang Ward, a little to the south of his previous lodging in the Ch'ang-lo ward. He was now well launched on his official career. Two of the poets whom he most admired, Ch'ên Tzu-ang (656–698) and Tu Fu (713–770), had, as he reminds himself in a poem written a few weeks after his appointment, never risen above the rank of Omissioner, and Po still had most of his career before him. Writing on the nineteenth day of the eighth month he speaks of himself as having recently married. As I have already mentioned, his wife was a Miss Yang. She was a 'Yang of Hung-nung', and thus came of the same family as the wife of the poet Tu Fu and also as Yang Kuei-fei, the heroine of 'The Everlasting Remorse'. Despite the fact that Po and she were together for thirty-eight years we know extremely little about Mrs. Po Chü-i. There are at least seven poems addressed to his wife (in 809, 811, *c.* 814, 815, 817, 821 and 842), but they are all couched in conventional language and we learn from them hardly anything about Mrs. Po or their feelings towards each other. In the first poem he asks her not to grumble at the fact that he is not rich, and reels off the names of a series of famous ladies who accepted their husbands' poverty with good grace. He adds that though she 'does not read books' she has certainly heard people tell the stories of these model wives. In the second poem he reproaches her with not being at hand to 'beat his autumn clothes'. (She was probably away on a visit to her parents.)

In the third poem he asks her not to spoil her good looks by 'sitting in the moonlight and repining about the past'. She is at any rate 'better off than the wife of Ch'ien Lou', whose poverty was proverbial. ('One does not borrow rice from the barbarian parts of the land of Ch'i nor talk about one's poverty in the house of Ch'ien Lou.')[1] In 821, when she was ennobled as 'the Lady of Hung-nung', he reminds her that she has done nothing herself to deserve this distinction and owes it entirely to him. Then, after an interval of twenty-one years, when he was 70 and she about 52, he addresses to her the only poem that sounds a note of appreciation:

*A companion till old age is hard to get;*
*But to one who has her, what do white hairs matter?*

However, he ends the poem by comparing himself to Liang Hung (famous recluse of the first century A.D.) and Mrs. Po to Mêng Kuang, Liang's wife. This was not very obliging, as Mêng Kuang is described as having been 'fat, ugly and sallow'. One has indeed the impression that the Lady of Hung-nung was a simple, perhaps rather commonplace creature, devoted to Po, but never a sharer in his inmost thoughts and feelings.

About this time he was ordered to sit for his portrait, which was to figure in the Hall of Assembled Worthies. The painter was the well-known portraitist Li Fang. It was presumably a replica of this painting that he carried about with him in later years. In 817 he notes ruefully how little he now resembles this early portrait, and has a fresh one made. But this second portrait is never referred to again, and in 842, when he was painted for a third time, his mind harks back to Li Fang's portrayal of the 'young academician with a glow in his cheeks'.

[1] Quoted in *Pao P'u Tzu*, XX.

# CHAPTER IV

## SEPARATISM

FROM 808 to 810 Po Chü-i was immersed in public affairs and his writings, both in prose and verse, are to a large extent concerned with the social and political questions of the day. It will therefore be convenient at this point to devote a chapter to the public issues with which he now found himself confronted. My main source, apart from the general histories of the period, will be his memorials to the Throne, written in his capacity as Omissioner, the fifty political ballads, and the ten *Songs of Ch'in*, all of which belong to this period. But I shall also make incidental use of the hundred 'Judgments'[1] (802) and the seventy-five model examination essays[2] (806). To give a complete account of this vast material, amounting as it does to well over two hundred items, would clearly be impossible, and I shall only deal with some of the more crucial questions with which Po was concerned.

I have already referred once or twice[3] to the An Lu-shan revolution, and though it occurred in 755, nearly twenty years before Po was born, it formed so important a landmark in the history of China and was still so constantly in the minds of Po and his contemporaries that it is necessary to give some account of it; moreover, the disturbances of Po's own day were to some extent merely a continuation of the earlier upheaval.

In the view of Chinese historians An Lu-shan was a 'bandit', a 'traitor', a 'criminal', who stirred up the people of China against their legitimate ruler. We have in our own day often seen terms of this kind applied to leaders who viewed from a more sympathetic angle appear as patriots, liberators, reformers and in general as champions of the oppressed. It is certain that it was in this latter guise that An Lu-shan appeared to his own supporters, both at the time and long after his death. But the history of the T'ang dynasty, though formally compiled after its fall, consists largely of documents composed while it was still in power. There is no reason for us (as European historians have consistently done) to take sides against An Lu-shan, and to rehash all the Palace tittle-tattle about his cowardice, cunning and obesity; nor need we (like his followers) accept him as a *shêng* (a holy man). We cannot indeed at this distance of time construct any theory about his personal qualities or

[1] See above, p. 29. [2] See above, p. 39. [3] Pages 11, 44.

behaviour. But I think it is possible at any rate to point to some of the more general social and political causes that facilitated the Separatist movement in the north-east.

An Lu-shan's base of operations when the revolt started was at Fan-yang, near the modern Peking, and his sphere of influence extended through Central Hopei to the shores of the Gulf of Chihli. There had been discontent in this part of China since the seventh century, both among the upper classes and the peasants. In order to understand the discontent of the nobles it is necessary to know who constituted the traditional, socially accepted—as contrasted with legally imposed—aristocracy of China at this period. From the beginning of the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618) there had been a cleavage between the families that had risen to prominence because of their services to the reigning dynasty and those that had become important in Northern China when it was under the rule of the Wei Tartars in the sixth century. The latter had been 'collaborators', but of a rather special kind. The Wei Tartars wished to be regarded not as barbaric conquerors but as rightful inheritors of China, and for this purpose it was necessary for them to pick up Chinese culture as rapidly as possible. Their tutors were the 'five top families' (Ts'ui, Li, Chêng, Lu and Wang) who in return for coaching the Tartars in the elements of Chinese civilization were given high official rank. In particular, they taught to their non-agricultural conquerors the rites of clan-ceremonial and ancestor-worship, upon the proper performance of which good harvests were supposed to depend. Even in the ninth century we find originally non-Chinese families looking for guidance upon ritual points to members of these 'top five'. These families and their various branches came chiefly from North-East China, and it was here that opposition to the T'ang dynasty continued almost throughout that dynasty's existence. In order to break up their cohesion they were forbidden to intermarry; one has, however, only to look at the names of the mothers and wives of Po Chü-i's aristocratic friends to see that in the ninth century the 'top five' were still doing a lot of intermarrying. But they were very proud, and their pride (like that of English aristocrats in Edwardian days) took the form of marrying outside the charmed circle only when heavily bribed to do so. The Lus, Ts'uis and Wangs of whom we read in history seem usually to have lived at Ch'ang-an or Lo-yang. But they were of course the successful members of those families. The rest presumably stayed in Hopei and Shansi, and it is reasonable to suppose that they found a considerable element in the upper-class disaffection of the north-east. At the end of the seventh century, when the Kitan[1] chieftain Sun Wan-jung con-

[1] The Kitan (or Kitai) founded a dynasty in North China in the 10th century, and it is from their name that 'Cathay' is derived.

quered part of Hopei and proclaimed himself Khan, not only the peasants but also many members of the official class sided with him. After the suppression of Sun Wan-jung violent retaliatory measures were taken against both the Chinese and the natives who had supported him. 'All the people of Hopei who gave themselves up after having sided with the rebels were put to death; but first their livers were gouged out.' Many others fled to the 'hills and swamps'. This was in 697 and 698. Though the Kitan remained in possession of the northernmost parts of Hopei till well into the eighth century and made constant raids further south, the Central Government seems to have had no more trouble with the local Chinese inhabitants till 755. But events such as those that followed the suppression of the Sun Wan-jung rising are remembered for many generations.

Over a wide area on the north-east frontier the Chinese and the Tartar populations overlapped. The Chinese tended to give up agriculture and take to horse-breeding and hunting; the Tartars took to Chinese diet without at the same time adopting Chinese methods of food-production. That the area was not self-supporting as regards food is shown by some lines in a poem by Tu Fu, written about 755–756. He says that An Lu-shan kept a fleet of sailing-ships plying between the Yangtze delta and the Gulf of Liaotung, laden with high quality rice. He must thus have come into direct competition with the Capital, which drew its grain supplies, by inland waterways, from the same region. Competition for rice supplies may indeed have been one of the underlying reasons for the breach between An Lu-shan and the T'ang Government.

As we shall see later, the Wu Yüan-chi rebellion of 815–817 was an open and avowed struggle for command of the waterways linking the Yangtze with the Yellow River—the route by which grain was transported to the Capital.

After the An Lu-shan revolution and its various sequels, the north-east remained practically independent. The mixed Chinese-Tartar population thought in terms of tribal rather than of bureaucratic organization. To them their commander was a Khan, and they expected to see him succeeded by the young Khan, his son. Thus most of the frontier Commands, in defiance of the Central Government, became hereditary and ceased to pay taxes to Ch'ang-an. Encouraged by quick and easy success in overcoming relatively unimportant risings in Chekiang and Szechwan the Central Government in the autumn of 809 launched a big campaign against Wang Ch'êng-tsung, by origin a Kitan tribesman, who had just inherited from his father the control of Western Hopei. The campaign dragged on for nearly a year, without definite result. In the summer of 810 Po Chü-i, in a series of memorials, urged the Government to come to terms with Wang Ch'êng-tsung.

He pointed out that though the generals reported occasional successes, the rebels continued to gain ground, and there was reason to believe that the *communiqués* were not reliable. In the last memorial (written after Wang Ch'êng-tsung had already offered to negotiate) he pleads that it is no longer merely a matter of loss of prestige or of expense. The Government troops drawn from Central China are showing signs of disaffection, a complete *débâcle* is imminent, and the future of the dynasty itself is at stake. There is no hope of a settlement by force of arms. 'What are we waiting for? Why do we not negotiate?'

The policy recommended by Po was adopted. In the seventh month Wang Ch'êng-tsung's position as Commander of Western Hopei was recognized by the Government and he continued to hold it till his death in 820. One of the arguments used by Po in favour of making peace was that the Tibetans and Uighurs, 'who through their secret agents know everything that goes on in China', will not fail to take note of the fact that 'the united forces of the whole Empire have been unable to achieve success against this single rebel, Wang Ch'êng-tsung'. By continuing the campaign 'we shall merely be exposing to the barbarians of the west and the tribesmen of the north the weakness of our military power and the insufficiency of our resources'.

## THE FRONTIERS

When An Lu-shan revolted in 755, the Government was obliged to bring back the Chinese garrisons from Central Asia in order to cope with the revolution, and by 763 the Chinese frontier, instead of being near Kucha, in Turkestan, was not far west of Fêng-hsiang in Shensi, only about a hundred miles from the Capital. The Tibetans conquered almost the whole of what is now the province of Kansu. Isolated garrisons held out against them for many years, but they were only in occasional communication with Ch'ang-an. Po, like many of his contemporaries, felt it to be a disgrace to the dynasty that great Chinese cities, such for example as Liang-chou with its 120,000 inhabitants, should be in Tibetan hands. In the twenty-fifth of his political ballads, called 'The Dancers from Hsi-liang', he makes an old soldier comment bitterly on the fact that 100,000 soldiers are stationed on the western frontier, 'well-fed and warmly dressed, with nothing to do all day', while the people of Liang-chou are broken-hearted at being left in the lurch. The idea of recovering the lost territory, says the old soldier, seems never to enter the heads of either officers or men.

It fell to Po's lot to write, in his official capacity, three letters to the

Tibetan authorities. The first is addressed, in the Emperor's name, to the Chief Minister of Tibet, Po-shan-pu who, it is interesting to note, was a Buddhist *śramana*. In 808 the Uighurs descended from the north and drove the Tibetans out of part of Kansu, including the city of Liang-chou. In consequence of this defeat the Tibetans made several attempts to secure an alliance with China. They had agreed in principle to restore to the Chinese the three districts An-lo, Yuan and Ch'in[1] in Western Kansu. But the Tibetan Minister's last letter had been evasive on this point, and Po makes it clear that there can be no alliance till the three districts have been handed over. He suggests that details had better be settled with the Chinese Commander of the troops on the Kansu frontier. In 787 two Chinese envoys, Chêng Shu-chü and Lu Pi, had disappeared in Tibet and it had been impossible to obtain any news of them. The Tibetans now stated that Chêng was dead, but that Lu Pi was still alive, and Po asks that Lu Pi should be sent back to China and that Chêng's bones should be returned for burial by his family.

This letter seems to date from the early winter of 808. A second letter, dating from the last days of that year, was written by Po on behalf of Chu Chung-liang, who had recently been appointed to the command of the Kansu frontier. It was addressed to Chu's opposite number on the Tibetan side, General Lun-chi-tu-li. The General had complained of various disquieting signs of activity: the Chinese had been making bonfires, Chinese soldiers had crossed the frontier and, above all, since last year the Chinese had been building a new defensive line. Po replies that the bonfires were not war-signals; it was the practice to burn the 'old grass' and the same thing had happened every year. If soldiers had crossed the frontier it could only be to recover strayed horses or cattle. As for the defensive line, although relations with Tibet had improved, normal precautions had to be taken and it was natural that both sides should keep their defences in repair. 'Anyway,' Po adds more aggressively, 'the walls are Chinese walls and the ground they stand on is not Tibetan ground. The step we have taken was a perfectly reasonable one and it is hard to see why it should have aroused such deep suspicions.' The next letter was written in the autumn of 810 and is addressed in the name of the Emperor to another Tibetan Minister. The purport of it is that the territory asked for by the Chinese is only a very small part of what they have every right to claim. The Tibetan Minister, in the letter to which this is an answer, had claimed that the districts in question had not been 'obtained by aggression' and therefore could not be 'ceded'. 'They did not belong to Tibet to start with', says Po. 'If there was no aggression, how is it that they are now in your hands? All we ask for is that they should again be

[1] The areas round the modern Chung-wei, Ku-yüan and T'ien-shui

administered by Chinese officials. There is no need to drag in the term "cession". Any treaty of alliance that is made will have to embody a clause about the new frontier; consequently the three districts must be surrendered and the future frontier delimitated before there can be a treaty.'

The Tibetans had now sent back the remains both of Chêng Shu-chü and Lu Pi (the latter having died since the last letter was written), together with a number of other prisoners. Among them was a young man called Liu Ch'êng-shih, about whose identity there had evidently been some confusion, for Po says, 'This Liu Ch'êng-shih is not the nephew of Liu P'i; he is a native of Ch'êng-tu and we have sent him where he belongs.' This is a grim reference; Liu P'i had been executed as a traitor in 806, and the Chinese Government was evidently anxious to get hold of and punish a nephew of his who had fled into Tibet.

It was the Chinese policy to remain at all costs on good terms with their northern neighbours, the Uighurs. In 788 a Chinese princess was sent to marry the Uighur Khan. The Uighurs, who were a pastoral people, bred a surplus of horses, which they exported to China in exchange for silk. The Khan maintained an elaborate Court and some of the silk was no doubt used by the Court ladies; but probably most of it was re-exported to Central Asia and Iran. Fifty pieces of silk,[1] in theory fifty Chinese feet long, were paid for each horse, and as the horses arrived sometimes ten thousand at a time, the production of so much silk was a severe strain on the silk industries of the Yangtze and Huai valleys, and even by using a coarse weave and cutting down the length of the strip to 'thirty-odd feet' (supposed still to be charitably counted as forty) the women workers could not meet the demand. The Uighurs were dissatisfied with the silk they were getting, and complained through their Khatun (the Chinese princess). In 807 the Emperor ordered that the horses should be paid for partly by silk and gold from his own exchequer, and at the same time put a stop to the 'short length and coarse weaving' practices of the silk industry. Next year (808) the Uighurs embarrassed the Chinese authorities by sending twice the number of horses.

In the summer of 809 Po wrote a letter on behalf of the Emperor to Ai Tängridä, the Khan of the Uighurs. Six thousand five hundred horses have arrived. Reckoning this at 10,000, the nearest round number, the price (at fifty pieces of silk *per* horse) is 500,000 pieces of silk. Owing to heavy military expenditure and a run of droughts, this is more than the Chinese can pay. The Emperor offers 250,000 pieces on account, and suggests that the more horses the Uighurs send, the

[1] The term used (*chien*) properly means double-thread silk, which took longer to weave than ordinary silk. The 'piece' was in practice about 40 feet long.

greater will be China's unpaid debt; so that it would be better to come to some understanding 'convenient to both parties' about the number of horses to be imported in future. The rest of the letter concerns steps for the welfare of the Manicheans in China, most of whom were Uighurs. Everyone in China knew the story of how the hero Han Hsin 'crawled under the butcher-boy's legs'. Expediency at this period demanded that the Emperor of China should do a good deal of 'crawling'. The policy amply justified itself; for it was successful in saving the Chinese from serious trouble in their northern frontier during the next thirty years—the whole remaining period of Uighur ascendancy.

Po Chü-i engaged in similar correspondence with several other foreign states, among them Burma, Nan-chao and Korea. An account of Chinese dealing with Burma (the Pyu kingdom) will be found in G. H. Luce's *The Ancient Pyu* and in G. F. Harvey's *History of Burma* (1925). In 802 Yung-ch'iang, the King of Pyu, had sent his son on a mission to the Chinese Court, accompanied by a troupe of Pyu musicians. In a letter written on behalf of the Emperor in the winter of 809 Po announces that the rank of minister in the office of Imperial Rites has been awarded to the King, and that his son Sunanda and his vizier Mahasena have also received similar appointments. The Emperor also sends 'some small presents, as detailed in a separate list, and trusts that you are in good health, despite the cold weather'. With Po's attitude towards Pyu music I shall deal in a later chapter.

## THE EUNUCHS

Conspicuous in Po Chü-i's activities at this time was the stand that he made against a class that has no parallel in modern societies, that of the Palace eunuchs. They came chiefly from Fukien and Kwantung, in the south, where the population was mainly aboriginal. Prefects of southern districts were expected to furnish their quotum of castrated boys and obtained them, like other slaves, either by press-gang methods or by those campaigns of so-called 'pacification', which were in reality slave-raiding expeditions. At the Palace the boys were put in charge of older eunuchs, known as their 'fathers', and trained for service. Their theoretical status was that of house-slaves, particularly of attendants to the Imperial harem. This function was, however, relatively unimportant in the eighth century and was carried out by eunuchs of low rank. In addition to these there were about five thousand of higher rank, most of whom held military or political positions in the outside world. Some of their activities were as follows: (1) they were purveyors to the

Palace and their agents raided the markets, sometimes paying inadequate prices and sometimes merely requisitioning; (2) they commanded the two large 'Armies of the Holy Plan' (which I refer to as the Palace Armies) stationed near the Capital. These were quite distinct from the Emperor's personal bodyguard, and resembled the Nazi S.S. in their function and behaviour. (3) They were attached to provincial army commands as Superintendents and reported direct to the Palace with regard both to the efficiency and political reliability of the Commanders; whereas the reports of the Commanders had to pass through a sort of Confidential Messenger Service (the *Shu-mi-yuan*), which was run by eunuchs. (4) As Imperial agents, often with euphemistic titles, such as 'Commissioner of Comfort', they acted as Palace spies, set to watch over the activities of the official class. (5) Finally, they acted as 'Commissioners of Good Works': that is to say, were in charge of monastic life and ceremonial, both Taoist and Buddhist, in and around Ch'ang-an. This meant that they had charge of the numerous foreign monks, Indian, Central Asian, Japanese and Korean, who frequented the Capital. They thus became to some extent the protectors of Buddhism, and we shall see how in 842 repressive measures against the Buddhists were postponed owing to the protests of a eunuch Commissioner.

There are parallels in our own societies to most of these functions. There are still shop-keepers in the neighbourhood of modern courts who complain that palaces do not consider it necessary to pay their bills. Political commissars attached to armies exist in one form or another in many countries. Baron Stockmar and John Brown in Victorian times, 'personal advisers' and pet scientists in our own day, have all played roles similar to those of eunuchs in the T'ang dynasty. The so-called political parties in the ninth century were merely bureaucratic factions carrying on vendettas which did not in any way represent a cleavage of economic or social interests; the real political struggle was between the Palace and the bureaucracy—the Within and the Without—as the Chinese phrased it. The history of the period was written in the succeeding centuries when the same struggle was still in progress and it was of course written by the Without, not the Within. Consequently what history tells us about the eunuchs is, in the main, unfavourable. But praise is given to individual eunuchs and, so far as I know, no one ever suggested in T'ang times that eunuchs should be abolished. Two main attempts were made to curb their power, one violent and summary, in 835; one cautious and exploratory, in 845. Both attempts were unsuccessful.

The eunuch with whom Po chiefly came into conflict was T'u-t'u Ch'êng-ts'ui. In the tenth month of 809 he was put in supreme command

of the large forces that were attacking Wang Ch'êng-tsung in Western Hopei. This was quite unprecedented. Eunuchs had recently held the position of General Superintendent of several armies, but no eunuch had ever been Commander-in-Chief. 'I fear', wrote Po to the Emperor, 'that when the news becomes known in this country, the credit of the Court will suffer, and that when foreign countries hear of it they will laugh at the Middle Kingdom. It is certain that the news will give fresh courage to Wang Ch'êng-tsung.' Po also questions whether the professional army leaders will be willing to take orders from a eunuch. His protest was at first ignored; but it was supported by a large number of senior Statesmen and in the end the Emperor was obliged to give way. T'u-t'u was appointed *hsüan-wei-shih*, which means 'Commissioner for diffusing comfort', i.e. he was put in charge of anti-separatist propaganda.

T'u-t'u, who had been intimate with the new Emperor when he was Crown Prince and had been instrumental in getting him on to the Throne, was put in command of the Left Army of the Holy Plan[1] late in 806. He may well be the general referred to in the poem:

*In the morning I climbed the Tzu-ko Peak,*
*In the evening I lodged in the village under the hill.*
*The Elder of the village was pleased that I had come*
*And in my honour opened a jar of wine.*
*We raised our cups, but before we began to drink*
*Some rough soldiers pushed in at the gate,*
*Dressed in brown, carrying knife and axe,*
*Ten or more, hustling into the room.*
*They helped themselves to the wine we were going to drink,*
*They snatched away the food we were going to eat.*
*My host made way and stood at the back of the room*
*With his hands in his sleeves, as though they were honoured guests.*
*In the yard was a tree that the old man had planted*
*Thirty years ago with his own hand.*
*They said it must go, and he did not dare refuse;*
*They took their axes, they felled it at the root.*
*They said they had come to collect wood for building*
*And were workers attached to the Army of the Holy Plan.*
*'You'd better be careful; the less you say the better;*
*Our Eunuch General stands in high favour.'*

I have mentioned above the requisitioning of commodities not for the Palace Armies but for use by the ladies of the Palace. It was organized by a eunuch entitled Commissioner for Palace Marketing, first appointed in 797. The rather unconvincing excuse made for these requisitioning-

[1] See above, p. 57.

raids was that they gave work to hundreds of the unemployed. Po made his protest against Palace Marketing in a ballad (his forty-ninth) which describes how an old charcoal-seller, bringing his wares to market, is set upon by the agents of the Marketing Commissioner, who in return for his 1,000 catties (rather more than half a ton) of charcoal give him 'half a piece of red silk-gauze and ten feet of damask'.

## COURT TAOISM

There are many stories, both before and after Po Chü-i's time, of Taoist magicians who persuaded the Emperor that they could procure drugs which would make him immortal. The literary classes in Po's day as a rule had the same veneration for the early Taoist Classics that they had for the texts of Confucianism; but most of them did not believe in Taoist wonder-workers, and many prominent writers of the day, in poems or memorials to the Throne, satirized the folly of encouraging these quacks. There is a story that the Chief Minister Li Fan in 810 was asked by the Emperor whether he 'believed in Spirits, Immortals, prolongation of life and such things'. Fan knew that the Emperor had leanings in this direction and in the sharpest terms denounced 'the absurdity and utter falsity of such beliefs'. Not, however, to much effect; for a few years later the Emperor was completely in the hands of a 'man from the mountains' called Liu Pi, and it was (according to one account) the 'longevity pills' of Liu Pi that caused his death in 820, at the age of only 42.

Po Chü-i, who a few years afterwards was himself experimenting in this line, wrote (*c.* 809) a long poem and ballad ridiculing the search for herbs and drugs of longevity. These I have translated in *170 Chinese Poems*, pp. 132 *seq.*, under the titles 'The Man who Dreamed of Fairies' and 'Magic'. The former may be regarded as a warning to private people who waste their time on alchemical experiments; the latter is clearly addressed to the Emperor in particular:

*The Lord of Ch'in and Wu of Han*[1] *believed in these stories*
*And magic-workers year by year were sent to gather herbs.*
*The Blessed Islands, now and of old, what but an empty tale?*
*The misty waters spread before them; they know not where to seek.*
*Boundless, the great sea; dauntless the night wind.*
*Their eyes search but cannot see the shores of the Blessed Islands;*
*They cannot find the Blessed Islands and yet they dare not come back;*
*Youths and maidens that began the quest grow grey on board the boat. . . .*

[1] The First Emperor 259–210 B C. and Wu Ti 156–87 B C.

I have already (p. 35) referred to the abolition of miscellaneous *corvées* and the setting up of a general system of taxation reckoned on a money basis, which had been decreed in 780 and to some extent carried out in 788, at a time of inflation caused by thirty years of civil war. At the beginning of the ninth century the prices of staple commodities, such as grain and stuffs, had fallen heavily, and deflation was increased by the failure of the State to mint an adequate amount of money. Consequently the scale of taxation fixed in 788 became intolerably heavy, for the peasant had to set aside some two or three times more grain and stuff (silk, hemp-cloth, etc.) than was originally intended, in order to pay his taxes. It is clear from one of Po's essays that in 806 taxes were being collected from the peasants partly in money and partly in kind. Po maintains that only the book-keeping ought to be in terms of money, and that the peasant ought to pay solely in what he is able to produce—grain and stuffs. Onerous though the Biennial Tax (the standard scheme of taxation) had become, it was now quite inadequate to meet the needs of public expenditure. Among the various devices for raising revenue was the so-called Grain Harmonization. There had been a system[1] in the eighth century by which, in order to steady the price of grain, the Government bought up grain in good years at more than the current price and put it on to the market in bad years at less than the current price. Gradually this developed into a system of forced sale to the Government at an arbitrary price, paid in media that were of little value to the recipient—for example, lengths of silk and cloth not of standard quality, which were difficult to dispose of. In a Memorial to the Throne dating from about 808 Po claims to have knowledge of this system from two angles: 'I once lived for some time in a small country place where I was registered as a contributor to this scheme and was myself treated with great harshness. More recently, on the other hand, one of my duties when employed at a small place near the Capital was to direct the operations of those who were "harmonizing", and I found that if there was any recalcitrance, the whip was used—an outrage which I could not bear to witness.' Po suggests that if the Government wants grain it should allow a corresponding portion of the Biennial money-tax to be paid in grain. This would be a relief to the peasants and save the Government the expense of the so-called Harmonization Scheme.

The Government's reply may well have been that unless Po could show that the exchequer would not lose revenue by this scheme, his proposal ought to include some indication of how the deficit was to be

[1] See above, p. 22.

met. Po's account, however, seems to imply that the Government was compelling sale at less than the market price, in which case they would obviously lose revenue by adopting his proposal.

In one of the model examination essays he discusses the scarcity of money. It is due, he says, to the fact that it costs more than a penny to make a penny. This puts a limit on the amount of money that the State can afford to mint, whereas, owing to the great demand for metal, by melting down a penny the ordinary person can get more than a penny. The only remedy is to confiscate copper vessels and forbid the use of them altogether. 'Then copper will lose its value and coins will cease to be melted down.' Nothing of the kind was done, and the scarcity of money continually increased during the next twenty years.

About 809 Po addressed a series of five poems to an unnamed friend whom he thought likely soon to come into power. One of these poems dwells on the daily decrease in the price of agricultural products and the injustice of demanding taxation in money from those who have no means of producing it:

*Private people have no money-mints,*
*In ordinary places there are no copper mines.*
*How can they deal with their autumn and summer tax,*
*Year by year paying in copper cash?*

And Po draws the moral that people should only be asked to supply 'what the land they work on can produce'.

## THE GOLD RUSH

Theoretically everyone at this period had land assigned to him, part of which he could bequeath and part of which was returned to the State when he died. In practice, people were given land if it was available, but probably seldom got what they were entitled to. Officials were allotted land on a scale corresponding to their rank; the monasteries and the higher eunuchs secured a great deal of land, and a quite insufficient amount remained for allotment to ordinary people. Those who got land found it difficult to meet the heavy taxation, and in the south more and more peasants drifted away to the gold and silver mines. In another poem of the same series he says:

*Silver comes from the nooks in the hills of Ch'u,*
*Gold comes from the shores of P'o Stream.*[1]
*The people of the south no longer till the fields,*
*But seek gold with great toil and pain.*

[1] In Kiangsi, near Jao-chou.

*They clear away the gravel and chisel into the rock,*
*Hacking and hewing in spring and winter alike.*
*Their hands and feet are all chafed and swollen;*
*But they care for profit more than they care for themselves. . . .*
*Yet after all, what are silver and gold?*
*They are no more real use than mud or dust.*
*They are not things one can eat or wear on one's back;*
*They do not help men who are hungry and cold. . . .*

## THE PRISONS

Another memorial of 809 deals with the case of a dozen or more prisoners held in the gaols of Wên-hsiang and Hu-ch'êng, two neighbouring places in the extreme western tip of Honan. They had been found guilty of embezzlement and handed over to the local authorities by the Commission for Finance many years ago: 'Their wives and children have to beg in the streets in order to send food to them in prison. In some cases, owing to their long incarceration, their wives have taken fresh husbands; in others, when a father has died in prison, his son has been brought to gaol to take his place. . . . There have during the time of their imprisonment been two amnesties,[1] and this spring there was an Act of Grace. But it is said that these measures were not so worded as to apply to the present case. . . . There is an old saying that the resentment of one woman can bring three years' drought and the pent-up rage of one man can cause five months of frost. Judging from this analogy I fear that the bitter and resentful feelings of these prisoners might well injure the harmony of your Majesty's *yin* and *yang*.' Po goes on to ask that the case may be gone into by the Chief Minister; if it is found that the amnesties do not apply, then a special act of pardon should be proclaimed authorizing the immediate release of the prisoners. Serious though their offences may have been, they certainly have not merited indefinite detention. He also suggests that the Finance and Salt-and-Iron Commissions have probably consigned similar offenders to many other local authorities. All those cases should be looked into and reported upon.

As in other cases of the kind Po did not confine himself to writing a memorial; he also tried to arouse popular interest in the prison question by making it the subject of a ballad. This was the T'ang equivalent of a letter to *The Times*, or perhaps rather of an article in the popular Press,

[1] Those of 805 and 806.

for the ballad, if it caught on, would be sung all over Ch'ang-an. This ballad, the ninth of the ten *Songs of Ch'in*, is called 'Song and Dance':

*In Ch'ang-an the year draws to its close;*
*A great snow fills the Royal Domain.*
*And through the storm, on their way back from Court,*
*In reds and purples the dukes and barons ride.*
*They can enjoy the beauty of wind and snow,*
*To the rich they do not mean hunger and cold.*
*At a grand entry coaches and riders press;*
*Candles are lit in the Tower of Dance and Song.*
*Delighted guests pack knee to knee;*
*Heated with wine they throw off their double furs.*
*The host is high in the Board of Punishments,*
*The chief guest comes from the Ministry of Justice.*
*It was broad daylight when the drinking and music began;*
*Midnight has come, and still the feast goes on.*
*What do they care that at Wên-hsiang to-night*
*In the town gaol prisoners are freezing to death?*

The above examples will suffice to give some idea of the social and political questions with which Po was dealing at this period, and of his attitude towards them. I have not attempted to give a complete picture of T'ang society at this time, for to do so would have required not a chapter but a whole volume.

# CHAPTER V

Po Chü-i's immense political activity in the period 808–810 and the considerable measure of success that he achieved were largely due to the encouragement and support of the Chief Minister, P'ei Chi (765–813). P'ei had won the first place in the Palace Examinations of 788. In 802, as Vice-President of the Board of Civil Office, he marked the papers in the Placing Examination in which Po and Yüan Chên passed successfully. In 806 he received a high post in the Palace Secretariat and was made a doctor at the Han-lin Academy. In the summer of 808 several of the successful candidates at the Palace Examinations wrote essays severely criticizing the administration and the senior Chief Minister, Li Chi-fu (758–814). The Minister complained, and P'ei Chi was ordered to revise the awards. He reported that the criticisms were legitimate and that there was no reason to reject the candidates. Li Chi-fu retaliated by banishing the original examiners to the provinces and sending P'ei Chi back to his previous post in the Board of Civil Office. Po, in a memorial to the Throne, pointed out that general consternation had been caused by the sudden disappearance from the Central Government of the original examiners, who were all public servants of great talent and capability, and by the relegation of such a man as P'ei Chi, who had won a reputation for discovering and promoting promising juniors, to an inferior post. He pointed out that when in the examinations of 785 one successful candidate made severe strictures on the administration of the day the Emperor, so far from questioning the decision of the examiners, expressed great pleasure, and ordered that the candidate should be given a third instead of a fourth 'class'. Everyone believed, wrote Po, that the present trouble had been engineered by some of the unsuccessful candidates as a revenge for their failure. A great force of public opinion was on P'ei Chi's side, and in the autumn of 808 the Chief Minister, Li Chi-fu (while still retaining his rank as Minister), was relegated to a post in Eastern China; 'unexpectedly and at an early age' P'ei Chi succeeded him as head of the Government. Thus during the whole of 809 Po was fortunate enough to be working under a Chief Minister with whose views he was in entire sympathy and who owed his position partly to the stand that Po had made in his support. Particularly in the matter of the eunuchs P'ei Chi worked unceasingly on Po's side and in 810 managed to get T'u-t'u Ch'êng-ts'ui relegated to an insignificant post at the Arsenal.

At the end of 810 P'ei Chi had a stroke. He partially recovered, but

was obliged to resign his post, and died in 813. His death was not only a great personal blow but also a great political misfortune for Po Chü-i and Yüan Chên. They had lost their main supporter, and at the beginning of 811 Li Chi-fu, whom Po had mortally offended by his defence of the 808 examiners, returned from the east and again became the head of the Government.

It was no doubt owing to P'ei Chi's influence that Yüan Chên, when he came out of mourning at the end of 808, was given a position of some importance—that of Inspecting Censor in the circuit of Tung-ch'uan, the eastern part of the modern province of Szechwan. He set out in the spring of 809 and flung himself into his new work with frenzied energy. A stream of detailed reports concerning unauthorized taxation and confiscation came pouring into the Inspectorate at Ch'ang-an. Many of them concerned the misdoings of a certain Yen Li (he had died recently, after being Commander in Tung-ch'uan since the winter of 806) and of his subordinates. Every length of silk, every bundle of grass misappropriated by Yen was detailed in Yüan Chên's laborious statistics. The case was referred by the Censorate to the Palace Secretariat, who ordered that, where possible, restitution should be made and solemnly fined each of the surviving culprits two days' salary: 'they were merely accomplices and must therefore be treated with indulgence'. Late in the summer Yüan was made head of the Inspectorate's branch office in Lo-yang.

Po wrote sixty political ballads in and just before 809. It is therefore not surprising that he had not much time for what we may call personal poetry. The few intimate poems that he wrote were mostly addressed to or concerned with Yüan Chên. A very characteristic poem, however, is the one addressed at this period to Fan Tsung-shih (*c.* 770–820) who held the position of Recorder (*cho-tso*). In the ninth century this office seems to have been merely a sinecure; but its holders had originally been concerned with the compiling of national chronicles. In this poem we find Yüan Chên's exploits in Tung-ch'uan coupled with those of two men who were Po's especial heroes at this time, K'ung K'an (died 810) and Yang Ch'êng.

Yang Ch'êng came of an official family that had fallen on evil days. Having no money to buy books he got a post as copyist in the Chi-hsien ('Assembled Worthies') Hall, the institution for which Po worked in the autumn of 807, and by peeping into the books of the library there at odd moments he picked up a fair degree of education. After six years of this he retired to a mountain-hamlet near Ts'ang-chou, in South-East Hopei. He did not marry, owing (it is said) to his extreme devotion to his two younger brothers whom he feared to estrange if 'someone of another family' was brought into the house. He won a local reputation as a settler of village disputes, and people from far around brought their

troubles to him rather than to the magistrates. About 780 Li Pi (722–789),[1] an eccentric character who was popularly believed to commune with fairies and practise black magic, visited Yang and came away deeply impressed. During the troubles of 783–784 Li Pi displayed great devotion to the Emperor and in 787, despite the disapproval of the official classes, who regarded him as a charlatan, Li Pi became Chief Minister and at once sent for Yang Ch'êng. He made him Recorder, and eventually Censor. It was generally believed that the appointment would cost Yang his life, for it was expected that he would be utterly reckless in his criticisms of those in power. To everyone's surprise Yang Ch'êng spent his whole time drinking with his brothers, and appeared to take no interest in public affairs.

It was at this time that Han Yü wrote his famous 'Essay on a Censor', in which, after firing off with a kind of Anabaptist frenzy volley after volley of abracadabra from the *Book of Changes*, he bitterly assails Yang for his complete failure to live up to his reputation. In reality Yang was of course only 'dissembling', like the heroes of old Chinese vendetta stories. The critical moment for which he had been waiting came in 795 with the banishment of Lu Chih (754–805), the most able and fearless statesman of the period. He sent in a memorial demanding the recall of Lu and the dismissal of P'ei Yen-ling (died 796) who had intrigued against him. Yang Ch'êng was on the point of being arrested when the Crown Prince (afterwards the unhappy Emperor Shun Tsung) intervened. Yang was removed from the Censorate, but given the post of Director of Studies at the National University. His first act on arriving there was to tell his pupils that what they were at College to learn was loyalty and family affection, and he would prefer it if those who had been away from home for a long time went on holiday at once. By next day some twenty members of his class had disappeared. He finally got into trouble for hiding in his house a pupil who was wanted by the police, and was ordered to go as Governor to Tao-chou, in Southern Hunan, then regarded as at the very ends of the earth. Nearly three hundred students made a demonstration outside the Palace and refused to go away for three days; but the decision was not altered.

Yang found that Tao-chou had to send to Court a yearly tribute of dwarfs. The population was largely aboriginal and the dwarfs were perhaps Negritos similar to those of modern Malaya. He sent in a memorial condemning this practice, and succeeded in having it stopped.

*The people of Tao-chou*
*Old and young, how great their joy!*
*Father with son and brother with brother henceforward lived together,*

[1] Loyal supporters of the Emperor Tê Tsung during the troubles of 783–784 and Chief Minister from 787 to 789.

*From that day on for ever more they were left as free men.*
*The people of Tao-chou*
*Still enjoy his gift,*
*And even now when they speak of the Governor*
*Tears start to their eyes.*

So wrote Po in his ballad 'The People of Tao-chou'.[1] Yang's administration became a byword for happy paternalism. He treated his subordinates like members of his family, punishing or rewarding them as he thought they deserved without regard for official regulations. His superior, the Inspector of the circuit, was worried by the fact that taxes were not coming in. Yang took the opportunity of explaining this when he sent in the yearly report in which officials were classified according to their efficiency as 'top of the top class', 'middle of the bottom class' and so on. Contrary to the usual practice he included a report on himself: 'The Governor devotes himself whole-heartedly to the welfare of his people, but is no good at collecting taxes. Classification: Bottom of the bottom class'. An official sent to deal with the taxation business found that the Governor was not at home and, on asking where to look for him, was told to go to the town gaol: 'When he heard you were coming, His Excellency was sure you intended to arrest him and to save you trouble he has put himself in prison.' After the first official had failed to coax Yang back to his *yamen*, a second was sent to take forcible action. But Yang was viewed as a kind of saint, with whom it would be dangerous to interfere, and the second official decamped while on his way to Tao-chou and was never seen again. In 805, on the accession of Shun Tsung, an edict was issued recalling Yang Ch'êng to Ch'ang-an; but it was found that he was no longer alive. Some touches may have been added to this story after Po Chü-i's time. But in the main it corresponds with what we learn about Yang Ch'êng from the poems of Po and Yüan Chên, written soon after his death.

K'ung K'an, unlike Yang Ch'êng, was admired by Po not for his character and principles in general, but for one specific act of integrity and courage. K'ung was attached to the staff of Lu Ts'ung-shih, who became Commander of a large district in Shansi in 804. He discovered after a time that Lu was plotting to revolt against the dynasty, and when he found that he could not dissuade him from his plan he left Lu's service and (about 807) retired to Lo-yang. He thus put loyalty to the Throne above loyalty to his superior officer, a thing which it was considered 'hard for a staff-officer to do', as Po says elsewhere, but which he evidently regarded as particularly admirable.

A third character mentioned in the poem is 'Liu P'i's sister-in-law'. Liu P'i was the Szechwan separatist (see above, p. 55) executed in 806.

[1] *170 Chinese Poems*, p. 123.

About his sister-in-law nothing further is known. Here, then, is the poem addressed to the Recorder Fan Tsung-shih in which Po asks that a place in history shall be given to Yang Ch'êng, Yüan Chên, Liu P'i's sister-in-law and K'ung K'an. It is, however, only in the formal sense a poem. It fulfils exactly the same purpose as a prose letter which Yüan Chên wrote not long afterwards to Han Yü asking him to make sure that the name of a certain Chên Chi should figure in history, and I do not think it is worth trying to put it into verse:

'When Yang Ch'êng was Censor, he put his honesty at his Ruler's service. His hand was like the magic plant Ch'u-i;[1] he raised it only to point to a base intriguer, and in the end prevented this wicked man from holding the balance of State. When Yüan Chên was Inspector, he became famous for his straight dealing. His heart was like the Lung Stone;[2] he never stirred without discovering and making known the miseries of the common people. In Eastern Szechwan by one timely word he redressed the wrongs of eighty families. When Liu P'i's violence was at its height and he was putting to death all who opposed him, his sister-in-law, Miss Yü, cut herself off from him and refused to regard him as a kinsman.

'When Lu Ts'ung-shih was hatching his plot of rebellion, but was still hiding his designs, his adjutant K'ung K'an refused to remain on his staff. Everyone in the Empire has heard about the fine conduct of these two gentlemen and of this one lady. But will their names be recorded in history? The analists are, I fear, more interested in portents, such as the appearance of a phoenix or a unicorn. I know that fame is not the object of virtue; but virtue recorded constitutes a valuable lesson for posterity. It would be lamentable if the names of such men were forgotten after their death. You hold the position of Recorder. The functions of your office have fallen into abeyance, and even if you wished to do so it does not lie in your power to revive them. You would certainly make a good historian, but your honest pen has at present no outlet. Why do you not write a book on your own account, faithfully recording the lives of these and other good men? I do not mean officially, but simply as your own work, in order to fill in the gaps left by official history.'

Fan Tsung-shih was one of the most voluminous writers of the period; but by a strange irony almost all his works are lost, so that even if he had adopted Po's suggestion and turned his hand to contemporary biography, he would not by doing so have rescued any good men from oblivion. On the other hand, official history duly recorded the lives of

[1] Which in the days of the legendary Yellow Emperor suddenly pointed a tendril in the direction of a base intriguer who ventured to come to Court.

[2] On which people who had been wronged were supposed, in ancient days, to have stood and proclaimed their grievances. See my article in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, IX, 729.

Yang Ch'êng, Yüan Chên and K'ung K'an. But no one, so far as I know, ever took up the tale of Liu P'i's sister-in-law, and were it not for Po's brief mention of her we should not know that such a person ever existed.

In 802 Yüan Chên had married a girl of nineteen called Wei Hui-ts'ung. She died in the seventh month of 809, leaving him with three boys[1] and a girl called Pao-tzu. Yüan Chên wrote a long series of poems about his bereavement, of which one was 'The Pitcher', which I translated many years ago.

*I dreamt I climbed to a high, high plain;*
*And on the plain I found a deep well.*
*My throat was dry with climbing and I longed to drink,*
*And my eyes were eager to look into the cool shaft.*
*I walked round it, I looked right down;*
*I saw my image mirrored on the face of the pool.*
*An earthen pitcher was sinking into the black depths;*
*There was no rope to pull it to the well-head.*
*I was strangely troubled lest the pitcher should be lost,*
*And started wildly running to look for help.*
*From village to village I scoured that high plain;*
*The men were gone; fierce dogs snarled.*
*I came back and walked weeping round the well;*
*Faster and faster the blinding tears flowed—*
*Till my own sobbing suddenly woke me up;*
*My room was silent, no one in the house stirred.*
*The flame of my candle flickered with a green smoke;*
*The tears I had shed glittered in the candle-light.*
*A bell sounded; I knew it was the midnight-chime;*
*I sat up in bed and tried to arrange my thoughts:*
*The plain in my dream was the graveyard at Ch'ang-an,*
*Those hundred acres of untilled land.*
*The soil heavy and the mounds heaped high;*
*And the dead below them laid in deep troughs.*
*Deep are the troughs, yet sometimes dead men*
*Find their way to the world above the grave.*
*And to-night my love who died long ago*
*Came into my dream as the pitcher sunk in the well.*
*That was why the tears suddenly streamed from my eyes,*
*Streamed from my eyes and fell on the collar of my dress.*

In a poem addressed to Yüan in the autumn of 809 Po Chu-i speaks of the loneliness and depression felt by both himself and Yüan at this time and, in a line about the 'perfume of the orchid' being 'spent' alludes, I think, to the death of Yüan's wife; for Hui-ts'ung, her name,

[1] Who all seem to have died young.

means 'orchid clump'. But Hui-ts'ung was not the first woman whom Yüan loved. Both he and Po allude to a passionate but apparently very fugitive affair that seems to have happened about 795.[1] It is referred to, in the cover-language of the time, as a dream-meeting with a fairy; but it is quite evident that an ordinary human love-affair is meant. For the next eight or nine years, both friends tell us, Yüan Chên, still under the spell of his mysterious adventure, led a life of complete celibacy. The whole affair seems to have been highly secret and also in some way nefarious, or at any rate a matter for deep repentance. That is all we can deduce from the two poems, one by Yüan himself and the other by Po, which deal with it. Both are extremely obscure and allusive, and it is probable that they were not intended to be fully intelligible to the outer world.

In the autumn of 809 the Mayor of Lo'yang 'traduced a student', who thereupon committed suicide. There are no details; but the suggestion is that the Mayor in some way hounded the student to his death. Instead of reporting on the matter to Ch'ang-an (which his position entitled him to do), Yüan Chên, quite unconstitutionally, attempted to remove the Mayor from office on his own initiative. The Mayor on appealing to Ch'ang-an was told to resume his functions; Yüan was sharply reprimanded and ordered to report at once to his superiors in the Capital. He arrived in a state of great agitation and distress: 'I came back to the West weeping blood, with none above to whom to appeal, none below on whom I could rely, panting, at my wits' end, my soul already on the wing.' He goes on to tell how Po Chü-i's mother comforted him, saw to it that he was dressed warmly enough and that he took his medicine at the right times, and in general took him under her wing. He was only at the Capital for a few days; then without any warning he was ordered to proceed immediately to a small post at Chiang-ling in Hupeh. 'I met him in the street quite accidentally when I was coming back from duty in the Palace', Po writes, 'and learnt that he was on his way to exile. I was able to ride with him from south of the Yung-shou Monastery to north of the Hsin-ch'ang Ward.[2] There was no time to do more than exchange a few words of parting, each calling upon the other to treasure the things of the spirit and not let those of the body touch him too deeply.' Yüan Chên evidently had orders to get clear of Ch'ang-an by nightfall. He halted at the Shan-pei Monastery, not far from the outskirts of Ch'ang-an, and Po, who was prevented by official duties from joining him there, sent his younger brother Po Hsing-chien to see Yüan Chên off. Later, through the official messenger service, he sent a scroll containing twenty new poems—'no wanton words or pretty rhymes, but all fraught with a serious allegory, sent in

[1] When he was fifteen.

[2] A distance of less than a mile.

the hope that you would read them over to yourself while on your journey. They may at any rate have helped to pass the time and make you for a while forget your sorrows; and there were some that I felt might confirm you in the strong line you have taken, and give you fresh courage.'

It sometimes happened that sentences such as that passed upon Yüan Chên were revoked before the exile reached his place of banishment. Po sent in three memorials demanding that Yüan should be pardoned; only the third has been preserved. He recalls that from the moment Yüan Chên became Inspector he had exposed abuses wherever he found them, regardless of the rank and power of those whom he denounced. This had made for him many enemies in high places, in particular Li Kung-tso,[1] a member of the Imperial family, who in revenge had spread slanderous rumours about Yüan. If he was now allowed to remain in exile, no one in future would dare give information about the misconduct of well-connected people. Po admits that in the case of the Mayor of Lo-yang, Yüan had exceeded his powers. But for this he had already been punished (by a deduction from his salary). It was, however, generally believed, says Po, that Yüan Chên's banishment had nothing to do with the episode at Lo-yang, but was the result of his clash with a eunuch-envoy at a Government rest-house on the way from Lo-yang to Ch'ang-an. The eunuch had 'kicked down the gate, removed Yüan Chên's horses from the stables and threatened him with arrow and bow'. It was in fact a scramble for priority in Government accommodation. Po points out that if the eunuch is left unpunished, while Yüan is sent into exile, the outrages of eunuchs upon travelling officials are likely to become more and more intolerable.

Yüan Chên's tour of inspection in Tung-ch'uan, Po continues, led to the punishment of a number of local Governors and to the restitution of property wrongfully requisitioned by the late Commander, Yen Li. He had been equally successful in exposing the misuse of Government free-accommodation coupons at rest-houses. His exile would be the signal to all malefactors that the coast was clear and they could safely recommence their illegalities. 'We have all seen in recent years how dangerous it can be if the Government is cut off from outside information.' In 801, Po continues, Ts'ui Shan-chêng gave secret information about Li I's[2] plans for starting a revolt in Eastern China. So far from any attention being paid to his warning he was arrested and sent straight to Li I's headquarters, where he was put into a pit and burnt alive. But a few years afterwards (807) he turned out to have been right. Li I

[1] A different person from the famous story-writer of this name. We do not know what Li Kung-tso had done

[2] A different person from Li I the poet.

revolted, and 'the Empire is still suffering the painful results' of having ignored Ts'ui's warning. But the protests of Po and other friends of Yüan Chên were in vain. He remained at Chiang-ling till 814.

In the fourth month of 810 Po's term as an Omissioner came to an end. The eunuch Liang Shou-ch'ien, who in 807 had brought the announcement of his election to the Han-lin Academy, came to his house again, asking him to submit to the Emperor a statement 'which it was known he was desirous of making'. It had evidently come to the Emperor's ears that Po wished to make a plea on compassionate grounds for a post that would give him a higher salary, but would not take him away from Ch'ang-an. In his statement Po says that his mother is seriously ill; he has no private fortune and his present salary does not enable him to get her properly looked after. He asks for a post in the administration of Ch'ang-an city, such as would entitle him to a somewhat higher salary, without entailing undue promotion of rank. He was made Intendant of City Finances, at a salary of 'forty to fifty thousand cash' a month. His previous salary had been twenty-five thousand. He records his success in an exultant poem:

*I have been appointed Intendant of City Finances,*
*And humbly acknowledge how grateful I am to my Prince.*
*If I am grateful it is not on my own behalf;*
*But because I can now look properly after my kin.*
*Complete with hat-pin and tablet my brothers come;*
*The daughter-in-law,*[1] *in her best cap and gown.*
*They stand in a row at the bottom of the high hall,*
*Bowing they bless me over and over again.*
*My pay is forty to fifty thousand cash;*
*Enough to cover expenses, month by month.*
*My grain allowance is two hundred 'stones',*
*Enough to fill my bins throughout the year.*[2]
*Clatter, clatter the coaches and riders come;*
*Complimentary visitors crowd my gate.*
*I am sure they do not regard me as covetous;*
*They know well that my family is poor.*
*I set out wine and invite their congratulations;*
*The faces of my guests are as jubilant as mine.*
*Laughing they tell me that from this day onwards*
*Never again need I grieve at empty jars. . . .*

His appointment to this new post seems to have been simply a device for raising his salary. We do not hear of his doing any work at the City Headquarters (*Ching-ch'ao fu*), and though Government instructions no

[1] I e Po's wife.

[2] Two hundred 'stones' would have fed about 15–20 persons for a year.

longer passed through his hands for comment, he was still able to give advice on matters of common knowledge and in his capacity as doctor of the Han-lin Academy he continued to draft Imperial communications in their final form. But during the greater part of the autumn and winter of 810 he was on sick leave, and seems for a time to have retired to the country. In a poem called 'Autumn Hills' he says that during his long illness he had lost all powers of enjoyment; to-day for the first time he has been able to get into the hills and, now lying with a white rock as his pillow, now clutching at the green creepers as he climbs, he 'feels as though something lost had come back to him' and 'when the day was over I had no wish to return'. Man's life, the poem continues, his sojourn between heaven and earth, is brief enough, but in that brief span, 'his heart has a thousand years' sorrow, his body has not one day's rest'. And he asks himself whether the day will ever come when he can shake off the 'dusty net' of the world and live in these hills not as a holiday visitor, but for the rest of his life.

His depression at this time was increased by the news of his hero K'ung K'an's death in Lo-yang:

*If Heaven indeed does not love men*
*Why did it give us such a one as he?*
*But if it be true that Heaven loves men*
*Why did it snatch him away before his time?*

It was probably in the autumn of 810 that he wrote 'Reading the Poems of Têng Fang':

*On my dusty shelves lie many writers' works;*
*At hazard I took a scroll and opened it out.*
*Only when I reached the author's name did I know*
*That I had not been reading the poems of T'ao Ch'ien.*[1]
*I looked at the name and when I saw it was yours*
*Suddenly a pang of sorrow pierced my heart.*
*The life of poets has always been chequered and cramped,*
*And this is even truer in modern days.*
*Tu Fu in the city of Ch'ang-an*
*Never rose to be more than Omissioner.*
*At Hsiang-yang Mêng Hao-jan*
*Drudged till every hair of his head was white.*
*You alas were not so lucky as they;*
*At the age of thirty you were still without a job.*
*You passed well, but were not given office;*
*You married a wife, but could not take her home.*
*Still young and seemingly well and strong*
*Suddenly one day you fell down dead in the street.*

[1] 372–427 A.D.

*Yet Heaven that grudged you rank and length of days*
*Lavished upon you the gift of lovely verse.*
*Is there a sense in this? It is vain to ask;*
*No skill can interpret the Calendars of Fate.*

Save for the allusions to him in Po Chu-i's works nothing is known of Têng Fang. As we shall see later, he was one of the two or three people who admired Po's political ballads. A poem called 'Leaning over my stool' seems also to have been written during this period of retirement, in the last days of 810:

*When the body is content it forgets the four limbs;*
*When the heart is content it forgets Isn't and Is.*
*When both are content one even forgets content*
*Without knowing who it is that forgets.*
*My whole frame is like a dry log;*
*Numb and stark, I feel nothing at all.*
*My mind is like the ashes of a sunken fire;*
*Still and quiet, it has not any thoughts. . . .*
*I have almost finished my thirty-ninth year;*
*The winter is ending, the day draws to its close.*
*The philosopher's heart at forty no longer was moved;*[1]
*And I too am nearing a like state.*

In this poem Taoist indifferentism and Confucian stoicism are combined; there are no Buddhist allusions. But in the poems of 810 incidental references to Buddhism begin to become more frequent. They occur, however, chiefly in poems of consolation and advice addressed to Yüan Chên. He seems to have felt that his friend's passionate and impetuous nature needed some spiritual anchor-sheet. Thus he advises Yüan Chên in exile to read not only *Chuang Tzu*, Chapter 1, but also the *Sūtra on the Twelve Virtues of Asceticism*; and, after reading one of Yüan's poems in memory of his wife, to study the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*. Elsewhere he presses upon him the *Saddharmapundarīka* (the Lotus of the Good Law), the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the *Dharmapada*. He was probably thinking of the chapter on Impermanence (*anitya*) with which the Chinese version of the *Dharmapada* opens.[2] Po was not, however, himself much occupied with Buddhism till some years later. In one of the first poems written in 811 he praises his own brand of secular indifferentism as being no whit less effective than the meditation of Hui-nêng (638–713), the Sixth Patriarch.

At the end of the second month of 811 (corresponding roughly to our March), when spring had already started, there was a calamitous snowstorm at Ch'ang-an:

[1] See *Mencius*, II. 1 II.

[2] For information about these sūtras, see Additional Notes.

*All night and again all day*
*Heavy and fast—the snow never ceased,*
*Now mass on mass goose-feather flakes dropped;*
*Now but a wind-blown dust of ground jade.*
*Winter had gone and spring was blossoming*
*When the air changed and the wind grew icy-cold.*
*In the Royal Park the young plants perished;*
*On the Serpentine the ice formed again.*
*The apricot-bloom lost its brightness and died;*
*Loaded with ice the willow branches snapped.*

To Po an untimely happening such as this seemed sinister not merely because of the damage it did and the suffering it caused; it was also a portent—a sign that the earthly ruler was not in harmony with the forces of nature and a 'warning to him to correct his influence'.

There were, however, as one would expect, optimists who believed that a hard spring portended a bumper harvest. Han Yü mentions this belief in his poem called *The Snow Storm of the year Hsin-mao* (i.e. 811), written at the same moment as Po's. It was just at this time that Li Chi-fu, whom Po had mortally offended,[1] came back to Ch'ang-an to replace Po's friend and supporter P'ei Chi. The icy blast blown on all Po's political hopes by his sudden return may well have been in his mind when he wrote the poem about the untimely return of winter.

In the early summer of 811 Po's mother died 'at her house in the Hsüan-p'ing Ward'. According to Kao Yen-hsiu[2] she had for some time past been subject to fits of insanity, and on one occasion tried to stab herself to death. The family put her under the care of two strong peasant girls, but in the end she succeeded in evading them, and drowned herself in a well. We have seen how only a year before she took Yüan Chên under her wing when he made his brief visit to the Capital. This fits in with Kao Yen-hsiu's account, in which he says that she had periodic attacks from which she seemed completely to recover. Po, apart from a bare record of the date on which she died, alludes only indirectly to his mother's death, and throws no light on the circumstances under which it happened. The Hsuan-p'ing Ward was immediately west of the Ch'ang-lo Ward where he had been living before. It is usually supposed that he must have moved, perhaps quite recently; it is very unlikely that his mother under such circumstances would have been living anywhere except under Po's own roof. Mourning compelled him, of course, to give up his official post, and he went to live in the country, at Hsia-kuei. There would not normally, I think, have been any reason to give up his doctorate in the Han-lin Academy. But he seems to have done so; and it is likely that he was ejected by

[1] See above, p. 64.

[2] See above, p. 15.

Li Chi-fu, though we have no direct evidence of this. Indeed, when Po retired in the summer of 811 to 'the village on the Wei' he seems to have regarded his official career as closed for ever. Li Chi-fu was a comparatively young man; it seemed likely that he would remain in power indefinitely, and as long as his influence was supreme there was little chance of Po Chü-i being reinstated.

# CHAPTER VI

HSIA-KUEI was on the Wei River, about half-way between Ch'ang-an and the point where the Wei flows into the Yellow River. To the south-east lay the three peaks of the Hua Shan, rising to a height of over 7,000 feet. Po had not been to Hsia-kuei since 804. The grown men he met were the village urchins of those days and when he asked after the old men he had known, as often as not people pointed to the grave-lands that lay in a circle round the village. 'Life, like a passing stranger, comes and goes its way. . . .'

*And when I turn my thoughts, when I think of myself,*
*What should I look for but darkness and decay?*
*The flush of youth will not cease to fade;*
*Numberless the white hairs will grow.*
*Only at the gate that opens towards the hills*
*The Three Peaks will be lovely as of old.*

Po was wise enough only to *look* at the Hua Shan. A few years before, his famous contemporary, Han Yü, reached a point on the mountain from which he could neither go up nor come down, and had already dropped[1] a letter of farewell to his wife and family when the prefect of the nearest town managed 'by a hundred stratagems' to coax him down from his precarious perch.

During almost the whole of his time at Hsia-kuei, from 811 to 814, Po was in bad health. We do not know what his symptoms were, except that in the poems of the period he often mentions trouble with his eyes, which he attributes to his 'craze for reading'. Very slight defects, which could now be easily remedied with glasses, were of course in those days apt to cause great inconvenience. He regarded his worldly career as at an end, and when a diviner offered to tell his fortune, he wrote in reply:

*To my sick eyes the world seems dark as night,*
*Sere as autumn the locks that straggle on my brow.*
*Clothes and food—of a hundred former needs*
*To such as I only these are left.*
*I know how good you are at the* Book of Changes,
*And if when you ask, 'would I like my fortune told?'*
*I answer 'No', it is not that I doubt your skill;*
*In the world of men there is no fortune that I seek.*

Not long after the family moved to Hsia-kuei Po's only child, a little girl of three called Golden Bells, died after only two days' illness:

[1] The highest of the many precipices is a sheer drop of 2,500 feet.

*Girls are a burden, but if one has no son*
*It is strange how fond one can grow, even of a girl!*
*. . . The clothes she was wearing are still hanging on the pegs;*
*The rest of her medicine is still at the side of her bed.*
*I bore her coffin down the long village street;*
*I watched them heap the small mound on her grave.*
*Do not tell me it is only a mile away;*
*What lies between us is all Eternity.*

He seems, however, soon to have put his sorrow out of his mind for about this time he wrote two poems called 'Contentment':

*For ten years I had no home of my own;*
*All the time I suffered from hunger and cold.*
*For three years I held a Censor's post*
*And was also charged with the writing of many rescripts.*
*I could buy wine, but had no time to drink it;*
*The hills were there; but I never got away.*
*All the while, there were things I was longing to do;*
*I was tied fast, I could not do as I chose.*
*But ever since the morning I came back to the Wei*
*My life has drifted like an unmoored boat.*
*My heart is set beyond the things of the world;*
*I have no happiness, but also no sorrow.*
*One meal a day, and never any meat;*
*Summer and winter, the same cotton dress.*
*When it is cold, I grow more slovenly than ever,*
*And days pass without my combing my head.*
*I get up in the morning only when I am tired of bed;*
*I lie down to rest only when I have drunk my fill.*
*The heart of man cannot be more than content;*
*And if little contents me, why should I seek for more?*

The second poem runs:

*In my early years, when I travelled from place to place*
*I had little idea of what the world was at.*
*In middle life when I held an official post*
*I saw to the full the things that happen at Court.*
*To live without a job had been difficult indeed;*
*But to be an official I found harder still,*
*Above all for me, who am downright and self-willed;*
*At every turn I found myself giving offence.*
*If I went ahead, I ran straight into trouble;*
*To 'foul driving'[1] I could not bend my will.*
*Ten years of this and the last remaining breath*

[1] Crooked methods of getting on.

*Of force and freedom had vanished from my breast.*
*But from the moment I came to my home in the fields*
*I felt a sudden lifting of grief and shame. . . .*
*The world I had known seemed far, far away;*
*It and I would never meet again!*

To the same mood and presumably to the summer of 812 belongs 'At the Beginning of Summer during a respite in my illness':

*How long is the time that I have been living in the world?*
*It comes by now to fourteen thousand days!*
*And when I think about how those days have been spent,*
*It has been in sickness or, if not, in grief.*
*But now that I am older my sorrows are passing away;*
*With the coming of the years my health has begun to mend.*
*With a sudden joy I feel that to body and mind*
*A lull has come; both are free of pain.*
*And all the more, now that summer has begun*
*With this pleasant month of clear and tranquil skies.*
*A light wind blows on my lined coat;*
*I am not cold, and yet am not hot.*
*I shift my couch into the shade of the trees,*
*And all day long what is it that I do?*
*Sometimes I drink a single bowl of tea;*
*Sometimes I sing two lines of verse.*
*Within, no cares or troubles to press upon my heart;*
*Without, no task to chain me with official ties.*
*Surely if to-day I am not content with my lot*
*I need not expect ever to be content!*

Perhaps to 812 (many of the poems written during this period of retirement are difficult to date exactly) belongs the series of short poems, two of which I will quote from *Chinese Poems* (1946):[1]

*I hug my pillow and do not speak a word,*
*In my empty room no sound stirs.*
*Who knows that, all day abed,*
*I am not ill and am not even asleep?*

*Turned to jade are the boy's rosy cheeks,*
*To his sick temples the frost of winter clings. . . .*
*Do not wonder that my body sinks to decay;*
*Though my limbs are old, my heart is older yet.*

To the same series belongs 'The Village at Night':

*The grass of the meadows is streaked with frost, the voices of the insects creak;*

[1] Pp 150, 151.

*South of the village and north of the village not a soul stirs.*
*I go out alone and stand at the gate, looking at the open fields;*
*The buckwheat-flowers, in the light of the moon, shine white as snow.*

and finally this, written in depression, during a sleepless night:

*While I listen to the insects' 'crick, crick', the night drags on and on,*
*Gloomier yet now summer is gone and the clouds hang dark and low.*
*Every note of their dismal song sounds nearer than the last;*
*They seem to be afraid I may doze off and miss a moment of my gloom.*

'But I must not give myself over to idleness,' Po writes in 812, 'fold my hands and merely trail my skirt':

*I am learning to be a farmer, which is no mean job;*
*Friends and relations, please do not laugh!*
*I fully intend, after the New Year,*
*To take a hand myself at the hoe and plough.*

We hear, in subsequent poems, a good deal about fishing excursions and desultory reading; but nothing about hoeing or ploughing, and it does not appear that his resolution to make himself useful was ever fulfilled. He seems to have communicated very little with his friends in Ch'ang-an, at any rate during the first three years at Hsia-kuei; but late one autumn (probably that of 813) the sight of the 'white dew-drops, large as pearls' lying on the withered lotus-leaves reminded him of an autumn excursion with Yüan Tsung-chien, an older cousin of Yüan Chên, to the shores of the Serpentine at Ch'ang-an, and he sent Tsung-chien a poem in which he says:

*At the north-eastern corner of the Serpentine*
*Was a pool where in autumn hardly anyone came;*
*You and I that day were all alone.*
*In the pink smartweed hidden insects sang;*
*Our lean steeds trampled the green moss.*
*It was just when autumn begins to turn to winter—*
*The very moment of the year that I write to you now.*
*Things are looking just as they looked then;*
*The state of the times has not altered at all.*[1]
*The only change is that you and I are apart,*
*And for years on end you have not written me a word.*

Yüan Chên was still in his small post at Chiang-ling. In 811 a sympathetic friend sent him a perfect concubine, tidy, obedient and unassuming. She was called Miss An, and bore him a son whom he called Ching, which was the name of an ancient kingdom that had centred round Chiang-ling. Yüan Chên seemed infinitely far away. Letters from Chiang-ling, as we know from a poem written by Po in 812, often took nearly a year to reach Hsia-kuei. In the poem 'Night Rain' he speaks of

[1] I.e. the Government hostile to Po was still in power.

his longing for Yüan Chên and at the same time of a sorrow 'locked in the depths of his heart', which may have been connected, perhaps, with the tragic circumstances of his mother's death:

*There is one that I love in a far, far land;*
*There is something that harrows me, tied in the depths of my heart.*
*So far is the land that I cannot visit him;*
*I can only gaze in longing, day on day.*
*So deep the sorrow that it cannot be torn away;*
*Never a night but I brood on it, hour by hour.*
*And on such a night as this, when the lamp grows dim,*
*Lying alone, waiting for dawn to break*
*In the autumn sky, with the tempest at its height,*
*If I do not learn what the fasting Dhutas preach,*[1]
*How shall I banish the thoughts that rise from the past?*

In the autumn of 813 Po records (at second-hand) a 'strange experience': 'About six miles south-east of Hsia-kuei in Hua-chou there is a village called Yen-nien. South-west of the village stands what was once a private oratory; but now no monk lives there. In the autumn of the eighth year of Yüan Ho (A.D. 813), in the seventh month, my cousin Hao came from Hua-chou to visit me, by the road which passes the oratory. When he reached the oratory door he saw a number of women and girls of various ages, dressed in yellow, sitting in the chancel and talking so loudly that their conversation was audible at the door.

'Being hot and thirsty with riding he determined to go inside and rest for a little, and ask for something to drink. Finding that his attendant, Hsiao Shih-ch'ing, was not in sight he dismounted and tied his horse's bridle to the door-post. When he looked up, the women had all disappeared! He thought they had retired into the inner room, but when he looked there he found no one. Then he thought perhaps they were behind the altar-wall; but when he looked there, again he found no one. He then examined the walls all the way round the building and found that there was no breach or gap. He went back to the place where he had first seen them conversing; the dust on the floor had not been disturbed, there was not a foot-print anywhere.

'Then he knew that the people he had seen were not human beings. He was too much frightened to wait for his servant. Mounting his horse he galloped straight to my house and told me what had happened. I too was astonished and questioned him about what he had heard the apparitions say. He was able to remember a good deal, more than I have space to repeat. Most of it was about an old man whom they called Yin

[1] The arts of self-discipline taught by Indian ascetics.

Wang. As far as could be made out from what they had said, they seemed to be drawing up a list of Wang's misdeeds.

'The place is about a mile and three-quarters from my house, so one day we went there together. We discovered that there had actually lived in the village an old man called Wang Yin, who made up his mind to live in a building which lay a few hundred paces east of the oratory. He repaired the garden walls and house, built a threshing-floor, planted trees, and the day after his operations were completed, immediately moved in. He had not been in the house an hour when he fell dead. By next day his wife was dead, and in a very short time two of his sons with their wives and one grandson were also dead. There only remained one son, called Ming-chin, who was so unnerved that he did not know what to do. However, thinking that the site was in some way unlucky, he pulled down the house, felled the trees, removed in the night, and eventually came to no harm. . . .

'In the autumn of the next year my cousin and I, in the course of an excursion, again visited the place. There was nothing left of Wang's house except the garden walls. The well had collapsed and the fireplace was in ruins. No one from the village dared to settle there.

'To what agency must we attribute these occurrences? To Destiny—or to Chance? Was the site inauspicious for human habitation or had the Wang family committed some secret crime for which the spirits had determined it must pay the penalty? To these questions I can find no answer, but have inscribed the story on the wall of the shrine, that it may await the discrimination of the curious.'

The reason the apparitions called Wang Yin 'Yin Wang' is that ghosts turn everything wrong way about. The Chinese have always had a great fondness for ghost-stories. Down till the ninth century 'straight' stories of everyday happenings were very rare. The great development of the short story in China took place in the second half of the ninth century, chiefly after Po Chü-i's death. It is, however, to Yüan Chên and Po Hsing-chien (Po Chü-i's younger brother) that the two most famous realistic love-stories, *Ts'ui Ying-ying*[1] and *Miss Li*, are attributed. Dates make it improbable that Po Hsing-chien wrote *Miss Li* and it is, as I have said, very uncertain whether it was Yüan Chên who wrote *Ts'ui Ying-ying*. Po's little ghost-story is probably typical of hundreds of queer tales that were told on winter evenings in the farm at Hsia-kuei.

A poem called 'Hard Weather at my Village Home', written in the twelfth month of 813, shows, among other things, that Po's resolution to make himself useful in that year had not taken effect:

*In this eighth year, during the twelfth month,*
*For five days the snow has fallen fast.*

[1] For Ch'ên Yin-k'o on the Ying-ying story, see *Academia Sinica* (Hist. and Phil.), X, 1.

*Bamboo and fir have shrivelled up and died;*
*Yet I know of people who do not possess a coat!*
*I turn my gaze down the village byways and lanes;*
*Of ten houses, eight or nine are poor.*
*The north wind blows sharp as a sword;*
*Their cotton rags hardly cover their bones.*
*They can only burn a fire of bramble and straw;*
*Sadly they sit, waiting all night for the dawn.*
*I see now what misery is brought*
*By hard winters to those who till the land.*
*And what of me, during these days of snow?*
*In my thatched cottage I am barred from wind and cold.*
*Tucked well in with blanket on top of rug*
*Sitting or lying, I have all the warmth I need,*
*Lucky to avoid the pangs of hunger and cold*
*And again to be free from the labours of the field.*
*Thinking of the others I feel deeply ashamed*
*And ask myself, why I alone should escape.*

The first warm days of 814 delighted him and once more he idled without remorse:

*From the Southern Hills the snow is not all gone;*
*On the sunless crests I still see patches of white.*
*In the western gully no ice is left;*
*Its spring freshets are tinged with new jade.*
*The eastern wind has blown but a few days,*
*Yet the insects are stirring and sprouting bushes break;*
*Softly the mild season plies its task,*
*Never a day but they feel its secret touch.*
*Dearly loving the warm and gentle air*
*I came and brushed a rock at the side of the stream.*
*There I sat, with no thought of home*
*Till the evening birds suddenly raised their cry.*
*Through a tangle of mugwort, screened by mulberries and dates,*
*In the covering dusk glimmered a smoky flame.*
*Back in my home I ask about the evening meal;*
*My servant is cooking a soup of shepherd's-purse.*

Country people commonly used shepherd's-purse to make a vegetable soup. Certain preparations made from this plant were supposed to cure inflammation of the eyes, and it may have been partly as a medicine that Po's family had provided this soup for his supper.

Though Hsia-kuei looked towards the mountains, the country immediately round it was flat and uninteresting. Soon, like most people

who have lived for several years in the country doing nothing in particular, Po began to grow restive:

*High and low, these barrows of ancient days,*
*Scored by the paths that sheep and cattle have trod.*
*I stood alone on the highest mound of all,*
*My heart heavy with thoughts of far away.*
*I turned at last and looked at the village where I live;*
*All that I saw was a waste of fields and grass.*
*The people of the village do not like blossom;*
*Chestnuts and dates are the only trees they plant.*
*Ever since the day I made my home in this place*
*I have hardly been conscious of the season's beauty as it passed;*
*Flowers are few and the oriole seldom comes,*
*Year after year the spring grows furtively old.*

He had managed 'by thinking of the time before she was born' to drive away his sorrow at the death of Golden Bells. But a chance encounter with her foster-nurse brought back the old grief:

*Ruined and ill—a man of two score;*
*Pretty and guileless—a little girl of three.*
*Not a boy—but still better than nothing:*
*To soothe one's feeling—from time to time a kiss!*
*There came a day—they suddenly took her from me;*
*Her soul's shadow wandered I know not where.*
*And when I remember how just at the time she died*
*She lisped strange sounds, beginning to learn to talk,*
*Then I know that the ties of flesh and blood*
*Only bind us to a load of grief and sorrow.*
*At last, by thinking of the time before she was born,*
*By thought and reason I drove the pain away.*
*Since my heart forgot her, many days have passed*
*And three times winter has changed to spring.*
*This morning, for a little, the old grief came back,*
*Because, in the road, I met her foster-nurse.*

In the summer of 814 Po's younger brother, Po Hsing-chien, was summoned by Lu T'an (749–817) to serve on his staff at Tzu-chou, about 130 miles north-west of Chungking. They had been as inseparable, Po says, as 'a thing and its shadow'. In his poem of parting he speaks once more of his failing sight, and begs Hsing-chien not to desert him for long. But such appointments seldom lasted for less than three years. There seems at Hsia-kuei to have been only one even tolerably congenial neighbour, a Mr. Ch'ang who lived about a mile away and who in a district where 'one meets no one but farmers' was, as Po not very flatteringly puts it, 'better society than no society at all'; but round

about 814 this serviceable neighbour died. Po is grieved that his friends at Ch'ang-an do not write to him. It is possible that more letters may have been written than actually arrived. Postal arrangements were haphazard. Officials and their friends entrusted private letters to an official dispatch-carrier, if one happened to be going in the desired direction; ordinary people gave letters to any traveller who would undertake to deliver them. A letter from Li Shên (the 'Little Li' of the later poems) sent from Ch'ang-an at the end of the third month, 814, did not reach him till the end of the ninth month, though the journey was rather shorter than that from London to Brighton.

It was perhaps while this letter was on its belated way that he wrote to Yüan Chên:

*I have been ill for four long years*
*Yet friends and relations have not written a word.*
*In my changed position I could not really expect*
*To go on knowing the people I knew before.*
*How is it that you, alone of all my friends,*
*Living so far away in the land of Ch'u,*
*Have kept a heart, though we parted long ago,*
*That nothing can change, are a rock that cannot be moved?*
*It matters to you that I am wretched and ill;*
*Your letter is full of kindly exhortation.*
*You begin by begging me not to be so depressed;*
*You end by bidding me try to eat more rice.*
*And I, pitying your plight so far from home,*
*Have thrice sent you cash to buy clothes and food—*
*A full sum of two hundred thousand.*
*Not that I thought you were bent on food and clothes,*
*But only because I felt tenderly towards you.*
*That you should worry about how little I eat,*
*That I should want to make sure you are warmly dressed—*
*Has not anything to do with my being ill,*
*Or the sorrows and set-backs heaped on you by Fate.*
*When friendship is life-long the even tenor of the heart*
*Holds, unbroken by stretches of shallow and deep.*

Two hundred thousand cash was nearly half a year's salary at the rate Po was being paid before his retirement in 811, and it is surprising that he had such a sum at his disposal. Some of it, of course, may have been sent during 810, before he retired. But it will be remembered that he was at that time very short of money, and was obliged to appeal for a higher salary in order to be able to get his mother properly attended to. It is possible that what enabled him to send such a large sum to Yüan Chên was the sale of his house in the Hsüan-p'ing Ward at Ch'ang-an.

But the position which Yüan Chên held at Chiang-ling entitled him to a salary of 300,000, and as living was certainly much less expensive there than at Ch'ang-an, it is difficult to see why Po thought he needed so much money. Perhaps the poem itself answers the question; Po sent this huge sum 'only because he felt tenderly' towards Yüan Chên and took pleasure in showering largesse upon him. But the household at Hsia-kuei may very well have felt that his generosity was excessive.

Yüan Chên was not quite his only correspondent. He gracefully acknowledges another letter that at about this time gave him great pleasure:

*Since spring came so dim my eyes I had quite lost heart;*
*I had used up all my Golden Thread and still they were not cured.*
*But it proved that to get a letter from you was better than getting drugs;*
*When I broke the seal, before I read, my eyes grew suddenly bright.*

The sender was Ch'ien Hui (A.D. 755–829), a former colleague at the Palace and son of one of the best-known T'ang poets, Ch'ien Ch'i (*c.* 720–780). Tincture of Golden Thread[1] was used for dropping into inflamed eyes. It was to Ch'ien Hui again, and at the same time to another friend at Court, Ts'ui Ch'ün (772–832), that in the autumn of 814 Po addressed a 'poem in cadenced metre' (*lu-shih*) of no less than two hundred lines. The form demands so strict an antithesis both of meaning and tones that a *lü-shih* of over twenty lines is always something of a *tour de force*. Po and Yuan Chên had become famous for their 'long *lü-shih*', which they exchanged as a kind of literary game. In the present example, after a conventional description of his rustic existence at Hsia-kuei, he recalls (in the highly ornate and allusive language considered appropriate to such a subject) the brilliant scenes that they had witnessed together at Court. Both of them, it seems, had sent him supplies of various kinds, including medicine. He hints that they had also made attempts to influence the authorities on his behalf and get him recalled. This, he says, is like 'wasting good make-up on the countenance of Mu-mu', a legendary lady of horrific appearance; nothing they say in his favour can remove the distaste with which he is viewed by the present Government. Moreover, from Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu he has learnt 'detachment from self' and 'the doctrine of the identity of opposites':

*To recover my health I do service to the Medicine King;*
*To quieten my agitation I have recourse to Dhyāna.*
*To guard my soul I practise Sitting and Forgetting;*
*To cleave my folly I seek the Sword of Wisdom. . . .*

[1] *Coptis Teeta*. In Chinese *Huang-lien*, anglicized as Honglane. The best comes from Ya-chou, some 200 miles west of Chungking.

And he ends once more[1] with the assurance that he and the world have 'forgotten one another' for ever.

There is in this final passage of the long poem a curious mixture of Taoism and Buddhism. He jumps from Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, the two legendary founders of Taoism, to the Medicine King (Bhaishajya), a Buddhist deity; and side by side with Buddhist meditation (*Dhyāna*) he speaks of 'Sitting and Forgetting' (*Tso Wang*), which was its Taoist equivalent, and then of the Sword of Wisdom[2]—a Buddhist expression. Another long poem,[3] describing a visit that he paid to the Wu-chên Monastery[4] in the eighth month of 814, also ends with an assurance that he will never return to public life:

*Like a captive fish loosed into the Great Sea*
*To my marble basin I shall not ever return.*

It is a very different work from the displays of literary ingenuity that I have just mentioned. It is written in a freer form of verse, without undue parallelism, in simple and direct language. There are some Buddhist allusions, not of a recondite kind, but none of the examination-hall tags and reminiscences that he strings together when writing to impress literary rivals. The effect of the poem depends not on isolated passages but on its whole construction. It is like a perfectly architected building which could not in its very nature have been smaller or larger; whereas many long Chinese poems seem merely like short poems that have for some reason been unable to stop. For this very reason it does not lend itself to quotation, and I must refer the reader to the complete translation which will be found not only in *Chinese Poems* but also in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*.

Po arrived at the Monastery on the fifteenth of the eighth month. It must be by a poetic fiction that he also gives this date to a short poem which was clearly not written at the monastery:

*In the middle of autumn on the fifteenth night*
*A dazzling moon shone into my portico.*
*Wine was before me, but suddenly I could not drink;*
*I was thinking of those who have been my life's delight.*
*Two there are with whom my heart is one;*
*Ts'ui and Ch'ien, who live beyond my reach;*
*There are those to whom my very soul is tied,*
*Yüan and Li,[5] both so far away!*
*Some of them have flown on high to the blue clouds,[6]*
*Some of them have fallen among the rivers and lakes.*

1 See above, p. 79.
2 *Prajñā*, 'Higher Intelligence'.
3 See *Chinese Poems* (1946), pp 141–149.
4 About 40 miles south of his home.
5 Li Chien (764–821) had been exiled to Li-chou in Hunan.
6 'In the clouds above' means at Court.

*Far or near, in favour or in banishment—*
*I have not seen them for four or five years. . . .*
*A cloudless night, the loveliest moment of the year,*
*These are things that cannot be had at will,*
*That cannot be recaptured; the impatient moon*
*Moment by moment sinks into the south-west.*
*We shall not be parted for ever, and yet—the pang*
*That you are not with me on such a night as this!*

It is odd that Po should call this poem an 'imitation of T'ao Ch'ien'. So far from being unable to drink because he was saddened by the absence of his friends, T'ao Ch'ien on such occasions drowned his sorrow in wine and more wine.[1] All Po's intimate poems (as opposed to his ballads and songs and political pieces) belong to a general tradition that goes back to T'ao Ch'ien; but there is nothing either in the form or content of this particular poem which is not completely typical of Po Chü-i himself.

Since the summer of 813, when his mourning for his mother came to an end, it would have been possible for Po to re-enter public life, had he desired to do so and been able to obtain the necessary support. But the Government was still in the hands of Li Chi-fu, whom he had offended in 808,[2] and in the last two years the few prominent supporters who might have used their influence on his behalf had disappeared from the scene one by one. P'ei Chi,[3] on whose help both he and Yüan Chên had so much relied, died in 813. In the first month of 814 Li Chiang (764–830), who had encouraged Po's literary efforts in early days and supported him in his later political career, fell ill and retired. Soon afterwards the eunuch T'u-t'u, for whose original fall Po had been largely responsible but who had since had many ups and downs, was brought back to Court and once more became Commander of the Palace Armies. During the same year another powerful friend, Hsieh Ts'un-ch'êng, also died. He is famous for the stand that he made in 813 against the attempts of the Emperor to shield a swindling Buddhist monk named Chien-hsü who had amassed a great fortune by professing to be able to obtain promotion for those who made it worth his while to do so.

But on the third of the tenth month, Li Chi-fu suddenly died, at the age of 56. Chi-fu was an able administrator and the author or inspirer of several important reference works on the geography and administration of the Empire. Contemporary anecdotes show him as light-hearted, sensible and somewhat cynical. He was fond of fine clothes and good food, but was not interested in accumulating superfluous possessions, and apart from his house in the An-i Ward at the Capital never acquired

[1] See *Chinese Poems* (1946), p. 107.

[2] See above, pp. 64 and 75.

[3] See above, p 64.

other mansions or estates. He liked people to enjoy themselves, and in 812 suggested that as the worst of China's internal troubles seemed now to be over the time had come for the Court to relax a little from the austerities imposed upon it in the early years of Hsien Tsung's reign (806–810). The suggestion was opposed by Li Chiang, with whom he got on very badly. He reminded Chi-fu that fifty large districts were still not in allegiance, that the Tibetans were menacing the Kansu frontier and that the State granaries were empty. On another occasion, when accused of making over-optimistic reports to the Throne, he replied, 'But surely to give his Majesty pleasure and set his mind at rest can't be a bad thing to do!' During some ten years spent in provincial posts he had ample occasion to see what harm the incompetence and rapacity of provincial officials was doing to the reputation of the dynasty. When he became Chief Minister he insisted upon these posts being given to highly qualified people. He also ordered a report to be made about the whole system of Civil Service appointments and remuneration. As a consequence of this report many sinecures were abolished and many injustices removed. Most of its recommendations were in force till the end of the dynasty.

In qualifying Li Chi-fu as 'sensible' I had in mind the story that when, about 800, he became Governor of Jao-chou in Kiangsi, he found the Governor's residence deserted and overgrown with brambles. Four Governors in succession, it appeared, had died there mysteriously; the house was supposed to be haunted by maleficent demons and had been abandoned. He at once sent for the key, had the place put in order and moved in. His staff was eventually induced to follow his example.

Such was Po's enemy. As regards the examination affairs of 808 Po's own view was that examination candidates should be judged on the merit of their papers, irrespective of whether the opinions they expressed were congenial to the Government. Li Chi-fu looked at the matter in a very different way. He regarded the whole affair as a political move engineered by 'P'ei Chi and his gang' (*tang*) in the hope of ousting him from the Premiership. He was, however, far from being a vindictive man ('he never sought to harm those who had incurred his displeasure'). Early in his career he had been dismissed from the Capital by Lu Chih (754–805), and when Lu in turn (in 795) was banished to Chung-chou in Szechwan Lu's enemies arranged that Li Chi-fu should be sent as Governor of Chung-chou, in the belief that he would take steps to revenge himself on the man who had ruined his career. But on the contrary Li Chu-fu and Lu Chih at once became great friends. There is no evidence that Li Chi-fu took any steps against Po when he became head of the Government early in 811, and but for the death of his mother Po might have hung on at Court for a long time. But there is little

doubt that his main reason for staying on at Hsia-kuei after his mourning ended was the knowledge that he had nothing to hope for from the present regime.

By the twelfth month there had come a complete swing of the pendulum. Wei Kuan-chih (A.D. 760–821), the examiner who had originally passed the offending candidates in 808 and had come to the fore as a protégé of P'ei Chi, became Chief Minister. At about the same time Po Chü-i accepted the post of assistant-secretary to the Crown Prince. It was a great come-down. The job was one of the humblest at Court, and the salary considerably less than what he had been receiving before he retired. He was not even *the* assistant-secretary: he was merely one of several. The Crown Prince, a boy of nineteen, had become heir-apparent unexpectedly, owing to the death of a brother. He had a taste for poetry and knew of Yüan Chên as a poet, for the eunuch Intendant of the Army at Chiang-ling had, when at Ch'ang-an on business, shown him some of Yüan Chên's verses. As Yüan's name was always coupled with that of Po, it is probable that the Prince had also heard of Po Chü-i and may possibly have asked to have him in his household. But there is no evidence that Po ever had any personal contact with the Prince, and it seems that his duties were confined to reporting at the Palace once a day, albeit at an inconveniently early hour. He speaks of the job as 'cold' (*lêng*), in the sense in which we speak of 'cold comfort', and complains that, living so far away from the Palace, he always finds himself 'harried by the drum', however early he gets up.

Two questions arise: why, after so many protestations that he intended to remain in retirement for ever, did he suddenly accept so humble a post, and why did not Wei Kuan-chih, whom Po had so stoutly defended in 808, manage to do something better for him now that he was in power? No doubt the main reason for his change of mind was the change of Government at Ch'ang-an. But apart from this, it is clear that the lack of congenial society at Hsia-kuei was beginning to tell upon him, and the departure of his younger brother in the summer of 814 must have left him particularly desolate. A major reason may have been the probability that Yüan Chên would soon be returning to the Capital. In the autumn of 814 the Commander of Huai-hsi[1] died; his son Wu Yüan-chi took over the Command without authorization from the Government and was evidently prepared to resist any attempt to eject him from the post. If this had occurred in an outlying province the Government would probably have let him have his way. But the Commander of Huai-hsi was in a position at any moment to cut the line of river and canal transport by which grain reached the Capital from the east and he was also within striking distance of the Eastern Capital at

[1] Western and south-western part of the modern province of Honan.

Lo-yang. In the tenth month the Government decided to launch an attack on Wu Yüan-chi, and Yen Shou (A.D. 746–822), under whom Yüan-Chên had been serving at Chiang-ling, was put in general charge of the campaign. Yüan went with him to Southern Honan. He was already more than two hundred miles nearer home and if things had gone well he would no doubt soon have been given a post at the Capital. But Yen Shou, who had shown great ability in organizing similar campaigns at the beginning of the reign, was now 68. He gained a temporary popularity by distributing huge largess to his troops; then for months on end he shut himself in his tent and refused to see anybody. In the second month of 815 he was cashiered, and Yüan Chên was ordered to report at Ch'ang-an, where he probably arrived early in the third month.

To the question why Po Chü-i was offered so insignificant a post various tentative answers can be suggested. Wei Kuan-chih, like other Chief Ministers, was dependent on support inside the Palace—that is to say, from the eunuchs. T'u-t'u, the eunuch general whom Po had mercilessly attacked in 809 was, as we have seen, again in power and the new Minister naturally did not want to spoil his start by a head-on collision with the eunuchs. Again, Wei was not the only Chief Minister. At this period the designation was applied to several people simultaneously. One or two of them were usually at high posts in the provinces and were consequently not in a position to influence what went on in the Capital. Two or three were usually at Court and in actual control of the Government. When Wei Kuan-chih was appointed there were already two Chief Ministers at the Capital, Wu Yuan-hêng (758–815) and Chang Hung-ching (760–824). Po had been on friendly terms with Wu's family since very early days; Yüan-hêng was something of a poet and the two exchanged amicable verses when Po returned to the Capital. It is probable that in the political sphere too he had Wu Yüan-hêng on his side. Chang Hung-ching, on the contrary, though we have no direct evidence of this, was probably not so well disposed. He had originally been a protégé of Tu Yu (735–812), whom Po had attacked for clinging to office long after he had reached the statutory retiring-age of 70. This was certainly long resented by Tu Yu's family; for years afterwards we find Tu Yu's grandson busily engaged in traducing Po's memory. Another possible indication is the fact that Chang's son was a friend of Li Chi-fu's son.

Finally, we must not, in trying to discover why Po was given so humble a post, leave altogether out of account the possibility that he was not considered a very capable official. He certainly expressed great dislike for office work at the few periods in his life when he had to undertake it. Moreover, despite the general reverence for literature that has always prevailed in China, the opinion was gaining ground that

poets were *wu-i yü li*, 'no use at administration', and to be known chiefly as a poet was a handicap in public life. Po himself was conscious of this, and in a poem addressed at about this time to Yang Chü-yüan, a well-known poet from whom, as we have seen, Yüan Chên had taken daily lessons in the art of versification before he met Po Chü-i, he says:

*You write well enough as it is, don't write any better;*
*For what is spoiling your official career is your reputation as a poet.*

# CHAPTER VII

THE period of Po's retirement at Hsia-kuei was so entirely uneventful and he was so little affected by what was going on in the world at large that most of the previous chapter was necessarily in the main a sort of anthology; his poems at this period were his life, and apart from them there is little to record. It is now possible to revert to a method more normally biographical.

His new house was in the Chao-kuo Ward, just south of the Eastern Market. Next door lived Yuan Chên's cousin, Yüan Tsung-chien, and it pleased Po to think that 'not only we to the end of our days shall constantly see each other; our sons and grandsons in days to come will live wall to wall'. Soon after he came back to Ch'ang-an he went to have a look at the office where he had worked as a collator of texts in 802 to 805. He stood hesitating for a while and then, without knocking, opened the door of Room Two. The 'pale-faced young clerk of old days' had come back as a grey-haired Assistant-Secretary. The officials working in the room did not know him, most of them had been appointed since he left. He felt kinship only with the pine-tree and bamboos in the courtyard; for he had planted them himself. He remembered writing his name on the wall, and brushed away the dust to see if it was still there.

About the scene of his meeting with Yüan Chên after five years of separation we are told nothing. He evidently found him much changed, for that evening he wrote that every day of the four years he had been away seemed to have left its mark on people's faces, and that they had lost 'nine parts in ten' of their animation. 'If this saddens me when I meet people casually in the street, think what I must have felt this morning when I saw you!' One may suppose or at any rate hope that they were a good deal together in the few weeks that Yüan Chên spent at Ch'ang-an; but there are only two references to their seeing one another after the initial meeting. They went with Li Shên (775–846) on an excursion to the south of the city. Yüan and he were in a hurry to get home, but Po urged them to stay till nightfall:

*On a spring picnic in old haunts do not turn your backs;*
*Rare is such blossom and rarer yet a meeting such as this.*
*Drink at least what is left in your cups; I am watching the shadows grow.*
*We still have time to be through the gates before the curfew sounds.*

Riding home after another excursion to the south of Ch'ang-an Po and Yüan capped each other's improvised 'courtship-songs' all the way

from the Prince's Dyke (about four miles outside the city) to Po's house in the Chao-kuo Ward. The friends who were with them 'had nowhere to put their mouths', that is to say, could not get a word in edgeways. Such songs (*yen-tz'u*) were always couched in extremely veiled language, the lady to whom the gallantry was addressed figuring in the poem as a bird, flower or the like. This convention was assisted by the fact that women were often called by the names of birds or flowers. Two *yen-tz'u* attributed to Yüan Chên are preserved, one of which runs:

*Since spring came I constantly find myself east of the Sungs' house;*
*Trailing my sleeves and with open bosom I wait for a favourable wind.*
*The oriole has retired, the willow is in darkness, not a voice can be heard;*
*Nothing is there but the blossom by the wall, filling the tree with red.*

I imagine that this is about a lady called something like Peach-blossom, who had elder sisters called Oriole and Willow. When the sisters are safely out of the way, Peach-blossom comes to the wall, and no doubt helps the lover to climb over. Yüan Chên included over a hundred such songs in the collection of his works that he made in 812, but subsequent editors have removed them.

Po's occupations at this time, in default of any serious work to do at the Crown Prince's apartments, seem chiefly to have been of a retrospective and melancholy nature. He went and had a look at the house of Kao Ying, the old friend and patron who had been his examiner in 800 and had died in 811. He wept copiously, but could not go in and 'lament' in the correct, ritual way; for the house had been sold to strangers. He also called on P'ei Chi's brother and, feeling that he had not been very forthcoming, he afterwards sent him this poem:

*Do not wonder that when we met I was not very amusing;*
*Thoughts of the past beset the present as I stood by the Halberd Gate.*[1]
*Like Chang the elder and Chang the younger you are too much alike;*
*I cannot look on your clear-cut brow without feeling sad.*

The two brothers Chang Po-chieh and Chang Chung-chieh were proverbial for their likeness.

On the twenty-fifth of the third month Yüan Chên was appointed Marshal of T'ung-chou, about 140 miles north-east of Chungking. Nominally a marshal was the fourth in rank in the administration of a district (*chou*). But since the seventh century most of his functions had passed into the hands of the local military commander's civilian staff. The post was given either to deserving elderly officials who were no longer capable of doing any serious work or, as in Yüan Chên's case, to statesmen whom the Government of the day thought it safer to eliminate

[1] A Gate of Honour that high State officers were allowed to attach to their houses.

from the political scene. Po, as we have seen,[1] attributed Yüan's banishment in 810 to the influence of the eunuchs and it was presumably they who were chiefly responsible for this second exile. Yüan Chên left the Capital on the thirtieth of the third month. As a Court Official Po could not, except under instructions from the Palace, leave the County of Ch'ang-an. The frontier between Ch'ang-an and Han-chung was the western bank of a little stream called the Li and here, at a village about nine miles south-west of the city, the two friends parted. That night Po sent Yüan the poem:

*In hurry and agitation we parted at the village of P'u-ch'ih;*
*Dazed and stunned I turned back from the bridge that crosses the Li.*
*At the city gate I suddenly woke from the fumes of parting wine;*
*In a single moment my heart was full with a thousand longings and regrets.*

Yüan Chên sent back the answer:

*The time before when I went away we were parted for five years;*
*Who can say this time how long our parting will last?*
*Farewell, Lo-t'ien! Do not be so sad!*
*Worse could have happened; I might not have come to Ch'ang-an at all!*

Probably they both knew from the first that Yüan would not be allowed to remain in the Capital. The menace of a fresh parting seems to have clouded the few weeks that they spent together. It is possible, too, that Yüan was somewhat preoccupied. His exemplary concubine, Miss An, who came to him in 811, had died in 814. After his arrival at his new place of exile we find him married to a second wife, P'ei Jou-chih, who came of the same family as P'ei Chi (the P'eis of Ho-tung). She was a literary lady, and some of her poems are preserved. It seems likely that he had been given permission to come back to Ch'ang-an for a short time in order to get married. If this is so, it would account for Yüan's visit having been, from Po Chü-i's point of view, rather a disappointing episode.

In the early summer it rained incessantly and going became so bad that the Government offices closed. Knowing that Yüan Chên's cousin Yüan Tsung-chien would be at home and at leisure Po 'braved the puddles and mud' to pay a call upon him, bringing some poems that Yuan Chên had sent, that they might read them through together. Tsung-chien was Po's next door neighbour. But their houses were in different Wards and there was apparently no direct approach from one house to the other, though they 'shared the green spring time of the same willows'. To Tsung-chien again he writes in much happier mood now that the rain has stopped:

[1] See above, p. 71.

*I go into the Hall and make my morning bow;*
*I retire to the Gallery and eat my early meal.*
*Then back I ride to the Chao-kuo Ward;*
*The horse is unsaddled; the master goes to bed.*
*There I sleep sound till noon comes,*
*And get up at last feeling thoroughly refreshed,*
*The more so at this lovely time of year*
*When after the rains the sky is soft and bright. . . .*
*In my jars is wine from Hu-hsien,*[1]
*Above my wall, the Chung-nan Hills.*
*I slept alone, and am sitting all alone,*
*With open collar, facing the cool breeze.*
*Dhyāna monks presently begin to call,*
*And writers of verse, admitted one by one.*
*If I want to talk I talk for nights on end;*
*If I need sleep, I sleep the whole day.*
*I have to attend the early levee at Court;*
*But apart from that I can do exactly as I please.*
*As I grow older my health begins to improve;*
*In so humble a post my mind is completely at rest. . . .*

And he asks how soon Yüan Tsung-chien is likely to get the promotion which will save him from his present drudgery and enable him to share some of Po's idle hours. In another poem, entitled 'Coming back from the Serpentine and finding that Yüan Eight had called' he says:

*Ever since you entered the Censorate, we have hardly ever met;*
*At the most, I am able to greet you from afar as you stand in your row at Court.*
*The moment I heard you had thought of me and come to pay me a visit*
*I was sorry I loitered by the riverside, waiting for the moon to rise.*

There were two great friends of former days with whom Po now renewed contact. Wu Tan (744–825) in his early years was an ardent Taoist. He did not marry and for many years lived the life of a Taoist recluse, eating no rice[2] and devoting himself to breath-control and other Taoist exercises. But he was the guardian of a large brood of younger brothers and nephews, who badly needed his help. He decided that it was his duty to become a wage-earner, and in 798, at the age of 54, he came to Ch'ang-an to study. In 800, in the same year as Po Chü-i, he went in for the Literary Examinations and obtained a post in the same office as Po. But he continued in his leisure to lead the same life as before, never marrying or mixing in general society, and with some Taoist book, such as the Scripture of the Yellow Court,[3] always at his

[1] About twenty miles south-west of Ch'ang-an.
[2] But only berries and wild fruits.
[3] See p. 170.

side. He lived in the An-i Ward, a noisy and crowded district just south of the Eastern Market; but, as Po said, 'A heart that is distant can create a wilderness round it'[1] and this small oasis 'south of the Market' became a miniature Taoist Paradise:

*In the Topmost Empyrean is your home;*
*Your name is with those that are listed in the Stone Hall.*
*You were sent to earth for I know not what crime,*
*Condemned to live as an exile in the world of men.*
*When the day comes that your sentence is fulfilled,*
*When you float to your home on the azure mists above,*
*Do not forget one who in the ant-heap world*
*Was examined with you and took the same degree.*

Li Chien (764–821), known to his family as the Puppy, lost his father early and was brought up by his mother, who was a devout Buddhist. She did not allow him to eat meat and in deference to her principles he remained a vegetarian all his life. But he took to Confucian studies, specializing in the *Book of Changes* and the *Spring and Autumn Chronicle.* From 802 onwards he was an intimate friend of both Yuan Chên and Po Chü-i. When (810) Yüan Chên was sending back from Chiang-ling poems containing dangerous political allusions, Li Chien was one of the two or three friends to whom Po ventured to show them. He was a good administrator and when employed at the Board of Civil Office he substituted a detailed questionnaire for the vague 'Report on Efficiency' which high officials had hitherto sent in every year to the department which reviewed appointments. This greatly facilitated the work of the department, and the time taken in dealing with the reports was cut down by a month. In a poem addressed to Li Chien Po says:

*In my early days, to guide the course of my life,*
*I went straight to* Chuang Tzu, *Chapter One.*
*But in recent years the mind is my universe;*
*I have turned towards Dhyāna of the Southern School.*
*Without, I accept the world on its own terms;*
*Within I break the bounds that the senses impose.*
*Abroad, I have no distaste for town or Court;*
*At home, I feel no yearning for the haunts of men.*
*Since I learnt this art, wherever my steps lead*
*My mind is at rest, and I find I do not need*
*Bendings and stretchings*[2] *for the comfort of my limbs*
*Or rivers and lakes to set my heart at peace.*
*When I feel inclined I sometimes drink wine;*
*When free from business, I sit behind close doors,*

[1] Quoting from a poem by T'ao Ch'ien; see *Chinese Poems*, p 105, line 4.
[2] Taoist exercises similar to the Hatha-yoga of the Hindus.

*Silent and still, far into the hours of night*
*And next day sleep sound till the sun is high.*
*In autumn I am not afflicted by the long nights,*
*In spring I do not regret the passage of the days.*
*I have schooled my body to forget if it is young or old,*
*My heart to feel the same about life and death.*
*In the talk that we had when I saw you yesterday*
*You gave what they call a 'heart and backbone'*[1] *to my thoughts.*
*For my Way too is one 'that cannot be told'*
*And but for you I could never have forced it into words.*[2]

Something must here be said about 'the Dhyāna (Meditation) of the Southern School' to which Po refers in this poem. In the poems written during his period of retirement there are scattered allusions to Buddhism and to Meditation practices, but he does not seem to have been much in touch with Buddhist monks or to have actively pursued any form of Buddhistic study or discipline. As we have seen, he sank during this period into a kind of indifferentism, which he declared to be worth more 'than all the potations of T'ao Ch'ien or the *dhyāna* of the Patriarch Hui-nêng'. His visit to the Wu-chên Monastery in the autumn of 814 was that of a tourist not of a pilgrim. He was deeply moved by the beauty both of the monastery itself and of its surroundings. But the description he gives in the long poem to which I have already referred is a purely emotional one; it is not the record of a religious experience. But after his return to Ch'ang-an he came more definitely under Buddhist influence and, as we have seen,[3] Dhyāna monks were frequently at his house.

The so-called Dhyāna Sect in China had its origin in the Yogāchāra School of Indian Buddhism, one of the later developments of the Greater Vehicle (Mahāyāna) and dating perhaps from the fourth century A.D. The Yogāchāras were extreme Idealists, who taught that 'Matter is only an idea; things are merely clusters of sensations'. The form of meditation they practised was a gradually ascending Dhyāna, usually divided into four stages. In Southern China, however, in the eighth century there grew up another kind of Dhyāna which discarded all the traditional Indian technique and aimed at achieving Enlightenment by a kind of spiritual leap. This was the Southern School, to which Po Chü-i tells us that he was converted at about this time. It was then at the height of its influence, and in the winter of 815 the Emperor accorded the posthumous title of 'Master of the Great Mirror' to Hui-nêng, the reputed founder of the Southern School. The Northern

[1] Reference to the *Book of History*, V. 25. 3.

[2] Reference to the opening words of the *Tao Tê Ching*. The 'forced' of the last line refers to *Tao Tê Ching*, XXV.

[3] See above, p. 96, line 13.

School regarded the Sudden Illumination method much as orthodox Freudians regard the therapeutic methods of Jung. They refused to accept Hui-nêng as the Sixth Patriarch of the Dhyāna School and set up a Sixth Patriarch of their own.

Of the monks with whom Po associated at this time the best known is Kuang-hsüan, a poet and the friend of many prominent literary people. The Emperor gave him quarters in the An-kuo Ssu, a monastery adjoining the Palace precincts and made of him a sort of Poet Laureate. He possessed a 'silver key' (special pass) which admitted him at any moment to the Emperor's presence, and Po in a complimentary poem regrets that he is no longer an Imperial official and cannot have the pleasure of meeting Kuang-hsüan in the Palace. But Po's relations with Kuang-hsüan were chiefly literary. His main religious instructor was Wei-k'uan (755–817), a disciple of Ma-tsu (died 788) who is perhaps the most famous of all Dhyāna masters, particularly in Japan, where he is known as Baso. Wei-k'uan had studied the gradual form of Dhyāna practised by the monks of the T'ien-t'ai School, he was versed in the traditional rules of monastic discipline and believed in the efficacy of formal preaching; whereas the strict adherents of the Dhyāna School conveyed instruction only by startling and enigmatic questions, rough ejaculations or even sudden physical onslaughts. It was no doubt owing to Wei-k'uan's influence that Po, though he called himself a convert to the Southern School, always regarded Dhyāna merely as an important form of spiritual discipline, and not as the only road to Salvation. Po has recorded some questions he put to Wei-k'uan, together with the answers:

*Po:* You call yourself a Dhyāna Master. How is it that you also go in for preaching? *Wei-k'uan:* I regard the Highest Illumination as taking the form of obedience to monastic rules when translated into personal conduct, that of doctrine when preached, that of Dhyāna when enacted on a mental plane. There are these three applications; but in each case it is the same thing that is applied. Rivers and lakes have different names in different places; but what they consist of is the same everywhere. The *vinaya* (corpus of monastic rules) is *dharma* (doctrine), and *dharma* cannot be separated from *dhyāna*. You are wrong to make a distinction between them. *Po:* Granted that there is no distinction, which is the best means to improve one's mental attitude? *Wei-k'uan:* There is nothing wrong with your mind. Why should you want to improve it? All you have to do is not to let it start thinking, no matter what the thought is—tainted or pure. *Po:* I can understand that I ought not to have impure thoughts. But do you really mean that I must not have pure thoughts either? *Wei-k'uan:* If you had something in your eye, you would not be any the more comfortable because it was gold-dust,

valuable though this substance may be. *Po:* If I neither cultivate my mind nor think with it, it seems to me I shall merely be behaving very much like most ordinary people. *Wei-k'uan:* The ordinary layman does not use his spiritual insight, and followers of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna[1] have 'attachment' (*abhiniveśa*). The only true discipline of the mind is to keep it clear of these two defects. There must be no mental activity, but also no cessation of consciousness. Striving of any kind leads at once to attachment; trance involves loss of spiritual insight.

Po was not Wei-k'uan's only convert. In 791, we are told, he converted a mountain-spirit, administered the Eight Vows to it and accepted it as a lay-brother. In 797 he 'moved the heart of a demon' at the Shao-lin Monastery near Lo-yang. The demon presumably ceased to give trouble, but we are not actually told that it embraced the religious life.

When Yüan Chên reached his place of exile and was settling into his new quarters he found written on a dusty wall a poem of which the last two lines were:

*At Lu-shui when the first lotus opens its red bud*
*The thousand flowers, the hundred grasses lose all their beauty.*

He recognized it as a poem by Po and copied it out to send to him. Po remembered writing the poem. It was one that he had given fifteen years before, just after passing his examinations, to a courtesan named A-juan. There are vague and conventional allusions to his dealings with singing-girls when he first came to the Capital in several later poems, for example in the poem sent to Yüan Chên in the autumn of 810 'instead of a letter', where he describes the ladies whom he, Yüan Chên, Li Shên and other friends chose as being 'the foremost beauties of the day', and recalls their coiffure with its fashionable 'drooping-coils' and the 'weeping' expression given to their faces by the bizarre make-up which was then considered smart; but we know nothing definite about Po's early amours. The singing-girls of Ch'ang-an were of course not mere prostitutes. In addition to their proficiency in dancing, singing or playing on instruments they were expected to be able to improvise dexterous replies to the verses with which their clients wooed them. Wit and animation were valued by their patrons quite as highly as beauty. There is a story that when Liu T'an, son of the Chief Minister Liu Yeh,[2] came to Ch'ang-an at the age of 16 he heard everyone talking about a singing-girl named T'ien-shui. He imagined her as a paragon of youth and beauty and did everything in his power to make her acquaintance. She remained obdurately unapproachable. At last he came across a certain Li Ch'uan who lived near T'ien-shui and promised, in return for the gift of a silver tankard inlaid with gold, to

[1] As opposed to the Dhyāna School

[2] Made Chief Minister in 871.

bring her to the young man's house. A litter arrived, he tore back the blinds and to his horror saw crouching within it a shabby, dishevelled old lady. This shattering glimpse had cost him more than a hundred pieces of gold![1]

The courtesans were very devout and were always to be seen on prayer-days (the third, eighth, thirteenth, eighteenth, twenty-third and twenty-eighth of each month) at the Monastery of Enlightenment, which lay just to the south of the prostitute quarter. On these days there was also a large attendance of young gallants, more interested no doubt in the female part of the congregation than in the wall-paintings by Wu Tao-tzu for which the monastery was also famous.

On the third day of the sixth month of 815, just before dawn, the Chief Minister, Wu Yüan-hêng, was assassinated close to his house in the Ching-an Ward, when on his way to Court; the assassins escaped in the darkness. Po was presumably at the Crown Prince's early levee when he heard the news and on his way back to his house he seems to have visited the scene of the murder, for he writes a year later of the street being 'spattered with blood and marrow, torn flesh and hair—I cannot bear to speak of it'. That morning he dispensed with his usual doze and sat down to write a Memorial to the Throne demanding that every possible measure should be taken to find and arrest the assassin. He handed it in at noon. How it ran and what reasons he gave for supposing that active measures were not about to be taken we do not know, for the Memorial has not been preserved. We do, however, know that after the murder handbills were found in many parts of the city and surrounding places warning the authorities 'not to be in a hurry to track down the assassins' or it would be the worse for them. It is possible that Po had already heard of these handbills and had reason to suppose that the authorities were scared by them and were therefore hesitating to act. His own account of why he regarded it as his duty to send in the Memorial and of the consequences of its hasty presentation is given in the letter already referred to: 'Such a thing had never occurred since history began. Surely now if ever was the time for us servants of the State to risk all in an effort to redeem our country's disgrace. It seemed to me that not even the humblest underling in the remotest hamlet was justified in remaining silent if he had anything to suggest. How then could I, an accredited officer at Court, refrain from voicing my indignation and grief? The late Minister breathed his last at dawn; my Memorial was presented at noon. Within two days the whole town knew of it, and those who were not in sympathy with me at once attempted to discredit my motives by bringing false accusations against me or concocting slanderous stories. Moreover the high and mighty,

[1] A 'piece' of gold weighed about 20 ounces.

without weighing the seriousness of the emergency or attempting to show that what I said did not need saying, one and all asked why when the remaining Chief Ministers, Secretaries of Boards, the Supervisory Censor, Duty Officers, regular Censors and their Chief had not yet presented their views or made any petition, a mere assistant-secretary in the Crown Prince's Household should suppose that it devolved on him to express his concern about the disaster that had befallen his country.' It was arguable, Po continues, that he had acted mistakenly or even rashly; but he had certainly not been guilty of a punishable crime. Still less was this so in the case of the other charge that had been brought against him.

What this other charge was we learn from the notice of his life in the *Old T'ang History*: 'Some of his old enemies said that he was gifted, but unsound. For example, his mother fell into a well and was drowned while admiring some blossom; despite which Po Chü-i had written two poems, one called "Admiring Blossom" and the other "The New Well". This they said was a serious infringement of taboo, and he ought not to be employed as a Court Official.' The accusation was skilfully chosen, for we are told that when the Chief Minister, Wei Kuan-chih, was at the Board of Rites (about 812) and had charge of the Literary Examinations he made a point of giving low places to candidates 'who were gifted, but morally unsound'. The words used in the two passages are practically identical. The accusation brought against Po strikes us at first sight as unbelievably puerile. But it was perhaps not sillier than the small technical points upon which modern politicians trip one another up. In China at this period it was a recognized method of attack. In 808 someone succeeded in preventing the poet Li Ho (791–817) from graduating, on the ground that a graduate is called *chin-shih* and Li Ho's father was called Li Chin-su; consequently, as the syllable *chin* occurred in both designations, Li Ho by becoming a graduate would break the taboo on the use of a dead father's name. Against this piece of imbecility Han Yu, in a tract which later became a model of prose for every Chinese schoolboy, protested in vain.

The *Old T'ang History* continues: 'The heads of the Government, who were annoyed about Po's Memorial, recommended that he should be given the Governorship of some place beyond the Yangtze. A decree to this effect had already been issued, when Wang Yai, Duty Officer in the Palace Secretariat, sent in a petition in which he said that in view of the nature of Po's offence it was not proper that he should be made a Governor. The previous decree was rescinded and he was made Marshal of Chiang-chou.'

I find the story that he was first made a Governor and then, owing to a protest from Wang Yai, was relegated to the much inferior post of

Marshal, difficult to believe. The Governor of even the smallest district (*chou*) was an officer of the fourth rank, whereas Po's post at Ch'ang-an was only of the fifth rank. To make him a Governor would thus have been substantially to promote him, and it is unlikely that there was ever any thought of making such an appointment. It is also worth noting that Po had protested against Wang Yai's banishment to Kuo-chou, where he was sent as Marshal by Li Chi-fu in 808; this, however, is hardly an argument against the credibility of the story, for one good turn does not always beget another.

As regards the enemies who trumped up the taboo-charge against him Po says: 'I am well aware of how the hostility towards me began. I was promoted from a humble position to a place near the Throne by special favour and out of my proper turn. This gave me an uncomfortable feeling and I was constantly worried by doubts about my ability to fill such a post. I was also very ill-informed about what, as things now are, could and could not be openly said. Apart from direct Memorials and secret minutes, in cases where some diplomacy was wanted in order that a matter might reach the Emperor's ear, I led up to the topic in a ballad or poem. This seemed to be the easiest way to get a hearing and often the most effective way to put him on his guard. But by doing so I gave those who did not share my views their opportunity. It was easy for them now to make trouble between his Majesty and me, and once such misunderstandings had been started it was impossible, as between sovereign and subject, ever to clear them up. Apart from this the military commanders in the provinces disliked me because they found I would not take bribes and the politicians at the Capital turned against me when I showed that I preferred to remain independent and not attach myself to any one leader; while those who were already so attached were offended because I did not follow their example and were ready to believe all the yapping that was directed against me, their hearts set on getting hold in the end of something really damaging. That was how I got into trouble.'

Let us return for a moment to Po's admission that he perhaps acted precipitately. It is possible that when he put in his Memorial measures to secure the arrest of the assassins were already being discussed, for on the eighth of the month, five days after the murder, a proclamation was issued promising office of the fifth rank and a reward of ten million cash to anyone giving information which led to the arrest of the murderer. In order to allay any doubts as to whether so large a sum (it was about thirty times as much as Po's present salary) would really be forthcoming the money was for a time publicly displayed in the market-place, where it was gaped at by huge crowds. It was perhaps only after a considerable struggle that the Ministers had secured the

consent of the Treasury to the offer of so large a reward, and in that case the presumption presumably made in Po's Memorial that they were doing nothing at all must have been particularly galling. The fact that ten years later, when he collected his writings, he did not include this Memorial presumably indicates that he looked back on it as an indiscretion. He could certainly have used it if he had wanted to, for by that time both the Chief Ministers (Wei Kuan-chih and Chang Hung-ching) were dead and a new Emperor was on the Throne.

In the decree of banishment, which was issued late in the seventh or early in the eighth month, he was probably ordered to proceed immediately to his place of exile,[1] for he started next day, leaving his wife and the child to follow him. He left the city by the Blue Gate, the southernmost of the eastern gates, and looking back towards it thought longingly of Li Chien, the friend whom he most minded leaving: 'Together we climbed the ladder of blue clouds,' he wrote to Li later, referring to their careers at Court, 'but half-way up one of us lost his hold. So to the rivers and lakes I take my way, while you are left behind. . . .' Exactly a year later Li Chien was also banished.

Po took the usual south-eastern road, through Lan-t'ien to Shang-chou, where he was joined by his wife, and probably by servants, household effects and so on. After leaving Lan-t'ien he reached a high point in the road, from which he 'looked down upon a thousand, ten thousand peaks; the heads of the peaks looked like waves rising'. Chiang-chou was still hundreds of miles away, but already he felt worn out and his 'horse's hoofs were sore'. On the way to Hsiang-yang in northern Hupeh he wrote the following quatrain while travelling through fine rain at night:

*Silently the autumn rain begins;*
*Little by little the night chill grows.*
*I feel my clothes and find that they are wet;*
*There are no rain marks, nor any sound of rain.*

At Hsiang-yang he finds, much dilapidated, the house where he stayed during his early wanderings, some twenty years before, and his poem on the subject closes with the inevitable:

*Only on the autumn waters of the Han River*
*The misty waves are still as they were of old.*

From Hsiang-yang he travelled by boat down the Han River towards Hankow. Waking late after his first night on board he wrote the poem:

*By the shadow of the sail I knew that the sun was high,*
*But I did not hurry to rise from my quiet sleep.*
*When at last I rose I spoke to the man at the helm;*
*'Already we have made three hundred leagues.'*

[1] Chiang-chou, the modern Kiukiang, on the Yangtze about 140 miles below Hankow

*In the prow of the boat we have set up our travelling-stove;*
*They are boiling rice and frying red carp.*
*I eat heavily and staggering to my feet*
*I wash and rinse in the waters of the autumn stream.*
*I have always loved the water and dreamt of a life*
*Such as from now onwards this journey gives;*
*All the more since I have not lost my home;*
*My wife and child are both with me on the ship.*

Near An-lu he heard the news that troops of the rebel Commander Li Shih-tao had raided Lo-yang. They were ejected before they could set fire to the Palace, which was the object of the raid; but the reports that Po heard were very likely exaggerated. At Parrot Island, near Hankow, he wrote a poem called 'Hearing Some One Singing at Night'. The theme is very similar to that of Po's most famous poem, known to English readers as *The Lute Girl's Song*, which he wrote a year later:

*At night we moored our ship at Parrot Island;*
*It was autumn and the moonlit view was limpid clear.*
*I heard a voice singing in the next boat;*
*The song seemed fraught with the uttermost depths of woe.*
*The song stopped, and there followed a sound of weeping*
*Now breaking through, now stifled by sobs.*
*Guided by the sound I saw who the singer was;*
*A married girl with a face pale as snow.*
*She stood alone, leaning against the mast,*
*Very lovely, not more than seventeen. . . .*
*I sent to ask whose wife she was,*
*Why she sang so sadly and wept so bitterly.*
*At each question fresh tears flowed;*
*She hung her head and did not say a word.*

He was still practising Dhyāna and writes during the journey:

*Ever since I learnt to practise Dhyāna I have stopped taking medicine;*
*It is also true that since that time I have grown weaker and weaker.*
*Can it be that it is a bad thing to become too well?*
*It seems that when people are quite well there is too much 'self' in their system.*

Chiang-chou was a district with somewhat over 100,000 inhabitants, of whom possibly about half lived at Hsün-yang, the Governmental centre to which Po was now attached. About ten miles to the south lay the Lu Shan range with its magnificent scenery and many Buddhist monasteries. The position of Marshal (*ssu-ma*) was, as we have seen, an insignificant one, involving hardly any official duties, and Po was free to explore the neighbouring countryside. It was winter according to the calendar, but here so far to the south, 'the flowers of the smartweed'

were 'only beginning to fall', and as he walked at sunset by the P'ên river which flows into the Yangtze near Kiukiang, he could easily imagine himself to be taking an autumn stroll on the banks of the Serpentine at Ch'ang-an. As the year drew to a close there was even a little frost and snow; but not for long:

*The willows by the Wall were touched with flecks of white;*
*The drippings at the eaves were just turning into spikes,*
*When all in a moment the wind and sun grew warm;*
*Everywhere snow-flowers fluttered, icicles crashed.*
*Before I had time to enjoy the snow to my fill*
*I was sighing to see how swiftly it melted away.*

Yet even here, Po consoles himself by thinking, the lover of snow is better off than South of the Ranges (in Kwantung and Kwangsi) where the mushy drizzle that passes for snow melts before it reaches the ground.

# CHAPTER VIII

In the twelfth month of 815 Po sent to Yüan Chên a letter in which he discusses the 'main principles of poetry' and his own 'literary intentions'. It is of immense length; written on ordinary Western note-paper it would fill about thirty pages. Some parts of it are hardly possible to translate since they abound in abstract or technical terms for which there is no English equivalent; others consist largely of references to individual poets and poems and could only be made intelligible to the general reader by a commentary of dimensions quite disproportionate to the scale of the present book. In his discussion of the 'main principles of poetry' Po is merely setting down the traditional Confucian view of literature, which was indeed the only one available to him; for neither Buddhists nor Taoists had as yet occupied themselves with the subject. What he says is not, and is not intended to be, original; it is merely the re-statement of an orthodox view. It is therefore his account of his own 'literary intentions' and poetic career that here chiefly concern us, and I shall give this part of the letter almost in full.

'Chü-i to his honoured friend Wei-chih. Since you were banished to Chiang-ling (A.D. 810) I have inflicted upon you, including those which were answers to poems which you sent me, about a hundred pieces of verse. Whenever my poems arrived you were kind enough to send me either an introductory note to them or a letter to put at the beginning of the scroll, your subject always being the mission of poetry in ancient times and now. I then made notes myself about the circumstances under which the poems were written and the exact date to which they belonged. I had always admired your poems, and being now in possession of your ideas about poetry I frequently thought of giving a rough outline of the main principles of this art, together with an account of my own literary intentions, by way of response to your communications. It was my idea to combine both topics in one letter to you; but for several years distractions and troubles have left me scant leisure. Now and again when I got a little time to myself and set about carrying out this intention, it seemed to me that what I had to put down did not differ much from what you had already said. Again and again, with a blank page spread out before me, I gave up without having written a word, and it seemed as though the idea would never be carried out. Here, however, at Hsün-yang I am condemned to a life in which apart from washing, combing, eating and sleeping I have nothing to do at all, and chancing to come across the twenty-six scrolls of your new and old

writings that you left with me when you set out for T'ung-chou, it suddenly seemed to me, as I opened the first scroll, that you were there in front of me. I was even on the point of saying out loud there and then all that was stored up in my heart, and as I read on it still remained impossible for me to believe that ten thousand leagues lay between us. At last my pent-up resolution found its vent and I was able to carry out the task which I had so long delayed. But it will cost me some effort to write this letter and for my sake please try to examine it with some attention.'

Po then begins to recite his Confucian lesson. Just as the sun, moon and stars are the principal decorations[1] of the heavens, so the Confucian Classics, he says, are the principal 'decoration' of human life, and at the head of the Classics stands the *Book of Songs*. Po, as we have already seen,[2] believed that in antiquity officers went round collecting the songs that people were singing. In these songs were expressed directly or allegorically the feelings of the people about their rulers. They vented their grievances or (much more rarely) expressed their satisfaction. Such songs, it was believed, were gathered together by Confucius, and the collection made by him is the *Book of Songs* as we know it to-day. This was the Golden Age of poetry, when every poem had a moral or political meaning, and could be used by the rulers of China to guide them in their task. But soon decadence set in. Poetry became the vehicle of individual rather than of social grievances, and at the same time the true art of allegory disappeared. There arose a generation of poets who when, for example, they wrote about 'rivers and hills' really meant rivers and hills and were not allegorically satirizing some wicked Minister or wanton Court favourite. Finally, in the sixth century A.D., poetry became mere 'sporting with wind and snow, toying with grasses and flowers', and nothing was aimed at but pretty verbal effects. There was at first, says Po, no improvement under the T'ang dynasty, but towards the end of the seventh century Ch'ên Tzu-ang[3] wrote a series of poems of the kind called *kan-yü*, literally 'feelings about what is happening', which Po mentions with approval and which were generally considered to have restored to poetry its original function of social criticism.[4] This series as we possess it to-day consists of thirty-eight poems, one of which bears the date 687. In one or two of these poems Ch'ên Tzu-ang protests (as he also did in Memorials which have been preserved) against campaigns on the Tibetan frontier, which he regarded as unjustified; in one he protests against the unsuitable magnificence of Buddhist shrines and monasteries. There are no other open allusions to

[1] *wên*; but the word also means 'literature' and even 'culture' in general.

[2] See above, pp 47, 48.

[3] 656–698. See *Chinese Poems* (1946), p. 116.

[4] Po also mentions a similar series by Pao Fang (*c.* 735–*c.* 803), but this no longer survives.

current affairs, but the series teems with historical allusions which no doubt are used as a covert means of attacking contemporary persons and abuses. No one, so far as I know, has ever claimed to understand these references, and I very much doubt whether Po understood them. But he was willing to give the poet credit for his assumed intentions.

He next comes to the two most famous poets of the T'ang dynasty, Li Po (701–762) and Tu Fu: 'Li's work is talented, even extraordinary, and no one else could have done what he did. But of satire, allegory, double meaning,[1] search though you may, you will hardly find a trace. Tu Fu was a very prolific poet and there are over a thousand of his poems that are quite worth preserving. When it comes to stringing together[2] poems in the old style or the new and reeling off[2] verse-forms and tone-patterns he does it very skilfully and well; better indeed than Li Po. But putting them altogether, such pieces as "The Recruiting Officer at Hsin-an," "The Recruiting Officer at Shih-hao," "The Frontier Official at T'ung-kuan," "The Defences at Lu-tzu," and "On the Detention of the Uighur Troops from Hua-mên," or such couplets as "From the Palace Gate comes the smell of wine and meat, in the road lie the bones of people who have frozen to death"—it is a matter of not much more than three or four poems. And if such poems are rare in the works of Tu Fu, still less are they to be found in those of minor poets.

'I was deeply saddened by the decay into which poetry had sunk and often a sudden access of this feeling would make me leave a meal half eaten or wake me up in the middle of the night, and I was presumptuous enough to conceive the idea of restoring this art to its true place. I was, alas! utterly mistaken in supposing that I could do this. I cannot here retrace the stages of my failure one by one; but I feel I must try to give you some general account of it. When I was six or seven months old and the wet-nurse was dandling me in her arms close to some bookshelves, she pointed out to me the characters "not" and "of". I had not yet learnt to speak, but I took in what she had said and was henceforward able to pick out these two characters, never making a mistake however often I was put to the test; which proves, I think, that I had some predisposition towards literature. At four or five I learnt how to make poems, and by nine was thoroughly versed in the tones and rhymes. When I was fourteen or fifteen I first heard about the Literary Examinations and began to apply myself to serious study. From nineteen onwards I worked at examination-*fu* and general reading day and night, but still found time to go on studying poetry. I allotted no time for sleep or rest, with the result that I developed sores in my mouth and on my

[1] The terms he uses are those always applied to the methods of the *Book of Songs*, as interpreted by the Confucians.

[2] This does not sound quite so depreciatory in Chinese as in English.

tongue, my hands and wrists swelled; by the time I was fully grown I was scraggy and wan, while I was still young my teeth began to fall out and my hair to grow grey, and little things like flying gnats or dropping globules moved in myriads before my eyes, so that I could not see clearly. This sad state of affairs was entirely due to the extreme assiduity with which I pursued my literary studies.

'My family was poor and we had many troubles. I was twenty-six before I was able to go in for the local Examinations. After I passed, although my time was chiefly given to examination-subjects, I did not drop poetry. By the time I became a Collator, I had written three or four hundred poems. When I showed them to you and other friends, you all said they were good work; but in reality I had not yet discovered the true domain of poetic creation. The change began after I got a post at Court. I was getting older and more experienced; in conversation I always tried to pick up information about current problems, and in reading histories and other books I always tried to discover the principles underlying good government. It was then that I reached this conclusion: the duty of literature is to be of service to the writer's generation; that of poetry to influence public affairs. A new Emperor had recently come to the Throne; there were upright men[1] in the Ministry. Again and again his Majesty sent personal letters to his Ministers asking to be informed about the difficulties and sufferings of the people. I was a member of the Han-lin Academy; I was in a censorial post. Month by month I asked for and used in petitions and memorials the minute-papers to which I was entitled. But sometimes in cases where I believed I could bring alleviation to the sufferings of the people or remedy some defect of policy it was impossible to broach the matter directly, and instead I wrote a ballad, hoping that it would be passed on from person to person till it finally reached the Emperor's ear. The Emperor would thus get information useful to him in his efforts to relieve distress, I myself would be doing something in return for his Majesty's kindness and encouragement, and at the same time doing my duty as censor. In this way I should fulfil what had now become the whole aim of my existence. I little thought that, so far from furthering my cause I was merely creating prejudice against it, or that long before my words reached his Majesty's ear slanderous accusations against me would have discounted them.'

Po then reminds Yüan Chên of the consternation caused by his political poems, in particular by his attack on the eunuchs in *The Village of Tzu-ko*,[2] and by his scornful reference to the regime as a whole in *Climbing to the Lo-yu Gardens*.[3] 'Those who were against me', Po con-

[1] He is thinking, no doubt, particularly of P'ei Chi.

[2] See above, p. 58.

[3] See Add. Note on p. 222.

tinues, 'said I was simply out for notoriety and called my attacks scurrilous, libellous and what not; and even those who sympathized with my aims regretted the course I had taken—you remember Niu Sêng-ju's[1] warning? Even my wife and family all thought that I was in the wrong. There were not indeed more than two or three people who thought that I had acted rightly. Têng Fang[2] when he saw these poems was delighted, but soon afterwards Fang died. When T'ang Ch'ü[3] saw them he wept, but before very long he too was dead. Apart from them, there was only you, and what setbacks and disasters have befallen your career in the last ten years!' Can it be, Po asks bitterly, that Heaven for some reason does not want this kind of poetry—that is to say, poetry which aims at getting human wrongs redressed—to survive, or does not wish that the sufferings of the humble should reach the Emperor's ears? He then resumes the story of his career at the Capital: 'All my knowledge was of books and writing; in other respects I was blankly ignorant. For example, about calligraphy, painting, draughts and other pursuits that enliven social intercourse I understood nothing at all. . . . When I went in for the Literary Examinations I had not a single relative even of the most distant kind at Court or the most cursory acquaintance with any successful statesman. Yet though I could but hobble where others ran and fought empty-handed in the literary arena, in ten years I passed three examinations; my name became widely known and I had the entrée at Court. In private life I mixed with the foremost talents of the day and at the Palace I waited upon the highest dignitaries of the land. It was by my writings that I achieved fame, and perhaps it is only natural that it was through my writings too that I fell into disgrace.

Some while ago friends told me that candidates for the Literary Examinations often hand round *fu* poems and "judgments" written by me as private tests[4] and use them as models; also that other poems and couplets of mine are now constantly quoted. I felt embarrassed when told of this and could not believe that it was true. But when I came back to Ch'ang-an . . .' Po then tells the story of the singing-girl who put up her price on the ground that 'she could sing Po Chü-i's "Everlasting Remorse".[5] 'Moreover, you told me in a letter',[6] Po continues, 'that the day you arrived at T'ung-chou you found a poem of mine inscribed on a pillar at the river-house. Who am I to deserve such fame as this? Recently, again, when I was passing through Han-nan it happened that my host there was giving an entertainment and had got together a number of musicians to entertain his guests. All the singing-girls when they

[1] 779–847 A.D. We shall meet with him again later on. Po refers to this 'warning' several times; cf. II. 25.

[2] See above, p. 73.

[3] T'ang Ch'u was chiefly famous for his violent outbursts of lamentation.

[4] I.e. as practice for the official examinations.

[5] See above, p. 73.

[6] The letter does not exist; but a poem of Yuan's on the subject is in his *Works*, XX. fol. 2.

saw me coming pointed at me, saying to one another, "That's the one who wrote the 'Songs of Ch'in' and 'The Everlasting Remorse!' " All the way from Ch'ang-an to Kiangsi—three or four thousand leagues—in village schools, in Buddhist monasteries, at inns and on ships I constantly found poems of mine inscribed, and I heard them chanted by officials, monks, old widow-women and young girls wherever I went. These indeed were always mere literary trifles, not the serious works by which I myself set store; but they happen to be just the sort of poetry that it is now the fashion to admire. Nor did old masters such as T'ao Ch'ien and Hsieh Ling-yün (A.D. 385–433) always resist the temptation to produce this kind of work.'

Fame, Po continues, is like a public utility, which no one person has any right to monopolize. He has had far more of it than he is entitled to and must not complain if, to redress the balance, he has had less than his share of good fortune in other ways. Moreover, poets have seldom had successful public careers. He cites the cases of Ch'ên Tzu-ang, Tu Fu, Li Po and Mêng Hao-jan, Mêng Chiao (who had died the year before) and Chang Chi.[1] It occurs to us, of course, that some of these poets, for example, Li Po, might not have been very useful in high administrative posts; but to Po it was self-evident that poets, the glory of their age, ought to stand high in the official hierarchy. He then goes on to say that he himself, even as regards rank and pay, has not done so badly: 'Although I hold a subordinate post in a distant province I am still an official of the Fifth Rank with a monthly salary of between forty and fifty thousand. I have clothes enough to keep me warm, food enough to prevent me from starving and can support my household and family. Few of my forbears did better than this. Wei-chih, Wei-chih, you must not worry about me. In the last few months I have been going through my bags and boxes, and sorting out my poems, old and new. I have divided them into categories and arranged them in chapters, including only those written after I became an Omissioner.'

Though the arrangement of Po's poems was subsequently a good deal altered by his editors, this division into four categories has always been maintained. First come the didactic poems, those written 'to save the world'; then the meditative poems, the poems of 'quiet contentment', written to express personal moods and feelings. In the third category come the 'poems of sorrow', many of them elegies upon the death of friends or laments for his own and their misfortunes, and in the fourth the 'miscellaneous poems with strict tone-pattern', written simply to express some fancy of the moment or to 'enhance the pleasure of meetings or dissipate the gloom of farewells'. The poems in this fourth

[1] Of Chang Chi and Mêng Chiao I shall have something to say when discussing Po's relations with Han Yu and his circle, pp. 143 *seq.* and 147.

category, he says, he has retained for the moment, but he attaches no importance to them, and anyone arranging his works at a future date is at liberty to discard them. . . . 'At present the only poems of mine that anyone cares for are the miscellaneous poems, the "Everlasting Remorse" and others that I rate even lower. In fact, those that are admired are the ones to which I attach least importance. But in my didactic poems the purport is aggressive and the wording flat, while in the meditative poems the mood is placid and the language subtle; so that I am accused at the same time of being too obvious and too subtle. No wonder the didactic and meditative poems are not liked! In fact the only person of my own generation who does like them is yourself. But who knows whether hundreds, thousands of years hence there may not appear someone who understands and loves my poetry as you do?'

Their whole friendship, he continues, has been carried on in verse, and he reminds Yüan Chên of their joint feat in alternately improvising love-songs all the way back from a picnic in the country south of Ch'ang-an.[1] There follows a quite untranslatable passage in which he says that those who do not know him regard his gift for poetry as 'demoniac', while those who know him regard him as a sort of Taoist 'genius' (*hsien*) on the poetic plane. Both, he says, are in a way right. The frenzied zeal with which he toils at poetry day and night and wears himself out without at the time being conscious of any effort surely has something of the demoniac about it; while his capacity 'in the presence of lovely scenery, in flower-time after the feast is over, on moonlit nights when flushed by wine' to escape by a stanza or two of verse from the feeling that 'old-age is at hand' surely makes him at such moments as much a *hsien* 'as any that ever rode on the back of phoenix or crane to the Islands of the Blest.'

He then mentions a project, abandoned when Yüan Chên was again exiled, for collecting the poems of some of their friends, and reminds Yuan Chên of one prominent fault that both he and Po had been conscious of in their writings and must go on trying to correct. In poetry, as also in prose, Po says, they both tend to use too many words. No one likes cutting down what he has written and even when a writer sees that he must do so, he is often unable to decide what ought to stay and what ought to go. It is only when he has a friend at his side from whom he can obtain an impartial verdict of the matter that, after due discussion, he is able to make his cuts in a satisfactory manner. 'Now that we have both of us got our poetry and prose more or less properly collected and arranged, the next time we are together we must both produce all our works and criticize each other as we once planned to do. But how many years is it going to be before we meet and where will that meeting be?

[1] See above, p. 93.

What if before then something were to happen to one of us? Wei-chih, Wei-chih, you know what I am feeling as I write this.

'Here at Hsün-yang (i.e. Chiang-chou) in the twelfth month the river wind is bitterly cold. The last days of the year are always depressing; the nights are so long, and I am not sleeping well. Imagine me here to-night with brush in hand and paper spread out before me, sitting by the lamp. Not a sound anywhere. As thoughts came into my head I wrote them down, not trying to arrange them in any proper order. The result has been a long and confused letter, which I fear you may find very fatiguing; but you must think of it simply as a substitute for a night's conversation together. Wei-chih, Wei-chih, you know what is in my heart! Lo-t'ien bows twice.'

We possess one of Yüan Chên's letters to Po about poetry, apparently written in the autumn of 815. Yüan Chên had already recited his Confucian *credo* on the art of poetry in 813, when he wrote an inscription for the poet Tu Fu's tomb. Po, in his letter, first argues that political incitement is the true function of poetry in general and then goes on to describe how he himself applied this principle when he embarked on his career as a poet; Yüan on the contrary begins by describing the political and social conditions at the time when he first came to the Capital—the violence and rapacity of the provincial war-lords, the exactions of the eunuchs, the economic strain caused by the great number and magnificence of Taoist and Buddhist establishments. He then records his indignation at the sufferings of the populace owing to these abuses and his determination to call attention to them. Looking about for a suitable form in which to cast his propaganda he comes across the series of poems by Ch'ên Tzu-ang to which Po also refers, and writes a series of his own in the same manner. Unfortunately these early poems of his no longer exist. One might be tempted to regard this more concrete approach as characteristic of Yüan; but one reason for it no doubt was that he had already discussed the problem in a more abstract way two years before. Yüan's letter is not so long as Po's, but it is too long to translate here; moreover his views 'do not differ much' (as Po says in his letter) from those of his friend.

# CHAPTER IX

It must have been early in 816 that Po received from Yüan Chên the following poem written in response to some that Po had sent when on his journey to Chiang-chou:

*Other people too have friends that they love;*
*But ours was a love such as few friends have known.*
*You were all my sustenance; it mattered more*
*To see you daily than to get my morning food.*
*And if there was a single day when we did not meet*
*I would sit listless, my mind in a tangle of gloom.*
*To think we are now thousands of miles apart,*
*Lost like clouds, each drifting on his far way!*
*Those clouds on high, where many winds blow,*
*What is their chance of ever meeting again?*
*And if in open heaven the beings of the air*
*Are driven and thwarted, what of Man below?*

Po was fortunate in serving at Chiang-chou under a Governor who showed him extreme consideration and treated him as a distinguished visitor rather than as a subordinate. 'Knowing how fond I am of the country,' writes Po, 'Governor Ts'ui lets me go off on excursions whenever I am not wanted at the office.' And when inviting an unnamed friend to come and spend the day with him, drinking and playing 'forfeit-draughts' (*pi-ch'i*), he says: 'Governor Ts'ui, knowing how lazy I am, has excused me from appearing at the office in the afternoon.' On a hill behind his house, which was on the sandy shore of the P'ên estuary, Po built for himself an arbour amid the bamboos and white rocks. Early in the morning he had to put in an appearance at his office, but 'when the sun was high' he changed out of his office clothes and installed himself in this 'northern arbour', where he sat all day waiting for 'evening to come to the sky above the lake'.

He was living in a land where much was strange to him. For the first time in his poems he begins to mention the mynah-bird, the cry of gibbons, oranges, fire-tillage. The people spoke a strange dialect. Everything they said seemed to be a joke, their laughter never stopped. The grown men wore their hair in loops at the side of the head, like young boys in Northern China; their religion was a 'service to the spirits' carried out by female shamans (*wu*). He had a long time before him in which to acclimatize himself, for at this period though Governors were changed every three years their assistants remained at the same

post for at least five years. A few miles south-west of Chiang-chou was Chestnut Village, the 'southern village' of T'ao Ch'ien's poems. Po found that there were still people with the surname T'ao living there; but none of them could claim to be direct descendants of the poet. Still nearer at hand he found, when he had been at Chiang-chou for six months, a place from which he could see the battlements of the town wall reflected in the P'ên river—'shadow on shadow like the towers of a sea-god's home'; and wondering why he had never come there before, he sent back his horse and sat there till long after the sun went down.

Soon afterwards his unsuccessful elder brother, Po Yu-wên arrived from northern Anhui, bringing with him a number of little orphaned cousins (Po says vaguely 'six or seven'), both boys and girls. He was already looking after his younger brother Po Hsing-chien's little boy Tortoise, and there was his own little daughter Lo Tzu.[1] So there were now about nine children at the house by the shore, and one can imagine that Po was sometimes glad to escape to his 'northern arbour'. Po Yu-wên had held a small post at Fu-liang in Kiangsi some seventeen years before. This seems to have been the only job he ever had, and he must have quitted it long ago. It looks as though when he arrived with the six or seven children, he must have been living with relations near Hsü-chou, perhaps at Fu-li where the family owned a farm. Yu-wên died a year later, and in an address to his soul Po Chü-i attributes to him all the usual virtues. But they do not seem to have had much in common or really to have been on intimate terms.

In the early autumn he went to the Stone Gate Ravine, about sixteen miles south of Chiang-chou. It is famous for its waterfall, which was, however, probably not at its best at this time of year, for Po does not mention it. What he came to look for was a poem supposed to have been carved on the face of the rock by the famous monk Hui-yüan (334–416). But it seemed that it must have become overgrown with moss; there was not a trace of an inscription anywhere. Soon afterwards he paid his first visit to the twin Forest Monasteries on the northern slopes of the Lu Shan—the Western Forest Monastery, founded about 379 and the Eastern Forest Monastery founded in 386. The latter was built for Hui-yüan by the musician Huan I, who was then Governor of Chiang-chou. Here Hui-yüan founded the White Lotus Society, a confraternity of monks and laymen pledged to devote themselves to the worship of the Buddha Amitabha and seeking re-birth in his Western Paradise. He was also an authority on the *abhidarma* (cosmic philosophy) and on *Dhyāna* of the traditional, early Buddhist kind. He was the one Chinese monk whom Indian and Central Asiatic masters regarded as their equal and they looked upon it as a miracle that the denizen of an

[1] Born soon after he came to Chiang-chou.

'outlying country' like China should show so complete a mastery of Mahāyana thought. His poems, very famous in his day, have unfortunately not survived.

To the autumn of 816 belongs the 'Lute Song' (*P'i-p'a hsing*) which, after the 'Everlasting Remorse', is Po Chü-i's most famous work. The story of the ballad is this: he was seeing off a friend whose boat was moored in the estuary of the P'ên river, when from a neighbouring boat came the sound of someone playing the *p'i-p'a*, an instrument in many ways resembling the European lute. He knew by the touch that the player must have been trained at the Capital, and on making enquiries was told that she had once been a courtesan very well known for her lute-playing. When she lost her beauty and the young men no longer came galloping to her gate she married a tea-merchant and settled at Chiang-chou. Her husband, she said, was often away on business and some months ago he had gone to buy tea in Fu-liang. Po was deeply moved both by the woman's story and by the music. 'During my two years in this post', he says, 'my mind had till then been at peace and I had been contented with my lot. But now the story of her youth at Ch'ang-an made me for the first time realize that I was living as an exile.' She had indeed been brought up at the foot of the Frog Mound, which was close to Po's house in the Ch'ang-lo Ward at Ch'ang-an. He realized also how great a loss to him was the lack of good music at Chiang-chou. The childish local folk-songs and squeaky village flute were a poor exchange for the brilliant musical performances at the Capital. Po then asks her to play again, promising that if she does so he will write for her a ballad to fit her tune. The piece she then played was even more poignantly sad than the tune she had played before. Everyone present wept bitterly. 'But who wept the most? The Marshal of Chiang-chou; his blue shirt was wet with tears.'

It is possible that the "Lute Song" is an expansion of the poem written about a year before, when he heard a girl singing at night in a boat moored close to his own at Parrot Island.[1] But it is preceded by a preface describing the circumstances under which it was written and it is more probable that it is founded, as Po tells us, on an actual encounter in the harbour at Chiang-chou, in the autumn of 816. I do not think that in reading the poem one enters much into the feelings either of the lute-player or of Po himself. In this respect, as also it must be said in the extreme skill and delicacy with which it is written, the "Lute Song" resembles Po's other long narrative poem, the "Everlasting Remorse". But it contains all the ingredients—autumn, moonlight, a neglected wife, an exiled genius—calculated to make it a popular success in China. Even better known than the poem itself are the plays founded upon it.

[1] See above, p. 105.

In these Po Chü-i, who in the poem expressly states that he had not known the lady in her Ch'ang-an days, has an affair with her in the Capital. The proprietress of the establishment where Hsing-nu works (this is the name that legend gives to her) having by means of a forged letter convinced her that Po has died in exile, sells her to the tea-merchant. Po meets her again under the romantic circumstances described in the poem, and eventually they marry and live happily together to the end of their days. A good translation of the "Lute Song" by the American poet Witter Bynner will be found in *From the Chinese*, an anthology edited by R. C. Trevelyan.

Po's love-affair with Hsing-nu is, as we have seen, a fiction. But there was a girl far away in the north to whom his thoughts turned at about this time. In a curious poem called "Sentiment" (*kan-ch'ing*) he tells us that when airing clothes and furniture in the courtyard he suddenly came upon a pair of slippers that he had brought from his 'old home', which presumably means the farm at Hsia-kuei, and remembered that they had been given to him 'by the girl who lived in the next house eastwards'. Shoes were of course a symbol of 'going together and staying together', and that is why they figured in the ritual of Chinese as of other wedding-ceremonies. But the magic had not worked; the shoes were 'still a pair; but the people, separate'. They were beautiful shoes, brocade outside and embroidery inside; but the 'plum-blossom rain' of their first summer in the south had not been good for them. They were discoloured by damp and the delicately stitched flowers seemed to have withered and died. That is all the poem says; but the title (in the original, though not perhaps in English) definitely suggests a love-affair.

Early in 817 he heard that the Emperor had consented to forgo the usual New Year party at the Palace, it being thought unsuitable that it should be held at a time when civil war was still raging in Central China. Encouraged by this sign of grace on the Emperor's part, Po conceived a wild plan of sending in an urgent petition for recall, in order that he might put his services at the disposal of the Government in this emergency. But the petition was never sent. In the autumn he found a point under the Incense Burner Peak and near to the Forest Temples which struck him as the most beautiful in all the mountain, and he built himself a cottage there. Before settling in he sacrificed (on the twenty-first and twenty-fifth days of the second month, 817) to the spirits of the mountain, asking for permission to 'dwell within their domain'. For the present, he explains, he will only be coming and going. But when his five years at Chiang-chou are over he hopes to live in the cottage permanently. He asks the spirits 'not to let pestilences arise and see to it that I encounter no hobgoblins, wild beasts or poisonous snakes, but that these may all keep themselves to themselves'.

The cottage was quite small; the woodwork unpainted and the walls not whitewashed. The furniture consisted of four wooden couches and two plain screens. He kept a few books there (Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist), and a lacquered lute (*ch'in*). On the day that he came to take possession he sat in rapturous contemplation of the mountains, torrents, bamboo-thickets and cloudy rocks from the hour of the Dragon to the hour of the Cock (7 a.m. to 5 p.m.), and already found his spirit settling into a great 'outward contentment and inner peace'. After the third night he found himself in a state of utter mental and physical relaxation, for which at first he was at a loss to account. On reflection he saw that one reason for the, as we should say, hypnotic effect of the place was its proportions. In front of the cottage was a stretch of level ground about 100 feet in diameter and in the middle of this space was a terrace just half as great in extent as the level ground on which it stood. To the south lay a square pool just twice as large as the terrace. For the present, he says, he must content himself with occasional visits; but when he has married off all his cousins and his own term of office is at an end, he will come to live here till the end of his days. And he calls upon the 'clear fountains and white rocks' to bear witness to this vow.

On the ninth day of the fourth month he gave a house-warming party, which was attended by twenty-two friends, foremost among them Yuan Chên's cousin, Yüan Chi-hsü, who lived near by. Among the guests were also several monks from the Forest Temples, and in deference to their vows tea and fruit took the place of wine and meat. Not long afterwards Yüan Chi-hsü was summoned to join the staff of a military commander in Kwantung, and Po lost his principal friend at Chiang-chou. The day after the party, still at his cottage, Po wrote to Yüan Chên: 'Lo-t'ien speaks. Wei-chih, Wei-chih, it is three years since I saw you and almost two years since I had a letter from you. Is life so long that we can afford such estrangements as this? . . . Soon after I came here Hsiung Ju-têng arrived, bringing with him a note written the year before last, when you were so very unwell. In it you told me something about the nature of your illness and its effect on your spirits and referred to our successive meetings and partings, but said that at the moment you had not the strength to write more, but that you had put together several packets of your writings and written on the outside: "To be sent some time or another to Po Chü-i". For the moment, you hoped I would accept this brief note in lieu of a proper letter. I was feeling rather sad that you should treat me like this when I came across another enclosure—the poem you wrote on hearing that I had been exiled:

*In the last flicker of a dying lamp the shadows beat like wings;*
*Then it was that I heard this news: you are banished to Kiukiang!*

*I who was lying sick to death rose startled to my feet;*
*Through the cold window a dark blast blew the rain on my face.*

These are lines that even a stranger might well find almost unendurable in their pathos, and you may imagine their effect upon me! I still find them profoundly moving each time I repeat them. I will not dwell upon this, but will tell you something of my recent preoccupations. I have now been three years at Kiukiang. I am in good health and my mind is completely at rest. All the members of my household are also well, and my elder brother arrived here last summer from Hsü-chou bringing with him six or seven little orphan cousins belonging to various branches of the family. Thus for the moment I have under my eye all those about whose welfare I am particularly concerned. . . . That is the first reason for my peace of mind. Here on the River it is rather cooler than is general in the South and there is not much malaria. Poisonous snakes and troublesome insects do of course exist; but there are not very many of them. The fish of the P'ên river are particularly fat and the River wine is excellent. Most of the other things one gets to eat and drink are pretty much the same as in the North. I have now rather a large number of mouths to provide for and my marshal's salary is not large; but by keeping a careful watch on expenditure I can manage to clothe and feed them without calling for any contributions from outside. This is the second reason for my peace of mind. In the autumn of last year I began making excursions into the Lu Shan and found a spot between the two Forest Monasteries, just under the Incense-burner Peak, where the clouds and waters, fountains and rocks were more lovely than at any other place on the mountain. The situation delighted me so much that I built myself a cottage there. There is a group of high pine trees in front of it and a fine cluster of tall bamboos. I have covered the walls with green creepers and made paved paths of white rock. A stream almost encircles it and I have a waterfall at my very eaves. There is white lotus in my pool and red pomegranate on its banks. . . .

'Every time that I go to be alone here for a few hours the visit tends to prolong itself to one of many days, for everything that has always given me most pleasure is to be found in this place. I forget all about going home and would be content to stay here till the end of my days. I have begun by telling you of these causes for my present happiness, thinking that as you have had no news of me for so long, you must be feeling anxious. Other items of news are as follows. . . .[1] Wei-chih, Wei-chih, the night I wrote this letter I was sitting in my cottage under a window that looks out on to the mountains. I let my brush run on as it would, setting down my thoughts at random, just as they occurred to me. And now as I make ready to seal the letter up I suddenly find that

[1] These items are omitted in the published version of the letter.

dawn has almost come. Looking out I see one or two monks, some sitting, some asleep. From above comes the sad cry of the mountain monkeys, and from below the twittering of the valley birds. Friend of all my life, ten thousand leagues away, thoughts of our days together in the world's dusty arena rise before me and for a moment quite blot out this lovely scene. Yielding to the habit of old times again I address you in verse:

*Long ago I sealed up a letter that I had written to you at night*
*Behind the Hall of Golden Bells, as day was coming in the sky.*
*To-night again I seal a letter—in a hut on the Lu Shan*
*Sitting at the first tinge of dawn, by a lamp that still burns.*
*The bird in its coop, the monkey in its cage are still not dead;*
*Though the years pass, they yet may meet somewhere in the world of men.*

Wei-chih, Wei-chih! I wonder if you know all that is in my heart as I write this to-night? Lo-t'ien bows his head.'

In the early autumn Po witnessed a strange sight. The northern outlet of the P'o-yang lake dried up, leaving vast diaphanous shallows—'white dragons', as Po calls them, sprawling in the sunlight, and narrow, coiling channels threading their way through the mud like green snakes. Here and there the debris of daily life, broken metal-mirrors and snapped sword-heads, lay glinting on the mud flats:

*I have wandered by many waters and on many hills,*
*Seen many things that woke wonder and awe.*
*What to-day I saw from the arbour by the lake*
*Was a stranger sight than words of mine can tell.*
*And I felt as I looked how little of the world I know—*
*Of the marvels that Heaven and Earth have still in store.*

Then came the autumn rains and not only did the 'green snakes' and 'white dragons' merge and vanish under the rising waters of the lake, but every year the Great Flood turned the streets of Chiang-chou into rivers, mounting so swiftly that the townspeople had to knock holes in their roofs in order to escape from drowning and the country people fled with their horses and cattle into the hills. This was the time when those who had boats to hire came into their own. In a few days they could make a fortune out of the town's annual disaster. Po, in a poem which is no doubt partly a political allegory, derides the self-assurance of these profiteers, who have suddenly become the key-men of the town, and reminds them that 'In the ninth month after the frosts come the floods will dry and turn to level ground'.

In the eighth month he wrote a poem called 'To the Moon of Mid Autumn'. The Chinese have always regarded certain forms of beauty, particularly the beauty of music and that of moonlight, as bound up with

sorrow. To those who are sad already moonlight, despite its loveliness, brings an almost intolerable weight of grief. Po in his poem imagines the effect of this mid-autumn moon, casting its 'beams of inscrutable purity' to every corner of the world, upon the frontier-guardsman far away in the west, upon friends newly parted, upon a Palace favourite in whom the Emperor has lost interest, returning to her rooms at night (instead of at dawn), upon some high officer taken prisoner by the Tibetans and growing old in captivity; and he wonders whether the 'jade hare' and 'silver toad', denizens of the moon, know that the light they pour down upon the world brings unendurable sorrow to the hearts of all these people. One is inevitably reminded, though the parallel is not a close one, of Leopardi's:

*Intatta luna, tale*
*È lo stato mortale.*
*Ma tu mortal non sei,*
*E forse del mio dir poco ti cale.*

A walk along the banks of the river reminds him of his frequent autumn walks on the shores of the Serpentine at Ch'ang-an with Li Chien, and writing of their days together Po reminds him of their visits to the 'foreign monk' in the western monastery. The word I have translated 'foreign' (*hu*) means at this period Central Asian, as opposed to Indian; but Po may well have used it here in a wider sense. This is the only mention in his works of personal contact with any foreigner, and it is a pity that he does not tell us the foreign monk's name and nationality. There were a good many Japanese and Korean monks in China at this time, and some Indians. But the Tibetans now blocked the normal route from Central Asia to China, and the few Central Asiatics in Ch'ang-an had probably come on pilgrimage long ago and been unable to return.

Po Hsing-chien's little boy Tortoise (A-kuei), at the age of six (five by our reckoning) was already beginning to recite poetry:

*What a wonderful child! Already he knows how to recite poetry,*
*Wagging his knee and propping his chin just like his old uncle.*
*But don't work at it too hard, as your old uncle did,*
*So that by the time he was hardly forty the frost had settled on his brow.*

Readers of *Chinese Poems* (1946) will remember (p. 170) the poem 'Children':

*My nephew who is six years old is called Tortoise;*
*My daughter of three—little Summer Dress.*
*One is beginning to learn to joke and talk;*
*The other can already recite poems and songs. . . .*

Lo-Tzu (Summer Dress) was now, according to our reckoning, 2 and Tortoise 5; but the Chinese by 'three years old' mean 'in one's third year'.

Meanwhile great events had been happening in the outside world. In the eighth month, after the campaign against Wu Yüan-chi had dragged on unsuccessfully for nearly three years, P'ei Tu, colleague of the assassinated Chief Minister, Wu Yüan-hêng, was put in general charge of the operations and worked out a comprehensive plan, the essential element in which was what we should call a Commando raid on Wu Yüan-chi's headquarters at Ts'ai-chou in Western Honan. This raid was carried out by General Li So and a small body of men who under cover of a snowstorm penetrated the enemy's line, reached Ts'ai-chou by forced marches and meeting with little resistance captured Wu Yüan-chi alive. The rebellion at once collapsed and P'ei Tu, hence-forward the most influential figure of the day, was ennobled as Duke of Chin and returning in triumph to Ch'ang-an once more became head of the Government. Po's relations with P'ei Tu, which some ten years later became very intimate, were not at this time particularly cordial and he had little to hope for from P'ei's accession to power. But at about the same time as Ts'ai-chou fell an event occurred which touched both Po and Yüan Chên much more closely. A friend of theirs called Li Yung who had been a Commander of a district south of the Huai River, was suddenly called to the Capital as Chief Minister. Li Yung knew quite well that this summons was due to an intrigue engineered by the eunuch T'u-t'u, who had been Superintendent of the army that Li Yung commanded from 811 to 814. Li had always treated the eunuch civilly and T'u-t'u had got it into his head that if he could install Li Yung as a Chief Minister at the Capital he would be able to use him as a convenient political tool. At a farewell party held in his honour by his junior officers, in the midst of the music and laughter, Li Yung was seen to be weeping. 'I have grown old doing a soldier's job in the provinces', he said, 'and am not in any way qualified to be a Minister.' He felt deeply the humiliation of being promoted solely owing to a eunuch's intrigues and when, towards the end of 817, he arrived at Ch'ang-an, he pleaded ill-health, shut himself up in his house and would see nobody. In the spring he resigned from his post.

Po heard the news that Li Yung had become Chief Minister in the last days of 817 and at once addressed to Yuan Chên what must have been a rather maddening poem, in which he suggests that his friend is certain to be recalled from exile immediately. Yüan Chên replied that Li Yung had now been in power for several months, but that not a word had reached him about recall. 'If they let me spend another malaria-season here,' he says, 'it will not be on the earth but under it that they will have to look for me.'

It is, I think, to the spring of 818 that we must attribute a letter dated 'thirteenth day, third month' which Po gave to a certain Liu K'o, who

had for some time been living in a cottage on the Lu Shan, immersed in Confucian studies. Liu had written a book called *Aids to Mencius* and a collection of moral sayings. Some years before he had corresponded with Han Yü, the leader of the movement for the revival of Confucianism,[1] and though he never became a member of Han Yü's select circle of followers, he may be regarded as an outlying supporter of the movement. In the letter Po says that Liu, having decided to stand for the Literary Examinations, has come to him for assistance: 'Cast adrift amid the rivers and lakes there is little that I can do to open up a way for his career. Moreover, I am in bad health and have not the energy to write separate letters to my friends in different Government Departments. . . . So I have said to Liu K'o, "Take this letter, and when you get to Ch'ang-an call upon Yü Ching-hsiu, of the Hall of Assembled Worthies, the Omissioner Tu, of the Han-lin Academy, Yüan Tsung-chien of the Metal Board, the Inspector Niu Sêng-ju, Hsiao (Mien?) the Checker of Script, Yang (Yang Ju-shih?), the archivist at Lan-t'ien and his brother". These gentlemen are all literary friends of mine. They know that I am simple and straightforward and always have confidence in what I say. I feel sure that if in the present instance they do not fail me, fresh lustre will be added to our art. I am also glad to have this opportunity of showing to my old friends that, though my health is much undermined and my spirits very low, respect for virtue and delight at discovering talent are sentiments that are still very much alive in me.'

Armed with this recommendation Liu K'o passed his examinations *c.* 819; in 839 he wrote an inscription in memory of the famous pilgrim Hsüan-tsang ('Tripitaka'). After that no more is heard of him.

In the spring of 818 Po's only surviving brother, Po Hsing-chien, probably owing to the death of Lu T'an, the Commander under whom he was serving, gave up his post in Szechwan and came to live with Po at Chiang-chou. Apart from Yüan Chên there was no one to whom he was more deeply attached, and he felt more reconciled than ever to his life of mitigated exile. He was now on the friendliest terms with Mr. Ts'ui, the Governor of Chiang-chou, as we may see from the following poem written in answer to one inviting him to return from the mountains and attend a drinking-party at Yü Liang's Tower, a celebrated pagoda at Chiang-chou:

*The consideration you show is beyond all bounds;*
*Your courtesy far transcends the rules.*
*In the three years that I have served on your staff*
*Half the time you have let me live in the hills.*

[1] See below, p. 143 *seq*

*Now in a poem written with your own hand*
*You tell me of your party and hope that I shall be there.*
*It is pleasant to drink at Yu's Tower in spring,*
*And to-morrow I fully intend to be back in town.*

When the roses on his terrace began to flower, Po gave a party of his own. The invitation was in verse:

*My fresh brew of Bamboo Leaf*[1] *has been ready since spring came;*
*At the foot of the steps, since summer began, my roses have been in bloom.*
*Afire with many shades of red they weigh the trellis down;*
*Like candy is the yellow ooze that sticks to the malting-stand.*
*I send these few lines of verse to serve as an invitation;*
*If you are feeling at all in the mood perhaps you will manage to come.*
*Very early to-morrow morning the flowers will be at their best;*
*I hope you will come at the Hour of the Hare and drink a cup of wine.*

This was indeed an early start, for the 'hour of the Hare' means between five and seven in the morning.

Early in the fourth month, with sixteen friends, of whom ten were monks from the Eastern Forest Monastery, he climbed the Incense Burner Peak and spent the night at the Large Forest Monastery, which was about five miles farther on. It was the forest not the monastery that was 'large'. The monastery, indeed, was little more than a log hut, very roughly furnished, and the monks were strangers to these parts, having all come from 'east of the sea', that is to say from the Liao-tung peninsula, in what we call Manchuria. Though it was summer in the plain below, here spring was only just beginning. So different were both the climate and the inhabitants that on first arriving we were quite bewildered, and had the feeling that we were in some separate universe of our own. I was moved to improvise the following quatrain:

*In the world of men it is summer now and the fragrance of the year is past;*
*In this mountain-temple the peach-blossom has just reached its prime,*
*I have long wondered what becomes of Spring, and did not know where to look;*
*Now I know that when it leaves the plains it is here that Spring hides.*

They searched the walls and rafters for inscriptions by previous visitors; the most recent that they found dated from twenty years ago. 'This is beyond doubt the loveliest part of the whole mountain range; yet though it is less than half a day's journey from the main posting-road to the gates of this temple in all the twenty years since Hsiao, Wei and Li were here, there does not appear to have been a single visitor. Strange and sad indeed that the lure of profit and fame should be so strong as this!'

[1] The name of a wine.

From the autumn of 818 dates the essay on the post of 'marshal' at Chiang-chou and its advantages for anyone devoid of public ambitions. After explaining that almost all the functions of this office were now performed by other people, Po continues: 'For anyone anxious to put his abilities at the service of the public to hold such a post even for a day would be misery. But anyone devoid of worldly ambition and desirous merely of inward betterment could be happy in this post to the end of his days. Advancement or failure depends on the times; contentment or the reverse depends on the individual. Chiang-chou has the Lu Shan on one side, the River and Lake on the other. It lies high, the air is pure and there is an abundance of beautiful scenery. The Governor and principal officers in charge cannot absent themselves on distant excursions, the clerks and administrative officials are hard at work all the time. Only the Marshal is unattached, and is at liberty to enjoy the landscape, write poetry, drink wine, whenever he chooses. The pagodas to the south of the town and on the north of the mountains, the arbours by the P'ên River, the Arbour of a Hundred Flowers, . . . the waterfalls . . ., the two Forest Monasteries with their fountains, rocks, pine-trees and snow—all are his. In short, for anyone who wants to be hermit and official at the same time no better post exists. According to the Institutes of the T'ang dynasty the Marshal of such a place as this gets a yearly grain-allowance of several hundred "stones" and a monthly salary of sixty to seventy thousand cash, he has a roof over his head and can make provision for his family. If the people of the place thrive he gets no credit for it; on the other hand, if the district is badly administered, he is not to blame. . . .'

In the eighth month Wang Yai, who is supposed to have been responsible for Po having been sent as Marshal to Chiang-chou instead of being made Governor of a provincial district, fell from power. He had been a Chief Minister since 817, but was in disagreement with the policy of concentrating on the elimination of Wu Yüan-chi and was discredited by the striking success of this policy. The 'times' were changing in Po's favour and it became likely that he would soon be offered a better job. The efforts he made to persuade himself that he ought to be very well content with his humble sinecure in Chiang-chou did not of course mean that he would refuse a better post if it were offered to him. His friend Ts'ui Ch'ün had in fact been making constant efforts on his behalf, and on the twentieth day of the twelfth month (818), when he was staying at his cottage in the hills, news reached him that he had been appointed Governor of Chung-chou, a place on the Yangtze rather more than a hundred miles below Chungking. In the days immediately before this summons reached him he had, according to his own account, been engaged in an attempt to make the Philo-

sopher's Stone and achieve immortality. This curious episode in his career necessarily involves us in a short digression.

There are three main branches of Chinese alchemy: (1) the attempt to turn lead into gold; (2) the attempt to make an Elixir of Life; (3) subjective alchemy in which the ingredients are no longer external, but are the constituent parts, physical and spiritual, of the alchemist's own person. The second and third were not always easy to distinguish. The success of the purely concrete, chemical experiments of the alchemist was in any case thought to depend upon his having subjected himself to a severe spiritual discipline. The gestation of the elixir is constantly spoken of in terms of human biology, and we are left in doubt whether the creation of a new life or the production of an elixir is the aim in view.

The Lu Shan, besides being a great centre of Buddhism, was the home of many Taoist recluses, some of whom were alchemists. Po was on friendly terms with several of them. In 818 one of these alchemist friends, a certain Kuo Hsü-chou ('Kuo of the Empty Boat') lent him a book called the *Ts'an T'ung Ch'i*, which probably dates from the second century A.D. and may be the oldest treatise on alchemy in existence. In a poem written seven years later he describes his unsuccessful attempt to put its instructions into practice. Before quoting the poem it will be as well to explain that in the secret language of the alchemists 'the Yellow Sprout' means sulphur, 'the Purple Carriage' lead and 'the Little Lady', mercury. Referring to the treatise that Kuo had lent him Po writes:

*I read it, and day by day the meaning grew clearer,*
*Till no doubt was left in my mind at all.*
*The Yellow Sprout, yes, and the Purple Carriage*
*Seemed to be perfectly easy things to produce. . . .*
*I bade a lofty farewell to the world of men;*
*All my hopes were set on the silence of the hills.*
*My platform of clay was accurately squared,*
*The compass showed that my tripod was perfectly round.*
*At the very first motion of the furnace-bellows*
*A red glow augured that all was well.*
*I purified my heart and sat in solitary awe;*
*In the middle of the night I stole a furtive glance.*
*The two ingredients were in affable embrace;*
*Their attitude was most unexpected,*
*They were locked together in the posture of man and wife,*
*Intertwined as dragons, coil on coil.*
*The bell sounded from the Chien-chi Kuan,*
*Dawn was breaking on the Peak of Purple Mist.*

*It seems that the dust was not yet washed from my heart;*
*The stages of the firing had gone all astray.*
*A pinch of elixir would have meant eternal life;*
*A hair-breadth wrong, and all my labours lost!*
*The Master snapped his fingers and rose to go;*
*The Little Lady flew with the smoke to the sky. . . .*

'I knew at last', Po continues, in Buddhistic phraseology, 'that on the plane of Assembled Occasions one cannot escape from the secret laws of predestination.' He is referring to the doctrine of Tao-sui (fourth century): 'Existence is the state when "occasions" (*pratyaya*) are assembled; non-Existence is when they are scattered.' That night he dismantled his furnace; next day, he tells us, he heard that he had been made Governor of Chung-chou. The strange thing about this episode is not that he didn't succeed in making the Elixir (in this failed in very good company), but that he should ever have felt confident of being able to carry out the instructions of the *Ts'an T'ung Ch'i*, which are of the vaguest kind. Indeed, the author of these treatises (Chapter 31) himself tells us: 'In the directions for these processes only the more important principles are set forth; the details cannot be divulged.' Actually the book tells us little more than that we must get hold of an unspecified quantity of white lead, oxide of lead and mercury and heat them for an unspecified time to an unspecified degree. I do not doubt that Po undertook the experiment quite seriously, but in telling us of its failure he is obviously to some extent laughing at himself.

There are a few other poems of much later date, in which he refers to alchemy; but the allusions are purely literary, and he does not seem ever again to have made experiments on his own account.

# CHAPTER X

THE fall of Wang Yai, to which I have already referred, must certainly have facilitated the efforts made on Po's behalf by his and Yüan Chên's great friend Ts'ui Ch'ün, who became a Chief Minister in the autumn of 817. In thanking Ts'ui for what he had done Po says, in effect, that one must not look a gift-horse in the mouth. Chung-chou was a district of some forty thousand inhabitants of whom perhaps about half lived at the administrative centre, Nan-pin. The Chinese colony there was very small, most of the inhabitants being aborigines—primitive agriculturists, similar to the modern Miao tribes. He received the insignia of his new rank and office from the Inspector-General of Kiang-hsi, the immediate superior of the Governor of Chiang-chou. They consisted of a red robe and 'fish-bag', both embroidered with the same emblem—a kite holding in its beak a magic plant. The bag presumably contained the silver fish (emblem of the Fourth Rank), to which he several times alludes. The red robe was his official uniform as Governor. He pretends to view these paraphernalia with detachment, asks what they are good for except to impress his wife and family at home and whether a clothes-peg becomes something superior to a stick of wood or bamboo merely because a scarlet coat is hung upon it. But he mentions these new decorations so often that it seems he cannot have been entirely indifferent to them. In a poem of farewell to his cottage he appeals to the Lu Shan not to 'circularize' him. Mountains are not at all inclined to welcome back those who leave them. There is a story that Chou Yung (died A.D. 485), having left the Northern Mountain, near Nanking, in order to take up a post at the Capital thought that when he tired of official life he could come back and live in the Mountain as though nothing had happened. But the god of the Mountain was determined that renegades, soiled by contact with the world, should not be re-admitted and 'circularized' all the Mountain Courts (the abodes of the minor local mountain spirits) that wherever Chou Yung appeared they must bar his path with a curtain of magic cloud.

Po left Chiang-chou early in the spring of 819, parting from the Lu Shan when it was still snow-covered. About the same time as he was appointed Governor of Chung-chou, Yüan Chên was also recalled, to take up the post of Senior Officer (*Chang-shih*) at Kuo-chou, about half-way between Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang. They met, the one coming downstream and the other going up, near I-ch'ang, on the tenth of the third month. 'Next day Yüan turned his boat and came upstream with

me as far as the Hsia-lao garrison-post. We intended to part on the twelfth; but when the time came, we could not bear to do so, and kept on being hauled upstream and then turning round and going downstream again.' Hearing the sound of a waterfall they went ashore and making their way through a fissure in the rock came to a chasm full of strange stalactites over which water dripped in continuous white threads. With the help of rope and ladder, brought by their servants, they climbed on and on through a primeval world of water and stone. From the hour of the Sheep to the hour of the Dog (1 to 9 p.m.) they stayed in the mysterious chasm, unable to tear themselves away. Suddenly the clouds above the dark cliff parted and the moon came out, transforming the fantastic scene and producing shapes and contrasts 'such as no tongue could name or describe'. Before leaving they each carved a poem on the rocks, giving the place the name of 'The Cave of the Three Wanderers'.

Some days later, after finally parting from Yüan Chên, he came to a place where the women's faces were branded with strange markings. This, he was told, was the village where Chao-chun[1] was born, and ever since her time the women had disfigured themselves lest they should share in Chao-chun's unhappy fate. The explanation is not very convincing, for Chao-chun, it will be remembered, got into trouble because she failed to bribe a Court painter, and it may be presumed that her descendants, if summoned to the Palace on account of their beauty, would not have been likely to repeat this mistake. The truth no doubt was that Po was now getting into a part of China where the inhabitants were not of Chinese origin and were only imperfectly assimilated to Chinese ways. Tattooing of women's faces was of course a quite un-Chinese culture-trait.

He arrived at Chung-chou in the last days of the third month. The people spoke a language unintelligible to him; he had none of the interest in aborigines which is now so current in China, and dismisses them as being more simian than human. The place itself was 'little better than a village' and built on such steep ground that though the sumptuary laws allowed him as Governor to have a carriage 'with red wheels, drawn by five horses', there was not at Chung-chou any street where a carriage could be used. Salted fish was the staple food. Agriculture was of a primitive kind, rice being grown on plots prepared by burning, without the use of plough or hoe; few vegetables were grown. The only cloth produced was a coarse, knotty fabric called Yellow Thread Silk. The typical music of these parts was the 'Bamboo-branch Song'. Many poets of the period, banished to Szechwan, wrote Chinese words to be sung to these very mournful Bamboo-branch tunes, and this sort

[1] See above, p. 13.

of music had obtained a certain currency in China. But it was, as Po points out, one thing to hear such a song occasionally and quite another to have it dinned into one's ears perpetually by the youths and shaman-girls (*wu-nü*) of the locality. But, by way of compensation, it was at Chung-chou that Po first saw and ate lychees; and here too that he first became acquainted with the Tree-lotus (magnolia), upon which he has the following note: 'The Tree-lotus grows in the gorges and mountain valleys of Szechwan. The local people also call it the Yellow Heart Tree. It sometimes grows to a height of fifty feet, and remains green all through the winter. The trunk is like that of the Purple Willow, and it has white markings. The leaves are like those of the cassia, thick and large and without spikes. The flowers are like those of the lotus as regards scent, colour and glossy texture; but there is a difference in the seed-case and pistils. It begins to flower in the fourth month and remains in flower for barely twenty days. About two miles north-west of Chung-chou there is a ravine called the Valley of Tinkling Jade where these trees seem to flourish more than anywhere else.' In the summer of 819 he commissioned a Taoist called Mu-ch'iu Yuan-chih to paint a picture of a magnolia, that he might send it to Yuan Chên's cousin Yüan Tsung-chien at Ch'ang-an. The tree was evidently still quite unfamiliar in the north.

Early in the summer he heard that the Shantung rebel Li Shih-tao had been captured and executed at the beginning of the year. Shih-tao had long been disaffected; Po, it will be remembered, had warned the Government against him as long ago as 809. But he did not openly defy the dynasty till the autumn of 818. After his defeat there no longer remained any considerable part of China that was not under the control of the Central Government—a situation that was at this period quite abnormal, and indeed only lasted for about eighteen months. On hearing the news Po sent an 'Address to the Throne' congratulating the Emperor on the defeat of his sole remaining enemy and expressing the belief that China was at last entering upon a period of complete peace. He regrets that the position he now holds makes it impossible for him to offer his congratulations in person, at Court; and no doubt one of his objects in sending the Address was to remind the authorities of his existence, in case there should be a recall of exiles, as often happened after a victory. He was, however, still toying with the idea of retiring altogether from official life when his three-year term of office at Chung-chou was over, and in a poem addressed to his monk-friends at the Forest Monasteries on Lu Shan he mentions that he has left behind at Chiang-chou a sum of money sufficient to maintain him for a while when he comes back. He also asks them to keep an eye on his cottage and garden and make sure that they are being properly looked after.

The Chinese adjusted the lunar to the solar year by occasionally putting in an extra month. In 820 there was an extra 'first month' and the festival of the Spring Equinox fell, rather oddly and awkwardly, in the second month. Tribesmen flocked to the festival from many miles around; there was no flat ground on which to accommodate them, and they gathered in groups at many different levels. Soon the drumming began and the girls rose to dance. Po, with a few Chinese guests, surveyed the scene from above. Covering his mouth with his hand (a familiar Chinese gesture) he begged his guests not to laugh at him for calling these uncouth savages his subjects or for trying to pass off his shabby hovel as an Official Residence: for 'even in the wasp's nest and ant-hill there are Governors and governed'.

In the first month of 820 the Emperor Hsien Tsung died suddenly, at the age of 42. As often happens when conspicuous people die unexpectedly, it was rumoured that he had not died a natural death. Some said he had been done away with by eunuchs; the eunuchs, who were pious Buddhists and consequently hostile to Taoists, said that he died as the result of swallowing an Elixir of Life incompetently prepared by Taoist alchemists. It seems to be the case that the Emperor was interested in alchemy, as indeed were many of his subjects, Po Chü-i among them. But what went on in the Palace was very imperfectly known even to the contemporary world, and we cannot hope at this distance of time to discover how Hsien Tsung died. Po, remembering the high hopes caused by his accession in 806 and the great consideration shown to him by the Emperor during his three years (808–810) at Court, was deeply moved by the news. He no doubt also heard (though he does not refer to it) that his enemy the eunuch T'u-t'u, who was supporting a rival candidate to the Throne, had been murdered by a clique of younger eunuchs were who loyal to the Crown Prince. In the fifth month Yüan Chên, after holding his post at Kuo-chou for a year, was summoned to the Capital; in the eighth month he was accorded the honour of an interview with the new Emperor, who had known of him as a poet for many years. With events shaping like this it can hardly have come as a surprise to Po that he too, early in the winter, received a summons to Ch'ang-an. As a stop-gap he was given a post in an office which controlled Customs-barriers, but this may merely have been a device for giving him official status and privileges on his journey home. Within a few weeks of his return he was back at his old job of writing Imperial rescripts.

As at Hsia-kuei, Po suffered at Chung-chou from a lack of congenial society, such as was particularly necessary for a poet. We do not, of course, regard poetry as a game that needs an opponent. But at this period in China poets relied a great deal on the stimulus of friendly

competition, and it was not thought much fun to write a poem unless one had someone to show it to, who would reply with an answering poem, perhaps using the same rhymes, but in any case entering into the spirit of the original poem, and trying to improve upon it. It is to the fruit trees he had planted and not to any local acquaintances that his poems of farewell are addressed, and he contents himself with the reflection that the new Governor will perhaps also be a lover of flowers.

He had of course before starting to divest himself of his Governor's insignia, and he tells us how his little daughter of two, apparently born at Chiang-chou in 818, wept bitterly when she came to him to play with the 'silver fish' at his belt, and found it was not there. On the way down the Yangtze he stopped the boat and climbed to a height from which he could look back on Chung-chou. Eager though he was to get home he found himself regretting some things at Chung-chou, among them the profusion of white blossom in the Governor's garden and the excellent wine that used to be supplied to him from the garrison-mess. He noticed that on the journey, when he signed his name, no one seemed to have heard of him—a great contrast to the triumphal progress of only five years before. At Ch'ang-an it was hard to pick up the threads. He felt much aged and altered: 'the years of one's youth cannot be recaptured'. There is no mention of his first meeting with Yuan Chên, but we find them spending the night together in the Palace Secretariat just after Po was reappointed to his old post, with two other friends of old days; and Po apologizes for his lack of animation on the ground that his restoration to favour has come when he is too old to get any pleasure from it.

The new Emperor, Mu Tsung, like most Emperors, was not living up to expectations. He was devoting far too much time to amusing himself, and in particular, to hunting. Shortly before Po's return five gentlemen suddenly made their appearance at the Inner Palace and proceeded to lecture him on the subject. 'Who are these people?' the Emperor asked. 'The Censors,' he was told. 'Thank them for the trouble they have put themselves to,' said the Emperor, 'and tell them I mean to follow their advice.' But the hunting still went on. It must have been soon after his return to the Capital that Po wrote a 'Warning', in prose with occasional use of rhyme, in which he begs the Emperor to give up hunting. His argument is that various ancient monarchs who were addicted to hunting came to a bad end, whereas certain T'ang emperors who gave up hunting at the request of their Ministers had prosperous reigns. In the case of the Emperor Hsüan Tsung the argument is not convincing, for though he gave up hunting permanently, it was only the first part of his reign that was prosperous; it ended in disaster. Finally two more concrete arguments are used: the Emperor

may fall off his horse and hurt himself, and he may be set upon by brigands. The Emperor may well have replied that he was willing to take the same risks as other huntsmen, and that he could guard against the danger of brigands by taking with him a sufficient retinue. The essay is a typical Confucian 'remonstrance', weak in argument and calculated to irritate rather than to improve the person to whom it was addressed.

It was inevitable that as a well-known writer holding a position at Court he should again become involved in examination tangles. In the twelfth month of 820 he and Li Yü-chung (772–836) were asked to re-mark the papers of candidates in the Placing Examination. Li Yü-chung was the son of the well-known poet Li Tuan (732–792)[1] and himself became known not only as a poet, but also (like Po) as a writer of Imperial Rescripts. In their joint report Po and Li admit that the papers sent on to them 'are not devoid of mistakes. If a strict standard were adopted many of the candidates would have to be ploughed.' But this would involve a criticism of the original examiner, 'and we presume that your Majesty would not wish a veteran statesman, who has done service during several reigns, to get into trouble over so trifling a matter'. The examiner in question was Han Kao (746–824), who had been the Emperor's tutor when he was Crown Prince. The written tests, Po and Li continue, are not the sole standard; general qualifications of character and ability ought also to be taken into account. It would be better in this instance to leave matters as they stand. 'Possibly some of the successful candidates do not deserve to have passed; but at any rate we may be sure that among those that failed there are few who would be of much use.'

Whether the re-examiners were able to evade their embarrassing task in this casual way we do not know. Early in the next year (821) Po became involved in an even more embarrassing examination affair. The Literary Examinations were presided over by Ch'ien Hui (755–829), the friend whose letter to Po in 814 had so much cheered him.[2] Charges were made that the candidates passed by Ch'ien were grossly ill-qualified and owed their success solely to their connection with people in high places. The matter was referred to Yüan Chên and Li Shên ('Little Li'), who was one of Po's oldest and dearest friends. They agreed that there had been favouritism. Po Chü-i was ordered to re-test the candidates, and was obliged to plough most of them, including a younger cousin of his wife and a son of a very close friend, Li Tsung-min. This was unpleasant enough in itself. But he also knew quite well that an examiner whose decision was reversed was likely to be severely punished, and Ch'ien Hui was an older man whom he greatly liked and respected. After the re-examination was over and its result had been

[1] See above, p. 12

[2] See above, p. 86.

announced he sent in a report in which he appealed to the Emperor not to take too grave a view of the matter. He pointed out that under the circumstances he and his fellow re-examiner were bound to scrutinize the papers with very great care and apply the most rigorous standards. But it should be realized that the candidates worked under certain disadvantages. Owing to an inadequate supply of candles the time at their disposal was insufficient, moreover the questions were given out orally instead of on written question-slips, which had led to misunderstandings. Po asks that a statement should be made giving a definite example of the mistakes committed. This would convince the families of the rejected candidates that the verdict had not been arbitrary, make the candidates feel properly ashamed of themselves and serve as a warning to future examiners.

This suggestion was acted upon, and the blunder did indeed turn out to be of a portentous nature. The candidates had without exception failed to recognize a four-word quotation from the Ritual of the Chou Dynasty (*Chou Li*), one of the most venerated Classics! What happened is quite clear. The words 'the tube of the lonely bamboo' were given out as the subject of a *fu*, and the harassed candidates, with an eye on the guttering candles, had scribbled off a composition about the feudal State called Lonely Bamboo (*Ku-chu*) and its hermit-brothers Shu-ch'i and Po-i, quite forgetting that the 'tube of the lonely bamboo' is the name of a musical instrument used in the sacrifice to Heaven. The Imperial statement admits that the allusion in the words given out as a theme was rather 'deep and out-of-the-way'; but claimed it was a good test of how intimately the candidates knew the Classics.

Most modern examiners would regard a question that no candidate can answer correctly as an ill-chosen one. In fairness to Po it must be said that it was probably the Palace Secretariat and not he that set the questions in the re-examination. Ch'ien Hui, the original examiner, did not come off too badly; for he was sent as Governor to Chiang-chou, with all its amenities of climate and scenery, and not to the dreaded malarial districts of the extreme south, as might well have been his fate. There is a story that Ch'ien Hui possessed letters from Li Shên and others who had accused him of favouritism in which they themselves attempted to influence him in favour of certain protégés of their own. His friends, at the time when the affair was being investigated, urged Ch'ien to produce these letters. But he replied that 'a gentleman does not show private letters even in self-defence', and burnt the letters. Ch'ien Hui no doubt realized that Po had done his best for him, and evidently felt no ill-will; for on arriving at Chiang-chou he visited Po's cottage and wrote a poem on the wall. The two men continued to correspond in verse. The affair had in it an element of hereditary

vendetta. We find the sons of protagonists in the Palace Examination affair of 808 ranged on opposite sides in the present conflict.

In the winter of 820 Po bought a small house in the Hsin-ch'ang Ward which lay under the eastern walls of the city, for the sake, he tells us,[1] of the pine-trees in the courtyard. On the north side he had a low window made, which he left unpapered (paper was generally used instead of glass), and outside the window he planted bamboos. Coming back from Court he would throw off his stiff, uncomfortable clothes and lie under his 'bamboo-window', where there was always a cool breeze.

On the twenty-third day of the second month Li Chien, the great friend both of Po Chü-i and Yüan Chên, died suddenly at his home in the Hsin-hsing Ward, which lay in the south-east corner of the city. Po wrote an inscription for the monument erected in his memory, and Yüan Chên wrote the inscription for his tomb. Yüan Chên mentions it as much to Li Chien's credit that when his whole family gathered round his bed begging him to let them send for a shaman to exorcize his sickness, he shook his head. To have recourse to wonder-workers was looked upon as a sign of moral weakness; a courageous man accepts what Fate sends.

Po's present post was not a sinecure; he had a mass of official papers to deal with, and was constantly on duty in the Palace at night. He complains that for all he sees of Yüan Chên he might just as well be still in Chung-chou, and that he has not even had time to call upon Yüan Chên's cousin Yüan Tsung-chien and congratulate him upon being made Vice-mayor of Ch'ang-an. A few weeks later Tsung-chien died, as did also Ts'ui Shao, the 'Ts'ui Twenty-two' so often referred to in Po's poems, a serious-minded man who always said, 'The day is for work, the night for rest. I am entirely against all this strolling about by moonlight.'

With the Po family itself things were going well. Chü-i received a much coveted title, 'Upper Pillar of the Nation', which gave him the status of an official of the Second Rank. His brother Po Hsing-chien became Omissioner, and his young cousin Po Min-chung, who afterwards added lustre to the family by becoming a Chief Minister, successfully passed the Literary Examinations. Another member of the family who figures at this time is Po Hao, the cousin who saw the apparitions at the chapel in 813. He was a well-known painter of birds and flowers and was famous also for his singing. In 821 he presented Po Chü-i with a picture of an eagle, upon which Po wrote a eulogy in which he says that there had no doubt existed other capable painters of birds and animals, such as Hsüeh Lêng, famous for his cranes, and Han Kan, famous for his horses; but he could hardly be expected to admire the work of those strangers as much as he admired that of his own paternal

[1] *Chinese Poems* (1946), p. 172

cousin. Po Hao was only a third cousin. We in Europe, with our looser family system, would most of us find it difficult even to name a single third cousin and, if we discovered one, our judgment on his artistic performances would hardly be affected by descent from a common great-great-grandfather.

In the seventh month there was further trouble in the north-east. A certain Wang T'ing-ts'ou, an officer of Uighur origin, stirred up a mutiny in one of the Hopei Commands, in the course of which the legitimate Commander was assassinated and Wang T'ing-ts'ou was set up in his place. The late Commander's son T'ien Pu, who held a post on the western frontier, was recalled and given a Command in the north-east, with instructions to avenge his father's death. While on his way across northern China, T'ien Pu stopped at Ch'ang-an and Po Chu-i was ordered to convey to him a message from the Emperor. On leaving, Po was asked by T'ien Pu to accept 500 pieces of silk. To reward a messenger for his trouble was a usual thing; it was, however, unusual to employ so exalted a person as messenger. The present was a handsome one, equivalent to the price of ten horses.[1] No doubt T'ien Pu felt that, on the principle of 'to those that have more shall be given', a highly-paid official could not be asked to accept an ordinary gratuity. Po refused, and shortly afterwards a eunuch came round from the Palace with a message from the Emperor saying that he wished Po to accept the gift. Po still refused, and wrote to his Majesty explaining why he did so. T'ien Pu, he says, is the son of a murdered man and is under a moral obligation to avenge his father's death. For this purpose he will need every penny he possesses and it would be a crime to accept a present from him. Moreover, he is likely to receive further instructions from the Throne and if every messenger bearing such instructions is rewarded on this scale, 'long before the assassins have paid the penalty, T'ien Pu's resources will be completely exhausted'. The most remarkable sentence in this document is that in which Po admits that he is earning a big salary, amply sufficient for his requirements. The familiar formula: 'I am not so well off as people suppose' was carried to extreme lengths in ancient China, and we constantly find members of the official class, who owned several estates and could afford to maintain hundreds of servants and followers, describing themselves as living in miserable poverty. I wonder whether there is any other passage in Chinese literature in which the writer honestly avows that he is not a poor man.

For a year after his return Po abstained from making any comment upon the edicts which it fell to his lot to shape in their final form. Then came the affair of the party at the Board of History; Po felt that 'freedom of association' was at stake, and could not bring himself to write the

[1] See above, p 55.

edict that had been sent to him. The episode centres round a wild but very gifted character called Li Ching-chien, a distant relative of the Emperor's, who had been Yüan Chên's colleague and principal friend when he was in banishment at Chiang-ling. One day in the winter of 821 after returning from Court, where he held the position of Censor, he collected a number of friends, including Po's relative by marriage Yang Ssu-fu, and they all went to call on the official historian T'u-hu Lang (also a friend of Po's) at the Board of History. Here they had a great deal to drink and probably talked politics, for Li Ching-chien suddenly declared that he was going straight round to the Palace Secretariat to tell the Chief Ministers what he thought about them. And he did so, in no measured terms. Seeing that he was very drunk, the Ministers humoured him and managed at last to get him off the premises. But they reported the incident and Li Ching-chien was banished. Shortly afterwards a further edict was issued, banishing the historian T'u-hu Lang and all those who had been present at the party. It was to this latter edict that Po took exception. He reminded the Emperor that some twenty years ago the Government of the day, in order to prevent the formation of groups hostile to its policy, had tried to suppress all social gatherings of officials and had thus incurred great unpopularity. Whatever might be the real motive for the present edict, it would certainly give the impression that an attempt to prevent freedom of association was once more being made. Po suggests that a warning and fine would amply meet the case. His appeal was ignored, but a few weeks later, when Yüan Chên became Chief Minister, the historian and his friends were all recalled. Li Ching-chien died at the age of about 44, apparently in the spring of 822.

In the autumn of 821 Yüan Chên was made head of the Han-lin Academy. He was now on very intimate terms with the Emperor and in the eighth month he succeeded in carrying through a reform on which he had long set his heart. Edicts conferring new posts on officials were written in a style dominated by parallelism and other literary devices; instead of making clear in straightforward terms the reasons for promotion or demotion, they consisted merely of exaggerated eulogy or withering condemnation, expressed in a language that was derived from the *fu*-poems and 'judgments' (*p'an*) of the examination-room. Yüan Chên asked that such documents should henceforward be written 'in the old way', that is to say, in the archaic but solid and unornamental style that had prevailed before the influence of the Literary Examination pervaded the official world.

In the ninth month, in response to a prolonged agitation, the law of 785, decreeing that all taxes should be paid in money, was repealed. Henceforward only the taxes on salt and wine were to be paid in money,

and the rest in grain or silk. It was hoped in this way to stem the disastrous deflation which had prevailed for forty years. Yüan Chên did not share in the general enthusiasm with which this measure was greeted. He believed that China's troubles were due to unauthorized spoliation and not to a wrong system of official taxation. He pointed out that in large parts of Southern and Western China taxes were still paid in kind (in Yunnan, for example, in quicksilver and cinnabar). 'In one district this leads to distress, in another similar district, to prosperity.' A general change-over to taxation in kind would not lead to the expected millennium. The troubles of China, he maintained, were not due to 'money being dear and goods cheap', but to the private exactions carried out by local officials, and it was idle to suppose that the problem would be solved by changing the whole system of taxation in such a way as to decrease the value of money. By his scepticism about this extremely popular measure Yüan ranged against him a well-organized political group led by Yang Wu-ling[1] (753–830); a few weeks later we find him at desperate loggerheads with P'ei Tu, who since his victorious campaign against the separatist leader Wu Yuan-chi (817) had become the most venerated and influential figure in the political arena. He was at present conducting the campaign against Wang T'ing-ts'ou in the north-east. There was every prospect that he would repeat the success of 817 and soon be returning in triumph to the Capital. Early in the winter P'ei Tu got it into his head that Yüan Chên was intercepting his despatches and reports, many of which were not acknowledged and appeared not to have been received at Ch'ang-an. We have no means of knowing whether the accusation was in any way justified. But early next year Yüan Chên recommended that military measures against Wang T'ing-ts'ou should cease, and if he thought that P'ei Tu's despatches were misleading and likely to cause an unnecessary prolongation of the conflict he would, I think, have been quite capable of acting in the high-handed way ascribed to him. For the moment P'ei Tu was able to assert his influence; Yüan Chên was removed from the Han-lin Academy to a post where he had no access to military despatches. But P'ei Tu's campaign was singularly unsuccessful; he began to lose prestige, and on the nineteenth day of the second month, 822, Yüan Chên became a Chief Minister. The appointment was made solely at the instance of the Emperor and met with a very hostile reception. Yüan had held none of the high Metropolitan posts which usually paved the way for the Premiership, and was regarded as far too headstrong, irresponsible and unreliable; moreover, he entirely lacked political support.

Shortly before Yuan Chên became Chief Minister Po sent in a series

[1] A distant relation of Po's wife

of recommendations about the campaign in the north-east which may well have aggravated the conflict between Yüan Chên and P'ei Tu, for one of the principal suggestions was that P'ei should henceforth be entrusted with only a very minor role in the campaign. The document was sent in by 'Po Chü-i and others'. It deals in great detail with numbers and disposition of troops, and shows a minute knowledge of the whole situation that Po himself was not likely to have possessed. Probably his part in the matter consisted chiefly in giving the document its final literary form. In the third month P'ei Tu was summoned to the Capital and became head of the Government, with Yüan Chên acting as junior Chief Minister under him. The situation, bound in any case to be an uncomfortable one, took an even more disagreeable turn than might have been expected. In the fifth month P'ei Tu claimed to have received information that Yüan Chên had entrusted a certain Yü Fang with the task of assassinating him. P'ei Tu ignored the information, but the story received further currency, and eventually an enquiry was ordered. The charge proved, of course, to be entirely baseless. But in the course of the enquiry it became known that Yüan had indeed engaged Yu Fang's services, for a purpose which, though not murderous, was in the highest degree irregular and discreditable. A certain General Niu was being besieged by Wang T'ing-ts'ou in Shên-chou (Central Hopei). Yu Fang (as Yüan admitted) had come to Yüan with the following plan: the Board of War and the Board of Civil Office were to be bribed to issue twenty blank letters of appointment, which Yü Fang was to use at his discretion in inducing Wang T'ing-ts'ou's officers to connive at Niu's escape from the besieged city. Yüan Chên agreed to this fantastic plan, and in defending himself naively claimed that having heard the Emperor express anxiety about General Niu he determined to anticipate military events by a 'coup' of his own: 'I believed I was acting in accordance with your Majesty's feelings on the subject, and had no other object in view.' Yüan Chên was, not unnaturally, removed from the post of Chief Minister. So too was P'ei Tu, and though the reason for this is not given, it seems clear that the recent enquiry was regarded as having discredited both of them equally. It must, I think, have come out at the enquiry that the story about Yüan Chên's plot to assassinate P'ei Tu had been put about by P'ei himself. On the fourth of the sixth month Yuan was appointed Governor of T'ung-chou[1] in Eastern Shensi. He flung himself with his usual enthusiasm and assiduity into the duties of his new post, pouring in a stream of reports about local scandals and injustices, particularly as regards land-holdings.

To the summer of 822 belongs a document of considerable interest

[1] Not to be confused with the T'ung-chou in Szechwan where he was Marshal from 815–819.

to students of law. A certain Yao Wên-hsiu had killed his wife. The legal authorities maintained that according to the T'ang Code killing preceded by a struggle or 'incident' (*shih*) was to be counted as homicide, not as murder. They held that in the present case there had been a struggle; they also held that there had been an 'incident', consisting in the fact that the wife had been guilty of a misdemeanour which angered her husband. Po, in his comment on the case, holds that a struggle implies mutual injury, and in the present case Yao was found to bear no marks of injury. He also maintains that in the wording of the Code 'incident' merely further defines 'struggle', and has not a separate meaning. The Office of Law had quoted two precedents to justify their decision that the present case was one of homicide. Po admits that the previous cases were to a considerable extent similar to the present issue, but holds that wrong verdicts in the past are no justification for another wrong verdict to-day. If the ruling of the authorities is accepted, he maintains, it will be impossible to convict anyone of murder; for all murders are preceded by an 'incident' of some kind.

The edict in which Po's view was accepted is also given: 'Yao Wên-hsiu killed his wife and is therefore guilty of one of the Ten Major Offences. To treat him with indulgence would be to encourage violence. In cases where the relevant passage in the Code is capable of alternative explanations, judgment should be given in accordance with what is reasonable. Po Chu-i's report is to be accepted. We rule that the defendant is to be thrashed and then executed.'

An attempt had been made at the end of the third century B.C. to replace morality by law. The State, it was contended, must decide what people were to do and what they were not to do. There must be a code of law so detailed as to leave no loophole for private standards of right and wrong, which might conflict with the public interest. The Emperor (Shih Huang Ti; died 210 B.C.) who attempted to put this theory into practice and his Minister, Li Ssu, were subsequently regarded with such execration, owing to their ruthless suppression of all who did not agree with them, that the Chinese developed a species of what we may call 'nomophobia'—a dread of any system that relied exclusively on written statutes and left no room for the dictates of conscience or common sense. Certainly in T'ang times, and to some extent until the fall of the Manchus early in the present century, there was a tendency to regard laws merely as a general guide to the lines on which justice should be administered. No Chinese magistrate, after passing what he knew to be an unfair sentence, would (as sometimes happens outside China) have pointed out with a glow of pride that he had faithfully administered the Law of the land.

It was during 821 and 822 that Po Chü-i was on intimate terms with

the celebrated Han Yü (768–824), to whom I have already several times referred. Han Yü is famous as a prose stylist and as the reviver of primitive Confucianism. Owing to the influence of the Literary Examinations Chinese prose had in his day, except when used for purposes of straight narrative, become infected with the mannerisms and ornate devices of the *fu* and other quasi-poetical forms of composition. Han Yü imitated the style of the early Confucian Classics and so gave to his writings the authority of a voice that seemed to speak out of the past. He regarded himself, indeed, as entrusted by Heaven with a mission to revive not merely the style but also the teaching of the early Confucians, especially of Mencius, who lived about a hundred years after Confucius. The sayings of Mencius, which since the fourteenth century have played so dominant a part in Chinese moral education, were not in Han Yü's time very well known. They did not figure in the Examinations and were probably not easy to procure. There had indeed been a proposal as long ago as 763 to combine the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Book of Filial Piety* and *Mencius* into a single Classic, examine all candidates on their knowledge of this one book, and do away with the Literary, Classical and Taoist examinations altogether. But this revolutionary step was never taken, and *Mencius* continued to be treated merely as one out of many collections of early sayings.

Confucianism was indeed at a low ebb. It had to compete with Buddhism, which gave the common people magnificent spectacles to witness, glorious buildings to visit and wander in, which gave them legends, pictures and magic chanting; while a large section of the official classes, though they remained Confucian in their official outlook, made Buddhist philosophy their private solace and support. Taoism too had organized its institutions and ideas on the model of Buddhism and (though nothing could have been more alien to the anarchic and escapist precepts of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu than China's bureaucratic system) there were among the ruling classes devout Taoists in whose eyes Confucius was merely a humble follower of Lao Tzu.

But the Taoists were comparatively harmless rivals. The first step towards the reinstatement of Confucianism must necessarily be to weaken the hold of Buddhism on the people. It was a custom that once every so many years a Buddha relic kept at a monastery near the Capital should be brought to the Emperor's palace. The occasion was a great popular festival and huge crowds witnessed the magnificent processions to and from the palace. In 819 Han Yü protested against this practice in what is perhaps the most celebrated of his writings. The basis of his attack was that Buddhism was a foreign religion. To this his opponents could answer that it had been in China for nearly a thousand years and had long ago been completely assimilated to Chinese ways of life. His

other main argument was that Imperial patronage of Buddhism had always been followed by disaster. This was simply untrue; incidentally it was equivalent to the *lèse-majesté* of saying that the present Emperor was heading for disaster. Han Yu was banished, wrote an abject apology to the Emperor, and in less than a year was recalled.

It was soon after this that his brief friendship with Po Chü-i began. It has sometimes been thought surprising that so devout a Buddhist as Po should have made friends with a man who had recently become notorious as an opponent of Buddhism. But Po's interest was in the philosophic and mystic side of Buddhism, not in the cult of relics. Moreover, the proposal to hold the Procession of the Bones at this time came from the eunuchs, against whose dominance Po had many times courageously protested, so that he may well have felt a certain antipathy to the whole performance.

It is possibly a mere accident that they made friends so late in life. It so happened that previous to 821 they were never for long on end in the same place at the same time. They parted for ever in the autumn of 822. Po set out for Hangchow and Han Yu died at Ch'ang-an in the winter of 824, when Po (back from Hangchow) was living at Lo-yang. He several times mentions Han Yü in later poems. He recalls, for example, Han Yu's Warnings to Old Men: 'Don't start thinking you have not got enough to live on or take it into your head that you ought to try and get back into office, when you have not the strength to work. If you are hale and hearty, don't keep on boasting about it; and finally, don't tell interminable stories', and asks himself whether now that he is old he can honestly say that he lives up to these precepts.

But long before Po became intimate with Han Yü he had certainly heard a great deal about him from a mutual friend, of whom I have hitherto given no account. This was Chang Chi (*c.* 765–830), one of Han Yü's most candid critics and most devoted followers. He passed his Literary Examinations in 799. Soon afterwards his sight appeared to be failing, and Han Yu wrote for him a letter to a provincial Inspector in which he says that though 'blind in his eyes', he is still able 'in his heart to distinguish right and wrong'. Great men keep blind musicians to entertain them. Surely then a blind moral adviser would not be out of place. Moreover, he is 'not very blind', and it is believed that if he had sufficient means to procure proper treatment for his eyes, he might recover his sight. We do not know if this appeal was successful; but in after life, although always suffering from trouble with his eyes (to which Po, who had similar trouble, often refers sympathetically) he does not ever seem to have been entirely blind. In 822 or 823, for example, Po sent him a picture of the view from his upper window at Hangchow—a present he would hardly have made to a completely blind man.

Chang Chi was undoubtedly one of the main influences in Po's early poetry, particularly on his didactic ballads. He is indeed one of the few contemporary poets praised in the letter to Yüan Chên. A good many of Chang's poems have been lost. Such ballads as remain have the same excellent social and political intentions as Po's, but have not even the modicum of poetry that Po manages to inject into his verse-tracts. Perhaps his most successful poem is 'The Crow that cawed at Night', a highly condensed ballad, written round the popular belief that when a crow caws at night it means that a prisoner will be pardoned. It was intended to be sung to the traditional zither-tune that bore this title:

*In the land of Ch'in*
*At Ch'ang-an over the scrivener's roof*
*Suddenly at night there sounded a jarring cry.*
*The scrivener was lying sentenced in the town gaol,*
*A ruined man, who had spent*
*His whole fortune to buy his freedom back.*
*His wife jumped up when she heard the cry, for she knew that the cawing of a crow*
*Heard at night means Imperial Pardon.*
*She lay down again, too happy to sleep;*
*Long before dawn she went to the Hall to tell his father and mother.*

*Then the young wife said to the crow,*
*'Remember you have cawed! Don't let it be in vain!'*
*We'll let you nest year after year high up in the courtyard tree,*
*Where your little ones will never come to harm!'*

The effect, I think you will agree, is all the greater because we are not definitely told that the pardon failed to come. We are left poised between hope and doubt, as was the young wife herself. The poem is the direct descendant of what I have elsewhere[1] called the 'elliptical ballads' of early Chinese folk-song.

When Po first knew him Chang Chi was living in very humble circumstances in the west end of Ch'ang-an, which was at that period a very unfashionable quarter. In a poem written apparently in the spring of 810, Po thanks him for having recently come all the way to the extreme fringe of the east end ('east of the Serpentine') to visit him and hopes that as to-day is warm, he will feel well enough to repeat the visit. In the autumn, in reply to a poem sent to him by Chang Chi, Po laments that Chang's bad health and his own constant duties at the Palace have made their meetings so infrequent. They met again when Po returned to the Capital in 814. From about this time dates a poem in praise of Chang's didactic ballads, which he fears are not attracting any attention

[1] *The Book of Songs*, p. 56.

and (as has to some extent proved to be the case) will be lost to posterity. He deplores the fact that such a man and poet should, at the age of almost fifty, be living in obscurity, 'with sick eyes', in the west end, where no one of importance thinks it worth while to visit him. Why is it, he asks, in another poem, that since he went away all his contemporaries have become heads of departments or in some way gone up in the world, whereas 'such a poet as Chang Chi still holds the same rank that he held ten years ago'. In the summer Po says how touched he is that Chang Chi, who seldom came to see him when he was in a high post, comes so often to call upon a mere assistant-secretary. He feels all the more honoured because the only other person whom Chang Chi sees is the great Han Yü, with whom (Po says) he feels quite unworthy to be bracketed. On this occasion Chang Chi spent the night at Po's house. They talked till dawn, and only parted reluctantly when 'the sun was high':

*At Ch'ang-an it is long since rain fell;*
*The sun is red and the wind blows in gusts.*
*I have to think of you with your sick eyes*
*For my sake braving the storms of dust,*
*Coming all the way from the Yen-k'ang Ward*
*To visit me on the banks of the Serpentine.*
*But what most I prize is that one who follows the Way*
*Of the old sages is ready to take me as his friend.*

A few weeks later, addressing Chang as his 'fellow-sufferer' (in allusion to their eye trouble) he laments that they have not met since the autumn began. True, eight or nine wards separate them and they are both lazy. But now that it is getting cooler will not Chang Chi come once more and spend the night? This must have been written a few days before Po was banished to Chiang-chou. Their friendship was renewed when he returned to the Capital at the end of 820. Chang Chi had now been promoted and P'ei Tu had given him a magnificent horse. In 822 he was made Second Secretary of the Water Board. There does not at first sight appear to be particular suitability in the appointment of a poet to such a post; but Po, remembering that the famous fifth-century poet Ho Hsün had held this post, found it highly appropriate that Chang Chi should have been given it:

*Since the day that old Ho died the sound of recitation has ceased;*
*Secretaries have come and secretaries gone, but none of them cared*
*for poetry.*
*Since Ho's day their official journeys have remained unsung;*
*The lovely precincts of the head office have waked no verse.*
*For long I grieved to see you kept in the same humble post;*
*I trembled lest the art of high song should sink to its decline.*

*To-day when I heard of your appointment as Secretary of the Water Board*
*I was far more pleased than when myself I became secretary to a Board.*

In the early autumn of 828, on a rainy day when it was 'too muddy to make any sort of excursion', Po again invited Chang Chi to spend the night at his house: 'We will listen to the rain, dozing on opposite beds.' When Po Chü-i left Ch'ang-an in the spring of 829 Chang Chi wrote a poem of farewell. This is the last we hear of him; in a poem of 834 or 835 Po speaks of Chang Chi and Mêng Chiao (another of Han Yü's' followers, who died in 814) as having 'spent their whole lives in poverty'. Evidently Chang Chi was at that time already dead.

Han Yü's relation to his followers was a rather unusual one. Like Chang Chi, they were in most cases older men than himself; their admiration of him was immense; but it seems to have been exceeded by his admiration for them. For him contemporary poetry meant the poetry of Chang Chi, Mêng Chiao and Huang-fu Shih (died A.D. 830); in his frequent discussions of poetry he never mentions either Po Chü-i or Yüan Chên. Chang Chi, for his part, though deeply attached to Han Yü, was ready to criticize him. In a letter that is generally printed in Han Yü's works along with Han Yu's reply, Chang Chi suggests that the master would fulfil his role as an inspired teacher more convincingly if he gave up gambling, and also raised objection to the frivolous nature of his general conversation. About the gambling Han Yu was inclined to agree, but he would not admit that jokes were inconsistent with his calling. Even in the Classics, he said, joking is mentioned; and he quoted the poem from the *Book of Songs* in which it is said:

*How free, how easy*
*He leant over his chariot-rail!*
*How cleverly he chaffed and joked*
*And yet was never rude!*

Po was acquainted with several other of Han Yü's disciples; but it was his friendship with Chang Chi that chiefly brought him into touch with the attempt to revive Confucianism. The movement died out during the troubled period at the end of the ninth century and when, in the eleventh century, Han Yü's real fame began it was almost impossible to find a complete copy of his works.

# CHAPTER XI

In the late summer of 822, shortly after the fall of Yüan Chên, Po decided to ask for a provincial Governorship. The new Emperor was turning out to be very unsatisfactory. He seemed to be interested only in sport and theatricals, and the advice that Po tendered to the Throne was again and again disregarded. So long as Yüan Chên was a Chief Minister, Po no doubt felt that he had a chance of indirectly influencing Government policy. But the atmosphere of the eunuch-ridden Court was abhorrent to him; Yüan Chên was no longer at Ch'ang-an, Li Chien and several other friends there had died. It is not surprising that he felt inclined for a change of scene.

On the fourteenth of the seventh month he was appointed Governor of Hangchow, the greatest city in Eastern China. The normal route from Ch'ang-an to Hangchow was through Lo-yang. But a small rebellion, which only lasted a few weeks, for the moment made this route impossible, and he went down the Han River and the Yangtze to Chiang-chou (as he had done in 815), and thence down the river to Hangchow. Among the poems that he wrote during this journey is 'The Hat given to me by Li Chien':

*Long ago to a white-haired gentleman*
*You made the present of a black gauze hat.*
*The gauze hat still sits on my head;*
*But you already are gone to the Nether Springs.*
*The thing is old, but still fit to wear;*
*The man is gone and will never be seen again.*
*Out on the hill the moon is shining to-night*
*And the trees on your tomb are swayed by the autumn wind.*

At a Government rest-house he unexpectedly met Chang Chi, who was presumably travelling on Water Board business. His friend's welcome made his arrival like 'coming home at night'. He spent a night at his cottage on the Lu Shan at Chiang-chou and saw once more the lotuses he had 'planted with his own hand', in the pool that he had dug for them. It was 'better all the same than not coming at all'. This time he says nothing about returning there to end his days. His thoughts were set upon Hangchow. 'There are plenty of wise people at Court', he wrote in a poem entitled 'Rising Late on Board Ship', 'to look after the affairs of the nation. I for my part have turned my face to the lakes of Hangchow, where my only business will be poetry and wine for two or three years.'

Hangchow was at this time immensely prosperous. It was one of the main centres that purveyed luxury articles such as fans, fine stuffs, and trinkets of every kind to the Capital; it could have found no other market for these, and had consequently no separatist inclinations, so that it had been almost entirely spared the devastation caused elsewhere by risings against the Central Government. Po went there, as we have seen, with a determination to enjoy himself; but within a few weeks of his arrival (on the first day of the tenth month) he fell ill, and we find him in a poem written on the last day of the year saying that if only he could afford to, he would give up his job and retire to the hills.

In the summer of 823 he was much elated by the effect, on his spirits and health, of the Summer Fast that was observed by all Buddhists during the fifth month. He tripped about so lightly that he felt almost as though he had grown wings, and says that he can now quite well believe the stories about Lieh Tzu, the legendary Taoist philosopher, 'riding on the wind'. If only he could retire and devote himself to a life of abstinence and seclusion, he might still, despite his poor health, hope to live to a normal old age.

There had been a drought in the autumn of 822 and there was another in the summer of 823. It was Po's duty as Governor (and at Hangchow, at any rate, we hear little about his having any other duties) to compose addresses to the spirits that controlled rain. In the eighth month he prays rather sharply for rain to the Black Dragon of the North. 'We are asking you for a favour,' he says, 'but you depend on us for your divinity. Creatures are not divine on their own account, it is their worshippers that make them so. If within three days there is a real downpour we shall give your holy powers the credit for it, and the rain will certainly be a great blessing to the peasants.' To another divinity he promises 'singing and dancing, drums and bells', if it rains within five days. But if the Spirit 'just sits calmly watching while the crops go dry it will not only be a disaster for the people, it will also be a disgrace to you. It is for you to decide!'

In a third prayer he asks a Spirit that controls the wild creatures of the district how it is that man-eating tigers have for some time past been attacking the villages near Hangchow. Does the Spirit realize that each time a villager is eaten he (the Spirit) loses a worshipper and diminishes the number of sacrifices that are made to him and on which he depends for sustenance? If the trouble continues, Po warns the Spirit, we shall begin to doubt whether you have any divine power at all.

He speaks of himself as having spent several weeks that autumn 'trying new medicines and searching in old books for medical recipes'. 'I am feeling better to-night,' he writes to a friend, 'and I think we might do a little drinking.' To the same period belongs one of the few

'social' poems that he wrote in later life. It is put into the mouth of a poor girl who is carrying a heavy burden of firewood on her back. She is poorly clad and tousle-headed. Why, she asks, is her lot so different from that of some other Hangchow girls, who ride on horseback, clad in scarlet? It was the custom for gallants to send their riding-horses to the establishments in the prostitute-quarter, to fetch the girls whom they had hired to entertain them.

To the autumn of 823 also belongs the 'Record of the Cold Fountain Arbour', a small but exquisite building that lay, surrounded by water, to the south-west of the famous Ling-yin Monastery at Hangchow. 'In spring', writes Po, 'I love the smell of the grass, the filling out of the green upon the trees, which soothe and purify the spirit and exhilarate the humours of the blood. On summer nights I love the trickling of the fountain, the chill of the breeze, which wash care away and dissolve the fumes of wine. Here the mountain trees are my roof, the rocky cliffs my screen. Clouds rise from the rafters of the shrine; the water is level with its steps. As you sit and enjoy this scene you may wash your feet without rising from your couch; while you lie in intimate converse with it, you may dangle your fish-hook with your hand still on the pillow. Nay, more! So clean and clear is the flowing stream, so pure and fresh, so soft and slippery that whether you be layman or monk, the mere sight of it will take the dust from eye and ear, the grime from heart and tongue, without the need for washing or rinsing. . . .'

In the early winter Yuan Chên, who had been appointed Inspector-General of a large area centring round Yüeh-chou and was consequently within easy reach of Hangchow, visited Po and spent three nights with him. Huge crowds lined the streets to gaze at this celebrated couple, Po and Yüan, 'about whom we have heard so much'. Their friendship was already a sort of national institution. A constant interchange of messages and poems ensued; but the regulations forbade them to leave their respective districts, and six years were to pass before they met again.

His constant solace at this time was his only surviving child Lo Tzu ('Summer Dress'), the intelligent little girl who at eight years had already learnt how to paint her eyebrows, and could recite poetry in a tolerable imitation of her father's manner. Among his companions at Hangchow were several elderly retired officials, to whom he grew much attached. One of them, Hsiao Yueh, is famous in Chinese art-history as a painter of bamboos.[1] He was now well over seventy, 'his hand shook and his eyes were dim', but he still ranked as the greatest bamboo-painter of his day. Po tells us that he was 'very loth to part with his paintings and people have often tried for a whole year to acquire one of

[1] See my *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting*, p. 182.

them, without succeeding in getting so much as a single stem'. 'But he knew that I had an innate love of such things' (meaning, I think, bamboos, not paintings) 'and suddenly one day he painted a clump of fifteen stems and gave them to me as a present. As a token of my gratitude for his kindness and of my admiration for his art I made this song. . . .' The burden of the song is that since the art of painting has existed no one has got so 'near to truth' as Hsiao. If one looks up suddenly, one forgets that one is looking at a picture and not at real bamboos. One fancies that one can hear the rustle of their leaves. 'But alas, Hsiao is old, his hand is shaky, his eye is dim and his head snowy white. He says that it is time for him to stop painting, and henceforth such bamboos as these will be very hard to get.' Painting, however, which later on in China became one of the chief distractions of the literary caste, was in Po's day a craft, practised almost exclusively by specialists. The art which Po himself practised and which became almost as important to him as poetry was music, and as it was during this Hangchow period that his love of music begins to pervade his writings it will be convenient to give in outline an account of the part that music played in his life, not only at this period, but before and afterwards. This course involves a considerable digression, but has the advantage of eliminating from the year-by-year record scattered references and explanations, which would break up its continuity.

There is hardly any reference to music in Po's earliest poems, and it cannot have featured prominently in his upbringing. But in the world around there was music everywhere. No social entertainment, no religious ceremony took place without it; there was singing in the fields, singing on boats, singing at fairs and markets. Music begins to be mentioned frequently in his political ballads written *c.* 804 to 809; but it is typical of his writings at this period (though not perhaps of his private, instinctive feelings) that music should be treated not as a source of individual pleasure but solely as a form of governmental magic which regulated the seasons and kept enemies at bay: 'Music is not simply an affair of tinkling noises; it is closely connected with government.' This was not a theory invented by Po; it was the traditional view not only of Confucians, but of all musical theorists. Many people in England used to disapprove of jazz on moral grounds, but no one, I think, suggested that it foreshadowed an African military conquest of Great Britain. Po, however, definitely regarded the introduction of foreign music into Court performances in 755 as the cause of the foreign invasions in 756. Even a Court performance of visiting musicians (the Burmese orchestra that came to Ch'ang-an in 801–802) he describes with disapproval, not on trade union grounds, but because such episodes were likely to distract the Emperor from his political duties. In several

other ballads he laments the current fashion for new and chiefly foreign instruments:

*Alas, alas that the ears of common men*
*Should love the modern and not love the old.*
*Thus it is that the zither at the green window*
*Day by day is covered deeper with dust.*

The Board which was concerned with the music of the Court Ancestral Sacrifices was, according to Po, much to blame for the decline of traditional music. It allowed its highly trained musicians to play at the performances of sword-dancers, ball-jugglers, tight-rope walkers, pole-climbers and other acrobats, accepting in exchange low-class musicians from the acrobatic troupe, who were expected to sit straight down and play classical music without any previous training. 'Has classical music sunk so low', he asks, 'that tuning by Fifths is to be permanently in the hands of such people as this?'

It is not till 818 that we find any mention of Po playing an instrument himself. It was probably during his leisurely years at Chiang-chou that he first studied music, and the instrument he played was, as we should expect, the *ch'in*, a species of seven-stringed zither[1] which was the instrument commonly used by amateurs. Being both faint in sound and small enough to carry about it corresponds rather to the clavichord than to the piano, and this parallel is even more complete to-day than in Po's time. For there are now comparatively few *ch'in*-players. A book[2] published in 1920 gives a list of fifty; since then the number may have increased to a hundred or so, which is, I suppose, about the same as the number of people who play the clavichord in England. None of the *ch'in*-tunes mentioned by Po has survived. The most venerable was the 'Yu-lan', 'Hidden Orchid', which is said to have been composed by Confucius, who saw in the orchid, wasting its perfume on the wilderness, a symbol of his own neglected existence, after his return from a fruitless effort to convert the monarchs of feudal China to his doctrines. Then there was the 'Lu-shui', 'Green Waters'. It was a spring theme and evoked a picture of young girls in a boat, trailing a listless hand through the water-lilies. The theme of 'Autumn Thoughts', another tune to which Po often alludes, is the fading of beauty. A young wife sits alone. Her husband is away at the wars; she has had no letter for a thousand days. The leaves are turning; she looks in the mirror and sees that she is growing old.

The tune called 'The Parting Cranes' was supposed to have been made by a wife who was divorced because, after five years of marriage, she had not had a child. About 826 Yüan Chên heard his second wife, who had

[1] I have in this book called the *ch'in* 'lute'. 'Zither' has not the right associations.

[2] See van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, p 20

not borne him a child, playing this tune at night and knew that she was beginning to be afraid he would divorce her. He wrote a poem to reassure her, and Po on seeing this poem wrote one of his own, in which he applauds Yüan Chên's fidelity and contrasts his lot favourably with that of the husband in the original story, who had no choice but to get rid of his wife, as his father and elder brother had ordered him to do so, and obedience to elders must be unquestioning.

It is in a poem called 'The Ch'in at Night' (A.D. 818) that we find the first references to Po playing himself. He plays only some ten 'bars' (*shêng*), and then stops. To his ear the sounds are 'thin and savourless', but they give him 'a secret inward satisfaction'; and that is all that matters, for he 'does not ask anyone else to listen'. In another poem, after playing the 'Parting Cranes' and another tune called the 'Autumn Fountain', he begs his guest not to listen so attentively: 'it is for myself not for you that I am playing'. Again, after playing 'Autumn Thoughts', he observes that he tends more and more to prefer playing without an audience: 'I know for myself, without being told, whether my standard as a *ch'in*-player is high or low.' Not long afterwards, however, we find him pausing after tuning his *ch'in*. What is the use of playing? 'There is no one here who understands and loves such things as the glide on the middle stud or the first eight or nine phrases of "Autumn Thoughts" as Ts'ui *shao-ch'ing* did.' *Shao-ch'ing* is a title not a name, and we do not know who this Mr. Ts'ui was.

We get from these passages the impression that Po, though in certain moods he felt disinclined to play without the stimulus of a sympathetic listener, was well aware that he was an indifferent performer and preferred as a rule to be his own audience. But, at this time (830) there was already another *ch'in*-player in the household—Lo Tzu, now fifteen years old: 'Luckily I have a *ch'in*-playing daughter, so that now and again I get a little music.'

It is natural to associate Po with the *p'i-p'a* because of the celebrated song[1] that he wrote about a player of this instrument. It is a four-stringed mandoline, with a bent-back neck, and in general appearance is rather like the European lute. It seems to have come originally from Central Asia, and though in T'ang times it was no longer regarded as a foreign instrument the three great *p'i-p'a* players and teachers of Po's day belonged to a family that came from Samarkand. These were Ts'ao Pao, his son Ts'ao Shan-ts'ai, the teacher of the girl in the 'Lute Song', and his grandson Ts'ao Kang. Po heard the grandson play at Ch'ang-an in 828 or 829 and admired the great variety of effects he obtained from the instrument. *P'i-p'a* players went in very much for imitating natural sounds—the din of battle, the splashing of water, the

[1] See above, p. 117.

sighing of the wind—and Ts'ao Kang, it seems, even imitated on the *p'i-p'a* the sound of different kinds of foreigners talking! 'If only', Po writes, 'I could put the hand of Ts'ao Kang into the sleeve of Double Lotus!' The latter may have been the 'small-faced *p'i-p'a* slave' to whom he refers elsewhere.

Very little is known about T'ang notation. Probably, as in later times, there were different systems of notation for different instruments. Notation for the *p'i-p'a* certainly existed, for in 834 we find Po composing, on behalf of a *p'i-p'a* player in Lo-yang, a poem of thanks for a new tune sent by the Court *p'i-p'a*-mistress Ts'ao, who was perhaps a sister of Ts'ao Kang. There was also a five-stringed *p'i-p'a*; but this was a Central Asian instrument of fairly recent importation, and was consequently disapproved of by Po in his early days, as being both modern and foreign, though he admits that the playing of old Chao Pi, the most famous master of this instrument, was very seductive:

*Those that pass that way as he plays his tune*
*Suddenly stop and cannot raise their feet.*

Another foreign instrument was the *pi-li*, a sort of musette, supposed to have come from Kucha, in Turkestan. It had a reed mouthpiece and nine holes, presumably seven on top and two underneath. In 825 Po wrote a poem about an infant prodigy, a boy of eleven called Hsieh Yang-t'ao, prophesying that if he stuck to his playing he would be even more famous than Kuan Ts'ui and Li Kun, the two great masters of the *pi-li* in Po's early days. It is always interesting to see what becomes of infant prodigies, and fortunately we know something of this boy's later history. About 877 the well-known statesman Li Wei, when Commander of Yangchow, came across an elderly minor official in the Grain Transport service who bore the name Hsieh Yang-t'ao. Li had heard of the famous boy prodigy and asked the official how it was that he had the same name. It turned out that he was indeed the same person. He had never become a professional musician, but he still played the *pi-li* and still possessed poems written about him by Po Chü-i, Yuan Chên and other great men fifty years ago. He had a number of *pi-li* with him. Li Wei noted that the reeds were very narrow, and that three were used in each instrument.

Songs and singers are less frequently mentioned in Po's works than instrumental music. A song that he refers to several times is the 'Yang-kuan'. It is founded on a poem by Wang Wei (A.D. 698–759), a famous poet-painter:

*At Wei City the morning rain has sprinkled the light dust;*
*By the posting-house the willow branches spread their new green.*
*Come drink again, drink to the dregs another cup of wine;*
*Once you are west of the Yang-kuan you will find no friends.*

The poem was addressed to a friend who was going on a mission to Central Asia. The parting took place some ten miles outside Ch'ang-an; the Yang-kuan was one of the main frontier barriers between China proper and the western Protectorates. Wang Wei's quatrain, not originally written as a song, has with various additions and repetitions been used for over a thousand years as a song of farewell.

Like so many of us Po was a ballet-fan; but strangely enough he seems to have been interested almost exclusively in one ballet. This was 'Rainbow Skirts and Feather Jackets', which he first mentions in his 'Everlasting Remorse', written in 806. The principal characters seem to have been the Jade Emperor and the Queen of Heaven, and the *corps de ballet* consisted of fairy ladies. What story, if any, they enacted we are never told. They were 'not dressed like ordinary human beings', Po tells us, but wore (in addition to their rainbow-skirts and feather-jackets) tall head-dresses 'that nodded as they walked'. There were many different stories about the origin of the ballet. Some people believed that it had been brought back to Ch'ang-an by the Emperor Hsüan Tsung from the Palace of the Moon, to which he had been whirled aloft by a Taoist magician. The true facts seem to be that about 730 a Commander on the western frontier brought back with him from Liang-chou in Kansu a piece of Hindu music. Some Court ballet-master took a fancy to this music and used it in a ballet that was not Hindu or Indian at all, but purely Taoist. Like other ballets (Po tells us) it began with a musical overture in which the instruments did not play in an ensemble but solo, each in its turn. This was repeated, no doubt with improvised variations, six times. Then began the rhythmical clapping—the so-called Middle or Clapped Prelude—and the dancers began to 'revolve like whirling snow'. The actual ballet was in twelve parts. It ended with long drawn-out notes, which was (Po remarks) very unusual, most pieces ending with an accelerated beat and short, quick notes.

Po had seen this ballet only once, in the spring of 808 or 809, when it was given at the Palace 'along with countless other songs and dances'. It made a deep impression upon him and in 823, when Governor of Hangchow, he began to collect performers with the hope of being able to revive it. His orchestra, or rather quartet, consisted of harp, psaltery (*ch'êng*), musette (*pi-li*) and reed-organ (*shêng*). The harp in question is a small one, held on the knees and steadied by a band worn round the neck. The business of training the troupe took a long time and they had only given three performances when he left Hangchow for Lo-yang; soon afterwards he heard that they had dispersed. He began all over again at Soochow in the autumn of 825, but had great difficulty in obtaining suitable dancers and musicians. Hearing that at Yüeh-chou there was a great deal of music he wrote to Yüan Chên asking if he

knew of any girls who could perform in the Rainbow ballet. Yüan Chên wrote back that there were a hundred thousand families in Yüeh-chou, but he doubted whether in any of them there was a single person who knew that such a dance existed. However, he sent a long ballad entitled 'Notation of the Rainbow Ballet', which Po enthusiastically describes as being so vivid that, as he read it, he saw every posture and attitude exactly as he had seen them years ago at the Palace. No painter, with his 'reds and blues', could have given him a more complete picture.

But Yüan Chên was not very encouraging about the prospect of reviving the dance at Soochow. He maintained that it was not worth doing unless the dancers were girls of quite exceptional grace and charm, and doubted whether they were to be found in Soochow at present. Po agreed in principle, but pointed out that if the dance was only given when ideal performers had been found, it would soon die out altogether. And after all, he says, are those so-called great beauties really anything much in themselves? In most cases they are accepted as such only because they have somehow managed to get themselves talked about. 'You must not take against Li Chüan and Chang Tai; I have made up my mind, as the best I can do under the circumstances, to put them into training and see what they can do.' These, presumably, were the two girls who were to take the leading parts. There is no reference to any performance of the ballet at Soochow and it is probable that Po did not succeed in collecting a satisfactory troupe.

There are frequent references in later poems to listening to the music of this ballet, but none to any actual performance. The written notes of the music survived until a much later time. Writing about 1180 Shên Kua says that he saw at P'u-chou in Shansi an inscription in characters resembling Sanskrit and was told that it was said to be the original Indian notation of the music to which the ballet of Rainbow Skirts and Feather Jackets used to be danced. It was of course no longer intelligible. Neither Po nor Yüan Chên seem to have been familiar with dance notation; but it existed in T'ang times, and a specimen of it that was brought back from the Tun-huang Caves by Pelliot may be seen at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, where it awaits interpretation.

Kao Ling-lung, the girl who played the harp in the Rainbow Ballet quartet, was also a singer. She knew settings of some thirty or forty of Yüan Chên's poems, and Yuan warns Po 'not to let Ling-lung sing to you my poems'. It will make Po too sad, for 'so many of these poems of mine are about partings with you'. She is mentioned in a song that dates from Po's Hangchow days:

*Silent, the Persian fiddle;*
*Dismounted, the psaltery of Ch'in.*
*Ling-lung bows twice; she has sung the last song.*

*Why should you think that Governor Po cannot also sing?*
*Listen to my ballad of The Yellow Cock—the Cock and the White Sun.*
*'The Yellow Cock, hustling the dawn, crows at the hour of the Ox;*
*The White Sun, hustling the year, sinks before the hour of the Fowl. . . .'*
*Scarcely was my red Governor's sash tied firm at my waist*
*Than I looked in the mirror for the flush of youth and found that it was lost.*
*Ling-lung, Ling-lung, help me to forget that I am old;*
*Governor Po has sung you a song and you must sing once more.*

Another remedy for old age at Hangchow was the company of old Mr. Chou (Chou Shih-fan) and Hsiao Yüeh, the veteran painter, with whom he spent part of the New Year holidays in 824. 'My legs are still nimble enough to follow Old Chou; my head compared with Ancient Hsiao's seems only half white.' In the presence of these two he is forced to play the part of 'the young man'. About his activities as Governor we hear very little. He evidently interested himself considerably in water storage and irrigation, and though he did not (as is sometimes supposed) originate the dam on the Western Lake, it was under his auspices that early in 824 it was raised by several feet. The draining of land for agricultural purposes was objected to on the ground that it 'left fishes and dragons with nowhere to go' and also that much water-bamboo (*zizania aquatica*) and water-chestnut, used for feeding animals, were lost. 'But which', asks Po, 'is more important, the welfare of fishes and dragons or that of human beings, and which is of more value to them, rice and millet or water-bamboo and water-chestnut? There was also a superstition that the lowering of the lake when its waters was released for irrigation purposes caused the wells in the city to dry up. Po points out that though the bed of the lake is higher than the bottom of these deep city-wells, there are a number of springs under the lake which would supply water to the town even if the lake were drained dry. There are buried culverts connecting the lake with the wells, and these (he recommends) should be inspected from time to time and cleared out if there is any obstruction.

This document, the 'Inscription on Stone concerning the Ch'ien-t'ang Lake', is written with admirable lucidity and clarity. 'I have avoided literary language', Po says at the end, 'in order to make it easy to understand.' Couched in more grandiose style, as befitted an address to a divinity, is the 'Prayer to the Ch'ê River', which dates from the fourth day of the fifth month. Po points out to the River Spirit the immense responsibility put upon it by God on High (*Shang Ti*). If the

waters flow gently they can bring prosperity to all this southern land; but if they plunge without restraint, they bring ruin wherever they go. The recent tidal bore, instead of keeping to its usual course, careered madly to the north-west, causing great destruction of life and property. 'The duty that I have been entrusted with by the Emperor is to promote the people's welfare and protect them from harm. I am in charge of water as of land, and my duties are therefore much the same as yours. So I come to you with my offerings, praying you in all sincerity to turn the waters back into their proper course.'

In the first month of 824 the Emperor Mu Tsung died at the age of 29 and was succeeded by Ching Tsung, aged 15. This boy did not take at all kindly to the austerities urged upon him by the Censors. He tended to arrive very late at Court, and on one occasion was given a tremendous dressing-down by the Censor Li Hsi-ch'u for sporting too long with his ladies, coupled with an attack on the eunuchs, whose policy was always to encourage the Emperor to amuse himself. As soon as he could escape from the morning levee, the young Emperor rushed off to play ball. His habits were well known in the city, and in the summer of 824 someone suggested to a master-dyer named Chang Shao that, as a prank, he should slip into the Palace, lie on the Emperor's couch and eat his dinner, 'for nowadays he is always away, playing ball or hunting'. Chang, with a band of young dyers, hid weapons in a cart-load of groom-well (used for dyeing) and drove into the Palace precincts. Taking out their weapons they fought their way into the Inner Palace and Chang, together with the friend who had suggested the prank, did indeed recline on the Emperor's couch and eat his food. But in a short while they got scared and ran away. They were overtaken by soldiers of the Palace Army, and Chang, his friend, and many of the young dyers were killed. The Emperor, too frightened to return to his room, spent the night at a barracks, and no one at Court knew what had become of him. Panic prevailed and at a levee summoned to congratulate the Emperor on having suffered no personal harm only eighteen courtiers were present.

A few weeks later (in the middle of the fifth month) Po was appointed Chief Gentleman-in-Waiting to the Crown Prince. No Crown Prince had, I think, as yet been nominated, so that the position was for the moment a complete sinecure. There are indications that Po was already getting tired of Hangchow and a life that consisted of 'parties and excursions, eating and sleeping'. But the knowledge that he was soon to leave the Western Lake and its monasteries gave him new zest, and during the fortnight which elapsed between the cessation of his Governorship and his departure for Ch'ang-an he spent all day going from one familiar haunt to another: 'after all, I am not tired of being here! And yet it is good to know that I am going home'.

Honan was now clear of insurgents, and Po set out for Ch'ang-an on the usual route, by way of Lo-yang, the Eastern Capital. In a parting message to Yüan Chên he says that 'things were better' than when they parted in the Gorges in 819, evidently taking his own recall as a sign that Yüan Chên too would before long be summoned to Ch'ang-an. On the way to Lo-yang he stayed with his cousins[1] at Yung Bridge, near Fu-li, in the northern extremity of Anhui. Since his first visit, twenty years ago, heavy taxation had obliged them to sell more than half their land, and as none of them had managed to obtain an official post they were living in very straitened circumstances. At Lo-yang he took lodgings and seems for a time to have toyed with the idea of giving up his new post and retiring to Hsia-kuei, for in a poem entitled 'Lodging by the Lo River' he reminds himself that 'the farm at the bend of the Wei is still there' and that enough of his Hangchow salary is left to live on comfortably for some while. Soon, however, he wrote to the Chief Minister Niu Sêng-ju (in verse) suggesting that as his post for the present entailed no duties he might as well stay where he was. In the days when the Crown Prince often visited Lo-yang it had been the practice to allocate some of the officers of his Household to 'separate duty' (*fên-ssu*) at the Eastern Capital. In Po's day no Crown Prince ever came to Lo-yang, but these posts still existed, and he was soon duly registered as 'on duty at the Eastern Capital'. Niu Sêng-ju, it will be remembered, was the statesman who had warned Po Chü-i in 810 not to show round the poems that he was receiving from Yuan Chên, then in exile and disgrace at Chiang-ling. In 823 he had become a Chief Minister almost as suddenly and unexpectedly as Yüan Chên the year before. An examination of the accounts of a certain Han Hung, who died at the end of 822, showed that large sums had been accepted from him as bribes by a number of high officials; but there was a note that 100,000 cash offered to Niu Sêng-ju had been refused. The Emperor was deeply impressed, and in the third month of 823 Niu became a Chief Minister. He was one of the leaders of the party which centred round the Yangs (relatives of Po's wife); his main opponent was Li Tê-yü (son of Po's old opponent Li Chi-fu) to whose party both Yüan Chên and Li Shên ('Little Li') belonged. Po's position, as the rift between these two parties widened, became more and more delicate, and it was perhaps in order to avoid getting dragged into party politics that he preferred to remain at Lo-yang.

This city was in the ninth century a sort of Leamington—the resort of aged generals and retired Civil Servants. It had been badly damaged nearly seventy years ago when it was captured by An Lu-shan's foreign legionaries, and had suffered even greater devastation when it was

[1] See above, p. 26.

re-taken by the Imperial armies, aided by Uighur levies. From time to time it was proposed that the Court should resume the practice of occasionally residing at Lo-yang; but the palaces and official buildings were in a state of dilapidation, and the Exchequer could not meet the expense of putting them in order. Lo-yang was not, however, a complete back-water. Travellers between Ch'ang-an and the eastern provinces usually spent some days there, and though a large number of permanently retired officials settled there to end their days, the high officers who administered the town and district were changed with great frequency. Thus between 830 and 840 there were eleven mayors of Lo-yang, many of whom came from Ch'ang-an or elsewhere, held office for a few months, and then moved to some other part of China.

Having received permission to remain at Lo-yang, Po looked about for a house. He found one in the Li-tao Ward, in the south-east corner of Lo-yang, which pleased him because it was surrounded on two sides by water. It had belonged to Yang P'ing, a member of the same family as Po's wife, and subsequently to a Mr. T'ien, from whom Po purchased it. Yang P'ing was notorious for his extravangant style of living and had in 809 been impeached for peculation and breach of the sumptuary laws. But this particular residence of his seems to have been on a very modest scale, with grounds covering only two or three acres. Po had saved part of his Governor's salary at Hangchow, but was obliged to throw in a pair of horses to make up the price of the house. At previous periods of his life his duties had sometimes been of a very unexacting kind, and during his retirement at Hsia-kuei he had been entirely his own master. But in those days he was always to some extent hampered by lack of funds. Now he was being paid to live in ideal surroundings, spending his time mostly as he pleased. Knowing Po as you do now, you will not be surprised to learn that the day upon which he moved into his house and entered upon his new life of freedom was haunted by the thought of all those whose lot was the reverse of his own, and not human beings only but, in Buddhist parlance, 'all living creatures'. He thought of prisoners-of-war, held captive year after year (meaning particularly, I think, those held by the Tibetans), of soldiers guarding distant frontiers, of wild birds in cages, the tortoise strapped to the carving-platter, the posting-horse at the gallop day and night with aching hoofs (there were no horse-shoes in those days), the mill-ox tramping blindfold in perpetual circles:

*If only someone could let them all go,*
*Let them scatter abroad, each on the way he chose,*
*So that all might be free to follow their own desires,*
*Even as I, at this day and hour!*

If Po had been a Western European he would no doubt have salved his

conscience by subscribing to humanitarian societies, holding meetings, writing to the Press, and so on. Many of his early ballads were indeed, as we have seen, rough equivalents of modern letters to the newspapers. But in middle age he is content merely to repeat what was still no doubt a genuine feeling in terms that were tending to become a formula.

At the end of 824 Yüan Chên wrote the preface to the first collection of Po's works, the *Ch'ang Ch'ing Chi*. After a brief account of Po's career, Yüan Chên says that the poems exchanged between him and Po during the period of their separation (810–820) were much imitated by the young men of Ch'ang-an and of the provinces to which each of them had been banished and that these young men referred to such imitations as being in the Yüan Ho style, this being the name of the period 806–820. The poems in question were the very long poems in strict metre, virtuoso pieces written as a display of technique, and what were called 'miscellaneous' poems, written not under the influence of deep emotion or with a serious moral intention, but merely to express some fugitive mood or fancy. Po Chu-i's 'Songs of Ch'in' and the other ballads that had a serious political or social intention remained, Yüan Chên tells us, practically unknown; but the lighter pieces had for the last twenty years enjoyed an immense popularity: 'One found them everywhere, on the walls of palace buildings, Taoist and Buddhist monasteries and posting-stations. Everyone recited them, princes and nobles, concubines and wives, ox-herds and grooms. They were even copied out, printed and sold in the market or brought to give in exchange for wine and tea. This happened in many different places.' Yüan Chên here adds in a note that the printing and sale in the market of his and Po Chü-i's poems had taken place particularly at Yangchow, Yüeh-chou and the towns between, that is to say in the Yangtze delta region. This is probably the earliest reference to the printing of secular, as opposed to Buddhist, texts. People even went so far, Yüan continues, as to put his and Po's name on compositions of their own, in order to obtain a market for them, or mixed spurious poems with real ones, so that hopeless confusion ensued. 'Once at P'ing-shui Market, a hay-market near the Mirror Lake, I found the boys at the village school practising for a poetry competition. When I asked what poetry they were studying they said "Our master is teaching us poems by Lo-t'ien and Wei-chih". They had no idea that I was Wei-chih! It is also said that a merchant from Chi-lin[1] bought up every copy of Po Chü-i's poems he could find, "for (said he) the Chief Minister of my country will gladly pay me a hundred pieces of gold for each poem, and what is more, he can tell at the first glance whether they are genuine". Since literature existed, there has surely never been a case of fame spreading so widely as this!'

[1] In South-Eastern Korea.

Tuan Ch'êng-shih,[1] writing in the middle of the ninth century, tells us how at Chiang-ling he saw a street labourer whose whole body was tattoed with lines from Po's poems, illustrated by pictures. Of the two lines he quotes one, however, is by Yüan Chên, not Po Chu-i. But 'Po and Yüan' were identified in people's minds as though they were one person. The quotation is from Yüan Chên's celebrated poem 'To the Chrysanthemum':

*It is not that you are dearer to me than many another flower,*
*But only that when* you *have faded, there will be no more flowers.*

What made possible this vast popularity was the relative freedom of Po's poetry from the archaisms and literary allusions that made most upper-class poetry unintelligible to the masses. The story (which does not make its appearance till the eleventh century) that he read all his poems to an uneducated old woman and took out everything she could not understand may not be literally true. He wrote indeed a considerable number of allusive and difficult poems. But no other T'ang poet wrote so many poems that ordinary people could understand. This very fact has caused a certain number of ultra-genteel critics to dismiss his poetry in much the same terms as *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly Review* dismissed the poetry of Keats. Thus Wang Shih-chên (1634–1711), who insisted on classical allusion as a necessary element in poetry, pronounced Po Chü-i to be 'intolerably rustic and common'. But on the whole his popularity has been steadily maintained, both in China and Japan, till the present day.

[1] *Yu Yang Tsa Tsu*, VIII, 2.

# CHAPTER XII

In the spring of 825 Po was appointed Governor of Soochow, a town of about the same size and importance as Hangchow. Shortly before accepting this post, in a poem called 'Thatching my new House in Springtime', he speaks of himself as asking nothing better than to spend all day 'seeking sweet scents and enjoying the water' in his small stream-encompassed garden, oblivious of everything that was happening in the world outside. His motive for accepting a Governorship may well have been financial. The purchase of his house had left him with nothing over for putting the grounds in order. The newly appointed Mayor of Lo-yang, his old friend and colleague Wang Ch'i (760–847) had built a bridge for him and supplied labour to plant flowering trees round the house. It is very likely that as a consequence of his distressing visit to Yung Bridge[1] Po was now making an allowance to his cousins there, and there were probably hosts of other poor relations to whose assistance he came when they were confronted with the expense of a marriage or funeral. As Governor of Soochow his salary would be 80,000 instead of 65,000 a month, a very considerable difference. On approaching the borders of the district over which he was to rule he sent a poem to Niu Sêng-ju and the other three Chief Ministers, playfully reproaching them for entrusting 'the most strenuous of Governorships' to a man so notoriously lazy as himself. It was, however, something of a shock to him to discover how great was the mass of papers with which he would have to deal. In this respect Governorships no doubt fluctuated according to circumstances. If the Prefects of the smaller districts under a Governor's rule happened to be capable and self-reliant, comparatively few cases were handed on by them for the Governor's decision. If they were timid or inexperienced, his desk soon became stacked with documents. Po found that he got no leisure except on the days of rest, which occurred every tenth day:

*If it were not for these nine days of work*
*The people of the province could not be properly ruled.*
*If I could not get drunk on one day in ten*
*I myself should have no fun at all.*

He was so busy that he had been nearly three months at Soochow when he was able to give his first party. Never in his career had he been forced to work so hard:

[1] See above, p. 158

*I spend the morning going through Government papers,*
*I spend the evening going through Government papers.*
*There are still many at which I have not looked,*
*And already the crickets are chirping close to my seat.*

He writes to Yüan Chên:

*At break of day I confront a pile of papers,*
*Dusk has come before I get away.*
*The beauty of the morning, the beauty of the afternoon*
*Pass while I sit clamped to an office desk.*

And again:

*For ten days I have drunk no wine;*
*Since last month I have not listened to a song.*
*It is not that I have lost interest in such things;*
*It is simply because I have so much work to do.*
*I blush when asked if I have been to Tiger Hill,*[1]
*I am envious of people who have visited the Kuan-wa. . . .*[2]

No wonder that Po, unused as he was to so strenuous an existence, broke down (apparently in the late summer of 825) and had to apply for fifteen days' sick-leave.

In the eighth month, his friend Ts'ui Hsüan-liang, who figures prominently in the poems of the next ten years, sent him a slab of red stone marbled with a pattern 'like rich brocade' to put his lute on. Their friendship had begun in 802, when Ts'ui sat with Po and Yüan Chên at the Placing Examination. But Ts'ui since then had held a series of provincial posts and they had no chance of meeting. Now he was Governor of Hu-chou, about half-way between Hangchow and Soochow. They had evidently begun to correspond again some time ago, and in a poem written just before he set out for Soochow Po links Ts'ui's name with that of Yüan Chên. 'Ts'ui is in Wu-hsing (the old name of Hu-chou), Yuan is in Yueh. If I ordered my horse and rode out, there would not be anybody to visit.' Ts'ui Hsüan-liang was admired for many reasons. In Anhui he abolished various forms of rake-off by which the officials had been enriching themselves at the expense of the people and allowed the mountain peasants to pay their grain-tax in cash instead of staggering with bushels of grain on their backs over hill and dale to the nearest town. Latitude in this matter had been recommended by Yüan Chên in 821, and although strings of copper-cash were not very convenient to carry, a string of a thousand cash (at this period the price of five bushels of grain) was certainly easier to transport than the corresponding quantity of grain. By what means the hill-peasants came into possession of money we are not told. Ts'ui was admired by Con-

[1] A famous place of excursion north-west of Soochow
[2] The Kuan-wa Kung ('Lodge Beauty Palace'), west of Soochow.

fucians because when his father died he slept during the whole period of mourning, as the Rites prescribe, on a straw mat spread on the ground, and got such bad rheumatism that he was never able to bow properly at Court. He was at one time a devout Taoist and acquired through breathing-exercises and other forms of Taoist discipline so great a control of himself that he became completely indifferent to heat and cold. 'His skin was clear as ice and his complexion flawless as jade; those who did not know him believed he must be a Taoist Immortal sojourning among men.' At Hu-chou, where he was conducting a service in honour of the Taoist Trinity, a miracle occurred. A brightly-coloured cloud appeared in the sky and out of it descended a flock of magic cranes who hovered for some time over the altar. The same thing occurred on several other occasions, and it was calculated that the number of cranes who came to do him homage was 360, roughly one for every day in the year, 'such was the power over outward things that his spiritual exercises had given him'.

Towards the end of the year business seems to have quieted down and Po was able to go sailing for several days on the 'grey crystal waters' of the Great Lake. There was snow on the pine-trees, but it was lovely winter weather. 'I have one thing to tell you', he says in a poem to Yuan Chên, 'that will make you jealous. I spent five nights on those clear waters in cloudless moonlight.' But at the close of the year he wrote saying that he was depressed by his long separation from Yüan and from his younger brother, Po Hsing-chien, who had almost given up writing to him. 'I feel that my capacity for enjoyment becomes every day less; at Soochow I have never had the zest that I had at Hangchow.'

When Yuan Chên's cousin Yüan Tsung-chien died in the winter of 821 he told his son Yüan T'u that he hoped Po Chü-i would consent to write a preface to his collected works. Constant moves and, more recently, great pressure of official work at Soochow had prevented Po from fulfilling the request. But in the late winter of 825 when he began to get more leisure he at last opened the box in which the thirty scrolls were kept and read them through. He was touched to find how many of the poems were written in response to poems of his own. As he sat chanting them by lamplight the image of his friend appeared vividly before him. 'I could not believe that one of us was alive and the other dead.' The preface opens with a general theory which is difficult to make intelligible in English: 'There are in heaven and on earth two energies, the Pure and the Magical. They work upon all the myriad creatures of the Universe, but to a greater degree upon Man, and upon the Poet more powerfully than upon mankind in general. It is these energies that in their concentrated form determine character; released they direct ambition, disseminated they turn into literature. If the Pure

predominates over the Magical, a man's writings will be unassertive and calm; if the Magical predominates over the Pure, they will be emphatic and brilliant. But if the two energies are in equipoise, a man's writing will be fraught with hidden meaning, but graceful and refined; will be profound and wide in scope, but at the same time will have lucidity and charm.... He can adopt archaic simplicity without becoming uncouth, or bold innovations without arousing repugnance. The writings of my friend Chü-ching (Yüan Tsung-chien) answer pretty well to this description.'

The collection contained 694 poems and 75 prose pieces, none of which have survived. At about this time he also wrote a memorial inscription for his old friend Wu Tan,[1] who died at the age of 81 in the sixth month of 825, as Governor of Jao-chou. He had held a series of high posts both in the provinces and at the Capital, but never married or relinquished his Taoist way of life.

In the spring of 826 Po speaks constantly of trouble with his eyes. Thousands of tiny specks, like snow-flakes, float in front of him and it is as though he saw everything through a curtain of gauze. The doctors said that the trouble was really seated in his liver; his monk-friends said that it was due to the 'defilement of the passions invading the sphere of the eye'. About this time his new punt was finished, and he found to his delight that he could get under the lowest bridges and explore out-of-the-way backwaters hitherto inaccessible. Late in the spring he had a fall from horseback and hurt his leg. He was laid up for some while and only struggled out into the garden just in time to see the last blossom that the east wind had left on the plum-trees. He also mentions that he is suffering from asthma (*t'an-ch'i*) and a 'deep cough'. His public and private responsibilities weigh upon him more and more. He hates condemning peasants to be thrashed, is tired of welcoming and seeing off an endless stream of visitors; he is even sick of music. He thinks longingly of his small house at Lo-yang and of the farm at Hsia-kuei. At Soochow he has visited every river and hill, has seen the trees in flower wherever there are any to be found, has written every possible poem about them, has drunk to his fill whenever there was wine to be had. Now his zest for all these things is gradually slipping away. There is no need to think it over any more. The arguments in favour of giving up his post are overwhelming: 'It is all settled; this very autumn I retire.' He gave notice of his retirement on grounds of health, probably early in the seventh month, and applied (as he was entitled to do) for a hundred days' sick-leave with pay. During the period of his sick-leave he wrote a curious poem entitled 'Written after a dream on the night of the thirtieth of the eighth month, second year of Pao Li' (i.e. A.D. 826):

[1] See above, p 96

*To have shaken off the dust of office is indeed a matter for delight;*
*Will the world's net catch me again? It is too early to say.*
*Let me not forget the dream I had at the Chüan-wu Lodge:*
*That south of the Ranges I went on foot tramping through the rain and mud.*

The Ch'üan-wu Lodge, as its name implies (for Wu is the old name for Soochow), was presumably in or near Soochow. What Po dreamt was that he took office again, got into trouble and was banished, in some very humble capacity, which did not even permit of his riding on horseback or being carried in a litter, to the extreme south of China. We have seen how a similar foreboding haunted the unhappy Minister Wei Chih-i in 805. Why Po noted so carefully the exact date of the dream we do not know. History has not recorded anything of importance as happening on that day, and there were no banishments to the south until four months later. It is clear, however, that Po was contemplating the possibility that he might be offered another post at the Capital and regarded the dream as a warning to behave with extreme caution if he accepted such a post. In consequence of it he became, one may well suppose, more determined than ever to stand aloof from the political see-saw which was then in full swing at Ch'ang-an. It is worth noting that the leaders of the two rival factions both died in remote exile, Li Tê-yü in the island of Hai-nan and Li Tsung-min in the south of Hunan; while most of their supporters at one time or another spent years of banishment in distant, malarial regions. Po did not share in their momentary triumphs, but by a policy of extreme caution and reserve he managed, despite many connections with both parties, to avoid being involved in their disasters.

Before leaving Soochow he wrote an account of a Society for the Solemn Recitation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, founded at Hangchow in 822 by the aged monk Nan-ts'ao, who at every meeting offered up a formal supplication that he and the hundred thousand other members (the number sounds improbably large) might be born again in the Paradise of Vairocana, the patron Buddha of the Avatamsaka Sect. Subscriptions were collected and an estate of 1,000 acres was purchased, the proceeds of which were used to cover the expenses of the Society. In the autumn of 826 Nan-ts'ao, now aged 80, visited Po at Soochow and persuaded him to write an account of this pious institution in order to encourage members to keep it going after his death. In the account Po speaks of himself as 'one of the 100,000', so he too was evidently a member of the Society. He does not subsequently, however, show any expectation of being reborn in Vairocana's Paradise, and his membership presumably lapsed.

He left feeling that he had done very little for Soochow. He had been Governor for not much over a year, and during half that time there had

been a drought, which showed according to Chinese belief that he lacked *tê* (inward power). Yet all the same huge crowds lined the banks of the river to see him off and many tears were shed. It was with a feeling of immense relief that he again cast away the shackles of office. Never 'in the last half-century' had his spirits been so high. It must, however, be added that the poem in which he says this was written after drinking a before-breakfast cup of wine which made him feel as though 'spring were coursing through his guts and a sunshine roasting his back'. He had dismissed most of his servants and had only his wife and his little daughter with him on the boat. He had saved enough at Soochow to live upon in retirement for several years.

He timed his departure so as to have the companionship of Liu Yü-hsi during the journey. And here I must digress again in order to give some account of this friend of Po's, who from now onwards plays so important a part in his life. Liu Yü-hsi, like Po Chu-i, was born in 772. When in 805 power fell into the hands of Wang Shu-wên and Wang Pi, neither of whom were members of the hereditary governing class, Yü-hsi believed that they had the interests of the common people at heart and threw in his lot with them. He was encouraged in this course by the fact that a friend whom he deeply respected, the great writer Liu Tsung-yüan (773–819), also supported the Wangs. When their brief regime fell and the traditional governing class came into its own again he was banished to a remote place in Hunan. The Chinese had in the ninth century the same complete confidence in the superiority of their own culture that Europeans had in the nineteenth. Liu Yu-hsi found that the shamans of the local aborigines were using in their ceremonies songs the words of which he considered barbarous and uncouth. He wrote new words in proper literary style, which it is said were used by local singers till long after his time.

Early in 815 the supporters of the Wang Shu-wên regime were all recalled to Ch'ang-an. But there was opposition to their being given posts at the Capital. In particular the Chief Minister, Wu Yüan-hêng (the Minister who, it will be remembered, was murdered a few months later), and the officers of the Censorate were against a complete pardon. As a compromise they were given remote provincial posts, but with higher rank. Liu Yu-hsi, who had been a Marshal, was promoted to being Governor of a district in Kwangtung. In 824 he became Governor of Ho-chou in Anhui and when his term of office expired was summoned to Ch'ang-an to take up a post in the Board of Rites. He picked up Po Chü-i (with whom he had been in correspondence for some time) near Soochow or perhaps a little further to the north, and they spent a fortnight together at Yangchow, sight-seeing with great energy. 'Not a tower, not a pagoda that we did not climb together. We were both

surprised to find what good form our muscles were in when we reached the ninth story of the Ch'i-ling Pagoda.'

They travelled in a very leisurely fashion and we must suppose that Liu Yü-hsi, like Po, was not in any particular hurry to reach Ch'ang-an:

*The month before last I left Chinkiang,*
*Yet only this morning did I reach the banks of the Huai.*
*Twenty days to do four hundred leagues!*
*I ask myself, why do I travel so slowly?*
*I am going home, but have no further plans;*
*From my Governor's pay there is still something left.*
*It was not to make money that I took the post;*
*Having given it up, I shall not be hungry or cold.*
*Why do the days slip so easily by,*
*What keeps me always so busily employed?*
*At every mountain I order the rowers to stop,*
*At every temple I land and inscribe a verse.*
*I sit drinking till very late in the night;*
*I lie abed till the sun is high in its course. . . .*
*When at last I arrive at Ch'ang-an*
*The life I shall lead will be just the same as this.*
*What is the use of fighting against wind and tide*
*In an effort to force the pace of my journey home?*

It must have been when Po was on his way home from Huai-an to Honan that he heard of the death of the Emperor Ching Tsung, killed in a drunken brawl after returning late at night from a hunting-expedition. He was succeeded by his brother, known to history as Wên Tsung, then aged 17. He was a serious-minded boy and came to the Throne determined to make his reign in every way a contrast to the two which had preceded it. He made drastic cuts in the personnel of his Household, dismissed crowds of concubines, banished the Taoist and Buddhist wonder-workers who had recently pervaded the Court, and restored the practice of holding levees and personal interviews on alternate days. He was also a patron of Confucian studies and a lover of poetry. A general feeling of relief and expectancy prevailed, very similar to the mood of the Court in Po Chü-i's early days, when Hsien Tsung came to the Throne in 806, determined to restore the dynasty's dwindling prestige.

It may have been partly a knowledge of the new Emperor's character and intentions which made Po decide to apply for a fresh post when he reached the Capital. But in a poem called 'Thinking of my house at Lo-yang' he says: 'I am lucky to be the owner of such a garden and ashamed to be drawn from it by considerations of pay.' His main object in entering the service again was evidently to increase the sum he had

put by to support him in his eventual retirement. His home responsibilities had lately much increased. In the winter of 826 his younger brother Po Hsing-chien died, and Po Chü-i took charge of the family, consisting of his widowed sister-in-law, his nephew Tortoise, now aged 14, and several younger children. Though for some time past little news had come from Po Hsing-chien, Po Chü-i had continued to think of him with deep affection, as is shown by a poem written in the spring of 825:

*Calm and lovely are these spring days, there is fresh beauty in the streams;*
*By the little bridge I stroll alone idly conning my rhymes.*
*The green grass by the pool-side gives but a halting verse;*
*I lie listless at the spring window dreaming of A-lien.*

'A-lien' was the childhood name by which Po Hsing-chien was known in the family. Strangely enough there is in Po Chü-i's existing works no reference to his death till two years later.

Po seems to have stayed at Lo-yang only for a very short while. Soon after his arrival at Ch'ang-an he was sent as an envoy to Lo-yang, perhaps to convey the terms of the Amnesty granted by the new Emperor on the thirteenth day of the second month. He lingered there till spring weather set in and on returning to Ch'ang-an became head of the Palace Library, the office where he had worked as a humble Collator twenty-five years ago. In the autumn Yüan Chên was made President of the Board of Rites. But this was merely an elevation in rank; he still remained at his post in Yüeh-chou. About Po's work at the Secretariat we hear nothing at all. He had incidental duties not connected with this office. It had long been customary that part of the Emperor's birthday treat should be a disputation between Confucians, Buddhists and Taoists. In the tenth month Po was chosen to represent Confucianism, and also took the chair. These were mock debates and Po was no doubt asked to 'play' on the Confucian side rather because he could be relied upon to conduct the proceedings with good humour than because he was regarded as a serious authority on Confucianism. Indeed in his opening speech, after a few words of conventional homage to the young Emperor, he confesses that he can lay claim to only a very slender knowledge of Confucianism. On the other hand, the monk I-hsiu is versed in all the doctrines of the Greater and the Lesser Vehicles and in every branch of learning, esoteric and exoteric. He is accustomed to addressing great assemblies and has a reputation for posing very difficult questions. Armed, however, with some knowledge of the writings that have come down from 'the Former Kings' and fortified by His Majesty's august presence, Po promises to answer questions to the best of his ability.

The first question put by the monk was an extremely easy one. It concerned the six classes into which the pieces in the *Book of Songs* were

traditionally divided and the four categories into which Confucius's disciples were placed. Po gave the required information and asked for a supplementary question, if his answer was not felt to be satisfactory. The monk then asked how it was that Tsêng Tzu, admittedly one of the most important disciples of Confucius, was not mentioned in any of the four categories. Po replied that Confucius classified his disciples in this way on a particular occasion and only mentioned those who were actually present. Confucius had only just returned from a journey, and while he was away Tsêng Tzu, famous for his filial piety, had gone home to look after his parents. That was why he was absent on this occasion. It would be interesting to know whether Po thought of this way out on the spur of the moment, in which case it does great credit to his ingenuity, or whether it was a current and accepted explanation.

It was now Po's turn to ask a question. The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* speaks of there being 'room in a grain of mustard seed for the whole of Mount Sumeru'. What does this mean? The proper reply would have been that all attributes are relative and that from the point of view of the Absolute such qualities as bigness and smallness do not exist. The monk, however, was not up to this and made the feeble reply that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas might quite well put Mount Sumeru into a grain of mustard seed, for there was nothing of which their magic power was not capable. Po then asked how the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas acquired their magic; but the debate is not reported in full, and the monk's reply to this question is not given.

It was now time to bring the representative of Taoism, Yang Hung-yüan, into the discussion. Po introduced him in an adroit little speech, in which he recalled that the T'ang Emperors traced their descent to Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism. His present Majesty had an equal veneration for all three doctrines, the 'three legs' of the national tripod, and would certainly wish Taoism to have its say. 'In the Master Yang Hung-yüan we have a Taoist adept of great subtlety, particularly learned in esoteric doctrine, and holding a position of authority in the Taoist Church.' Po then asks a question about the *Scripture of the Yellow Court*, a book of mystical therapeutics, to which he often refers in his poems. What does this book mean by 'nurturing the breath', 'keeping the soul intact', and so on? The answer was evidently not very satisfactory, for in a supplementary question Po wants to know what 'breath' it is that one is to nurture, and what 'soul' one is to keep intact—very natural questions, for both words had several different senses, the first, for example, meaning air, weather, breath, spirit, energy, temper and so on, according to context. Po next deals patiently with a feeble attempt on the part of the Taoist to discover ambiguity in a completely straightforward and comprehensible passage of the *Book of Filial Piety* (Section

Twelve). Finally, he forgoes his right to sum up the results of the discussion on the grounds that he lacks the professional competence of the two other speakers and that the Emperor has no doubt already heard quite as much as he wants to.

A number of other discussions of this kind, particularly those dating from the seventh century, are preserved in full. It is a pity that Po did not think it worth while to record the answers of his opponents. One has in reading his account the irritating impression of listening to a radio discussion which continually fades out at the critical moment. But of Po's competence and tact as a question-master the surviving text leaves us in no doubt.

Among the former friends with whom he renewed contact in 827 was the poet-monk Tao-tsung. In the latter part of the eighth century there had been a number of monks, such as Hu-kuo, Fa-chên, Chiao-jan and Ling-i (728–762), who achieved fame by writing purely secular poetry and who mingled on equal terms with the literary laymen and Court patrons of the day. Many people, knowing that Tao-tsung had consorted with a number of literary Chief Ministers and other high officials, such as Po Chü-i and his friends Yüan Tsung-chien and Ch'ien Hui, thought that Tao-tsung too, as was supposed to be the case with Hu-kuo and the rest, was an ambitious, worldly-minded monk who used his literary gifts as a passport to high society. But examining the poems written by distinguished visitors in response to poems by Tao-tsung and displayed in his room at the Shan-chi Monastery, Po realized that Tao-tsung did not cultivate poetry for poetry's sake, but used it as means of leading people in high position towards the study of Buddhism: 'To begin with he attracts them by poetry; afterwards he draws them on to the wisdom of Buddha.' In this, says Po, he is very unlike such monks as T'ang Hui-hsiu (fifth century) who, having made a name for himself as a secular poet, foreswore the 'grey clouds' of his monastic retreat and returned to lay life, ending his career as an official at Yangchow.

Tao-tsung's most eminent disciple at this time was the Chief Minister Wei Ch'u-hou (773–828). He had consulted Po early in 815 about the meaning of the Parable of the Gold Ore.[1] They met several times and found that they were in general agreement about Buddhist philosophy. In 821, when they were both serving in the Palace Secretariat, they went together to Tao-tsung and were, so to speak, temporarily ordained by him, taking vows of abstinence for a limited period, perhaps a month. Observances and acts of piety carried out in common drew them, as Po

[1] There are many passages in the Scriptures in which the workings of *Prajñā* ('Transcendent Wisdom') on the enlightened Buddhist are compared to the refining of gold ore I do not know which of these Po had in mind

records, closer and closer together. Now, despite Wei Ch'u-hou's public responsibilities, whenever they met, whether at his office or in private, their conversation was always about Buddhism.

In the second month of 828 Po became Vice-President of the Board of Punishments, the department which was responsible for the management of prisons and convict-gangs. We may be certain that he carried out his duties in a humane way, but his writings, apart from references to a mission to Lo-yang later in the year, contain no allusion to his official work.

Power was now more firmly concentrated in the hands of the eunuchs than at any period in the history of the dynasty. Though the young Emperor was supposed to be full of good intentions, it was the eunuchs who had put him on the Throne and he was unable to make any stand against their continual encroachments. In the third month Palace Examinations were held, and one of the candidates, Liu Pên, handed in an essay in which he made a violent attack upon the eunuchs and demanded that they should be stripped of all their military and governmental functions. The chief examiner was Fêng Su (767–836), a great friend of Po's. Both he and his colleagues were entirely in sympathy with Liu Pên's onslaught, but did not dare to pass him. Another candidate, Li Ho, who had passed, as a protest against the ploughing of Liu Pên resigned the post that was given to him, saying that Liu's essay was obviously far superior to his own and was indeed one of the finest that had ever been sent in on such an occasion. Liu Pên was never able to obtain a post at Court and died in a humble position on the staff of a provincial Commander.

It was probably in the winter that Yuan Chên sent Po a series of poems, challenging him to 'answer' them, that is to say, to write poems in the same vein, using the same rhymes. He accepted this challenge, in most cases using Yüan Chên's rhymes in the same order, but not necessarily sticking to the same subjects. 'Your strong point as a writer', says Po, 'is that even where hampered by the rules and restrictions of the most cramping literary forms you can always manage to say exactly what you want to say, and you know well enough that I have no such gift. . . . Your intention in sending these poems was clearly to get me into a tight corner and show once and for all which of us is master. Po complains that Yüan Chên has purposely chosen difficult rhymes and out-of-the-way topics in order to baffle him, but 'a strong opponent puts the player on his mettle and desperation is often a happy counsellor. I disposed of the whole set with one flourish of the broom. What, I wonder, does my great opponent make of *that*? . . . Of course the above must not be taken seriously. It was only written to bring a smile to the face of a far-off friend whom I know to be sad. Other people might

think it rather silly; so please do not show it to anyone. Lo-t'ien speaks.'

Po's answers do not seem to have been written with quite the rapid flourish to which he lays claim. Most of them belong to the spring of 829, but some seem to date from the end of 828. His difficulty in following Yüan Chên's rhymes is very manifest in number 16 of the series where (as he explains in a note) he has had to call his old friend Chou Shih-fan 'Chou Shih' in order to get a rhyme. The first two poems were protests against Yüan Chên's present addiction to Taoism and patronage of a Taoist recluse called 'The Master of the Morning Mist'. Another poem is an answer to one in which Yüan Chên had addressed a prayer to Ts'ang-hua, the god who averts baldness. Po says that he has got far beyond the stage where Ts'ang-hua could be any use to him; he is 'bald as the magpies when they bridge the River of Heaven', in allusion to the belief that on the seventh night of the seventh month the magpies build a bridge of feathers across the Milky Way in order that the Herdboy and Weaving Lady stars may meet. If anyone sees a magpie just at this season it is always featherless. In the ninth poem he recalls their brief meeting at Hangchow in 823: 'Scarcely had the laughter of meeting come to our lips when the sighs of parting began.' Since then six or seven years have passed. But they are both 'chattels of the Emperor', and who knows when their next meeting will be?

In his answer to a poem called 'Asking for news of Liu and Po', Po Chu-i tells how when the poem arrived Liu Yü-hsi happened to be with him. 'You can imagine', says Po, 'how delighted we were. I had the blinds rolled back, and while our cups were being filled again, we both stood by the window gazing towards the south-east. We loved your verses, which no one in the world but you could have written. We spoke of the high public achievements to which you are every day adding and of the great gifts with which Heaven has endowed you. We went on chanting your poems from noon till late in the evening; finally I asked Liu Yü-hsi to stay for the night and we slept together on the big couch under the eastern window.'

The fifteenth of the series is a narrative poem in ballad style, called 'Li Shih's daughter'. When in A.D. 347 Huan Wên defeated the local ruler Li Shih at Ch'êng-tu he took Li Shih's daughter as his concubine. Knowing that his wife was of a violently jealous disposition he hid the new concubine in his study. But the secret got out, and the jealous wife rushed into the study brandishing a sword. Li Shih's daughter was sitting by the window combing her hair, and the wife was so overcome by her beauty that dropping her sword she threw her arms round the girl saying, 'Child, even I cannot resist you! I do not wonder that the old rascal's head was turned.' Po, combining several versions of the story,

treats it as a moral tale, designed to soften the hearts of jealous wives. What relation his poem bears to that of Yüan Chên we do not know, for all Yüan's poems from 825 onwards are lost.

The seventeenth poem contains Po's only reference to his responsibilities as Vice-President of the Board of Punishments. He reminds himself that he is not given 'eighty to ninety thousand cash a month' merely in order to keep him warm and well fed. It is his duty constantly to wield the Red Pencil of condemnation. But he must not put out of mind those whom he has consigned to the desert frontier, or let prisoners languish in gaol a day beyond their time.

Another poem in the series describes a family scene which evidently takes place in the early days of 829. It is late at night, there are no visitors and Po, feeling rather at a loose end, heats some wine, pulls up the lamp-wick, and drinks 'several large cups'. His wife gets 'one small cup', and the rest is divided between his little girl Lo Tzu and his nephew Tortoise. Slightly fuddled but not at all sleepy he sits listening to the dismal sound of the wind buffeting the paper-windows and, remembering that in the last few weeks four of his friends, Wei Ch'u-hou, K'ung Ch'i, Ch'ien Hui and Ts'ui Chih have all died either in office or after enjoying only a brief spell of idleness, he asks himself as usual how much longer he is going to put off his own retirement.

Yüan Chên had written asking how Tortoise had been getting on since his father died. Po in the twentieth poem of the series explains that for a long time he could not bring himself to speak of any subject connected with Po Hsing-chien's death. He mentions now that Hsing-chien's wife and Tortoise are living with him and that the wife is ill, but gives no further information about them. The poem is in the main an expression of his grief at his brother's death. But it is couched in conventional, ultra-poetic terms, and a far more vivid expression of his feelings after Hsing-chien's death is contained in an address to his soul written on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month of 828, when performing the sacrifice which marked the close of full mourning. The cult of the dead consisted partly in keeping them informed about family affairs: 'Last year in the spring I became head of the Palace Library and received the Order of the Purple Sash, and this spring I was appointed Vice-President of the Board of Punishments. But I feel so utterly desolate without you and have also been in such bad health that I do not care much what becomes of me. In official life at any rate I have definitely lost all interest. I made up my mind to go on working till Tortoise's mourning was over. But I have now asked to be allowed to resign, and shall perhaps try to get a post with special duty (*fên ssu*) at Lo-yang, in which case I should move house and settle there permanently. I have been wanting to do so for some time and am now determined to wait no longer. I shall be quite

content to end my days there, looking after my health and taking care of Tortoise. Everyone in the family except Su-su is in good health. Tortoise shows a leaning towards literature and I read the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of History* with him every day. In two or three years he should, I think, be ready to take his examinations. Lo Tzu is getting to be quite a big girl and is turning out better than we expected. I still have no son. Tea-boy, Auntie and the rest are in Chêng-hua; he still has the same job. . . . Yao-lien is on the farm at Fu-li; he is still unmarried. Chai-hsiang is in the salt-administration at P'êng-tsê. We have good news of both of them. As Bone Helmet, Stone Bamboo and Scented Hairpin have been so long in our service I took the opportunity at the end of your mourning to give them their freedom. We have taken back Shan-niang, and your wife is looking after her and bringing her up. This year I completed the purchase of Yang Lin's farm at Hsia-kuei and have added a hall and courtyard. You will remember that we once discussed this, and you were very anxious it should be done in the event of your death. I have also bought the house on the west of the Hsin-ch'ang Ward.

'I have put together your writings and arranged them in order. There are twenty rolls in all. . . . I shall ask his Excellency Mr. Ts'ui to write a preface and shall bequeath the book to Tortoise and Lo Tzu to keep along with my own writings. Did you get any benefit from the good works done by the whole family on behalf of your soul last year? Did you come to take the offerings we made at morning and evening on the first and fifteenth days of each month?'

Po goes on to say that since his death his brother has hardly once appeared to him in dreams. Can it be that his spirit has disintegrated and been scattered abroad? He cannot believe that if Hsing-chien were conscious he would let two years go by without showing some such sign of remembrance as the dead often give. But on the bare chance that his words are heard he makes his petition. 'My heart is heavy, my heart is heavy, I entreat you and again entreat you to accept these offerings.'

Some of the references in this address cannot be understood. We know nothing of Su-su, and can only guess that she was a permanent invalid. 'Tea-boy' is Po's cousin Po Min-chung, who became Chief Minister in 846. Chai-hsiang was a son of Po's elder brother Po Yu-wên, and Yao-lien was very likely Chai-hsiang's half-brother. Mr. Ts'ui (Ts'ui Twenty-four) crops up from time to time in Po's works and there is a reference to his death, apparently dating from 834; but he cannot be identified with certainty.

Permission to resign evidently took some time to procure. In a poem written to Yüan Chên in the middle of the second month of 829, Po speaks of his loneliness at Ch'ang-an and asks, 'Shall I be able to extricate myself and get away, or not?' He felt that so long as he was at Ch'ang-an

the disaster of 815 might at any moment be repeated. Already in the last days of 828 he had written that he was not clever enough to foresee the chops and changes of the official world and too old to weather another political storm: 'If by any chance I made a mistake such as I made before, how sorry I should be afterwards that I did not extricate myself from office while there was still time!' No doubt one of the main reasons for Po's retirement was the sudden death of his main political supporter, Wei Ch'u-hou, at the age of 55. Ch'u-hou was a 'non-party' man. So was his immediate successor Lu Sui. The danger foreseen by Po presumably was that power would fall into the hands of the faction of which his wife's relations, the Yangs, were the principal supporters. He might then be implicated in their downfall when the political pendulum swung, as it was bound to do ultimately, in the opposite direction. What actually happened was that the party with which he was connected by marriage, led by Li Tsung-min and Niu Sêng-ju, did indeed come into power in the autumn of 829; but it was not ousted till 833, so that judged from the political point of view Po's flight from Ch'ang-an was needlessly precipitate. He had a plan, after his resignation on grounds of health had been accepted, of making a tour in Eastern China and visiting Yüan Chên, but it was not carried out.

In 828 or early in 829 a Mr. Lu, who held a small post in the Board of Rites asked Po and two other famous men to write appreciations at the end of a book called *Fragments of Gold*. It was a short glossary of rare characters, intended no doubt to assist writers in giving to their work a flavour of exotic learning. Po evidently regarded the book as a piece of grotesque pedantry. In two poems he makes fun of the fantastic expressions which the author has been at pains to assemble. The first poem, owing to the difficulty of finding English equivalents to such expressions, is hardly possible to translate. The second runs something like this:

*The beauties that pervade the whole book are truly Fragments of Gold;*
*No one could open it without finding a phrase to suit his taste.*
*For simple songs you must still apply to Po Chü-i;*
*But for 'timpings and tampings' you should now consult the work of Mr. Lu.*

The expression that I have translated 'timpings and tampings' is one of those that occur in the glossary. It appears to be descriptive of someone walking with a limp. The only known copy of the work is a manuscript (S.6204) brought by Aurel Stein from the Tun-huang caves and now preserved in the British Museum. The book appears to have obtained a certain currency, for a copy of it was brought back to Japan in 847 by the Japanese pilgrim Jikaku (794–864), along with Po's *Works* and a separate copy of the 'Everlasting Remorse'.

He arrived at Lo-yang at the end of spring. He had been accorded the

position of 'Social Secretary to the Crown Prince, with special duty at Lo-yang', which entailed practically no work. Unlike so many home-comings in the past this was a *ch'ang-kuei*, 'a return for ever'. Only once in the seventeen years that he was still to live did he travel more than a few miles from Lo-yang. His first thought, when the postilions had deposited his litter at the bamboo-gate, was of the garden-treasures that he had brought with him from Hangchow and Soochow. He strokes the fresh bamboo-shoots and counts how many white lotuses are in bloom. The dragon-head at the prow of the punt he brought from Soochow needs repainting; the balustrade of the bridge that Wang Ch'i, the Mayor of Lo-yang, built for him in 824 is a little awry. Late at night, when the moon has risen, he goes into the garden to look at his cranes, and suddenly remembers that he allowed P'ei Tu to borrow them while he was away. The cranes came from Hua-t'ing, north-east of Hangchow, and he had brought with him from the 'Indian' Temples at Hangchow a strangely shaped piece of rock. The white lotuses came from Soochow and another rock from the Great Lake nearby. Three flat blocks of blue-stone given to him by a certain Yang Chêng-i, probably a relation of Mrs. Po, made smooth and comfortable garden seats. From Ch'ang-an he now brought with him a troupe of ten dancers and musicians, and he would sometimes send them to an arbour on one of the little islands in his lake to play the introductory music to 'Rainbow Skirts'.

In the ninth month Yuan Chên was at last summoned back to the Capital, and on his way made a halt at Lo-yang. We do not know how long he was able to spend with Po. The sole record of their meeting consists of three poems, two by Yuan and one by Po, written when they parted. 'On his way from Yüeh-chou he passed through Lo-yang. We drank together and when we parted, with tears in his eyes, he gave me two poems:

*Do not scold me for still being here! I know I have stayed too long;*
*I have tried hard to say good-bye, but words will not come.*
*Let me stay, for few are left of our grey-headed band,*
*To-morrow you may not get the chance of a meeting such as this.*

*Since long ago when we first met there had been three partings;*
*Now we are parting once again, both old and grey.*
*That I do not find it easy to start you surely understand,*
*Who knows whether this time we shall ever meet again?'*

Po's answer is lighter in tone. It is true, he says, that they are getting old. But they are both in good health, and there is no need to have gloomy anticipations. 'We have drunk our fill. Let us clear away cup and ladle, put out the lamp and talk for a while in the dark. Then we will lie warm under our fur coverlets and sleep for a while. . . .'

That winter, strangely enough, sons were at last born to both Po and Yüan. Po called his A-ts'ui, using the surname of his friend Ts'ui Hsüan-liang as a child-name. The little Yüan was called Tao-pao, 'Protected by the Way'. Both children died in infancy. Almost immediately after he arrived at Ch'ang-an Yüan Chên was made President of the Board of Revenue, with duty as Commander at Wu-ch'ang on the Yangtze. Towards the end of 830 Po became Mayor of Lo-yang. I use the term 'Mayor' for convenience; the post was not a municipal one, the Mayor being appointed by the Central Government. It existed at only eight or nine of the principal cities of China. The functions were much the same as those of a provincial Governor. He does not grumble so much as at Soochow, but we again find him complaining that his morning sitting as magistrate is hardly over before the afternoon sitting begins. Prisoners defile ceaselessly before him; documents pile up in mountains on his desk. But the political situation at Ch'ang-an was becoming very menacing, and Po constantly expresses his relief at being safely ensconced at Lo-yang.

In the autumn of 830 the Emperor Wên Tsung determined to carry out an armed *coup d'état* against the eunuchs. He took into his confidence an official named Sung Shên-hsi, who had a reputation for independence and honesty, and made him Chief Minister. The eunuchs, however, got wind of the plot and retaliated by concocting evidence that Sung Shên-hsi's real intention was to depose the Emperor and put his younger brother on the Throne. Wên Tsung believed the story; Sung Shên-hsi was dismissed from his post as Chief Minister and condemned to death as the result of a farcical 'Palace enquiry'. Po Chü-i's friend Ts'ui Hsüan-liang courageously demanded a proper legal enquiry into the accusation brought against Sung Shên-hsi. According to Po's account, though everyone was convinced that Sung was innocent, Ts'ui alone of all the officials assembled at a crowded Court dared to brave the Emperor's displeasure by protesting against a charge of this kind being dealt with by an arbitrary Palace decision. 'Heaven's majesty blazed forth' (that is to say, the Emperor lost his temper) and Ts'ui was repeatedly ordered to leave the assembly. According to his life in the *New T'ang History* he then laid his official head-dress on the steps of the Throne and bare-headed proceeded to remind the Emperor of Mencius's words: 'If the common people demand a man's execution, that is not enough. If the great officers of Court all demand his death, that is not enough. Only when everyone under Heaven demands his death should an investigation be held.' 'That is to say (comments Ts'ui) there should be a proper legal enquiry. No single commoner should be condemned to death except in accordance with the Statutory Code, and how much the less a Chief Minister! It is regrettable that your Majesty should

regard the laws of the Empire as for some reason not applying to Sung Shên-hsi.'

The case had aroused great popular indignation; Ts'ui Hsüan-liang's protest became widely known and was much admired. The eunuchs began to be afraid that if the execution was carried out there would be unmanageable disturbances in the city, and they finally allowed the sentence to be changed to one of banishment to K'ai-chou in Szechwan, where Sung Shên-hsi died two years later.

On the twenty-second of the seventh month (831) Yüan Chên died at Wu-ch'ang after only one day's illness. Some three months later Po sacrificed to his spirit and in the address that accompanied the offering he speaks of 'laying his hand upon the coffin'. It would seem, then, that the body was brought to Ch'ang-an by way of Lo-yang. At the end of the address Po says that according to the Buddhist scriptures such a relationship as theirs could only have come about through friendship in many previous incarnations. 'In this life we are parted; but who knows whether in some future incarnation we shall not meet again?' He wrote on this occasion two formal dirges and later on when the final interment took place outside Ch'ang-an, three 'funeral-songs' for the pall-bearers to sing. He was also asked by the Yüan family to write the usual biographical tomb-inscription and in return for doing so received as a present Yüan Chên's silver saddle, jade belt and other belongings, 'to the value of six or seven hundred thousand cash'. He was unwilling to accept payment for such a service as this and sent the things back several times. But Yüan's family persisted, and he ended by presenting them to the Hsiang-shan Monastery near Lo-yang, to defray the cost of rebuilding the monastery, which had fallen into decay. The monk in charge of the work, Ch'ing-hsien, who was a friend of Yüan Chên, promised that the gift should be regarded as proceeding from him rather than from Po. 'Who knows', I answered, 'whether as the consequence of this good work Yüan Chên and I may not in some future aeon be friends once more in this land, or may even, as the result of your prayers, wander together again in this very cloister? And as I said this, the tears welled into my eyes.'

It is strange to think how little time these two, whose friendship is so famous, actually spent together. Parts of the years 802 to 806, a few days in 810, a few weeks in 815, again a few days in 819. For rather over a year in 821–822 they were both at Ch'ang-an, but Yüan Chên was engrossed in politics and they seldom met. Then the final meeting at Lo-yang in 829. But so intimately were their affections entwined during this whole period that it was not possible to write the life of Po Chü-i without making it to some extent also a life of Yüan Chên. An important element in the fabric of this book has been the interplay

of their feelings. Henceforward the story becomes simpler, since it ceases to be the joint record of two lives, and at the same time less concentrated in its interest, dealing as it chiefly does with a medley of fugitive contacts and acquaintances.

Readers of that excellent book *Christians in China*, by A. C. Moule, will remember that one of the few allusions to Christianity in ninth-century China occurs in the works of a certain Shu Yüan-yü, who in a panegyric on Buddhism declares that of the foreign religions Buddhism alone has achieved popularity; all the Manichean, Christian and Zoroastrian monasteries in the whole of China 'are not equal to the number of Buddhist monasteries to be found in one minor city'. It has not been generally realized that, in the period immediately after Yüan Chên's death, this same Shu Yüan-yü was one of Po Chü-i's closest friends. He seems to have been born about 780. In 831 he was associated with Ts'ui Hsüan-liang in demanding a proper investigation of the charges against the Chief Minister Sung Shên-hsi, and it may very well have been for this reason that some months later he was deprived of his post on the Board of Punishments and given a humble sinecure. He settled at Lo-yang, and he and Po at once became friends. In the summer of 832 Po invites him to spend the night, saying that in this very hot weather Shu is the one person he feels inclined to see. In the autumn he envies Shu's freedom to stay in the Hsiang-shan monastery as long as he likes, and contrasts it with his own laborious existence as Mayor of the town. After ten days' leave spent in the hills near Lo-yang two poems sent to him by Shu are his one consolation for having to go back to his office. On chrysanthemum-day (the ninth of the ninth month) he puts into the mouth of two favourite singing-girls an invitation to Shu to come and drink with him, otherwise 'the autumn chrysanthemums will have bloomed in vain'.

On an autumn day (833) he and Shu talk all through the night at the Lung-mên Gorge. Po puts forward the theory that two ways of life are possible—the altruistic, devoted to redressing the wrongs of the common people, and the individualistic, spent in self-improvement. They cannot be combined, and if one has no capacity for the first, there is nothing for it but to 'lie drunk at Lung-mên or ramble at Hsiang-shan'. Soon afterwards he stands under the cherry trees imagining the 'thousands and tens of thousands of blossom' that will come in the spring. But with whom will he sit under the flowering trees? Ts'ui Hsüan-liang and Li Shên are in favour again and have left Lo-yang, 'and to-morrow Shu deserts me'.

It must have been early in the seventh month that Shu Yüan-yü was recalled to the Capital. His stay at Lo-yang had not been devoted solely to rambling about the countryside or sitting under flowering trees. A

fresh attempt to crush the eunuchs was being planned, this time (perhaps with a view to more effective secrecy) at Lo-yang. Shu Yüan-yü was to play a leading part and during the period of his intimacy with Po was having constant meetings with a certain Li Hsün, who was ostensibly living quietly at Lo-yang, in mourning for his mother, but was secretly organizing the anti-eunuch conspiracy. Li Hsün was a descendant of a well-known Chief Minister in the eighth century and nephew of Li Fêng-chi, who had been Chief Minister in 822. He did well in his examinations and was regarded as an authority on the *Book of Changes*. Historians have dismissed him as an adventurer; it is certain at any rate that the course upon which he had embarked necessarily involved much cruelty and duplicity. Whether Po ever met Li Hsün and whether he knew of Shu Yüan-yü's secret activities at Lo-yang we do not know. In a poem written in the autumn or winter of 834 he speaks of the armed forces as having been reduced and of the times 'gradually becoming more peaceful', which looks as though he had no inkling of the storm that was about to break upon Ch'ang-an.

Commenting on the poems written at Lo-yang between 829 and 834 Po notes that apart from a few composed at times of bereavement there are no 'bitter words'; they are all records of placid enjoyment. This cheerfulness, he claims, was not in any way 'constrained or forced'. It arose naturally out of the circumstances of his life at this period. He and his family were well provided for, he had wine, music, scenery, and adequate leisure in which to enjoy them; it would have been perverse of him indeed if he had not been happy. All these advantages, however, depended upon the peace and security that now prevailed in the Empire; and he takes this opportunity of congratulating the Emperor, Wên Tsung, upon the excellent way in which the country was now being ruled. This sentiment was obviously insincere. Po knew well enough that never in history had the eunuchs wielded such absolute power, never had such savage political vendettas crippled the administration. I wonder, too, whether his claim that the light tone of the Lo-yang poems was not in any way a matter of policy can be entirely accepted. In poem after poem at this period he represents himself as a harmless old toper, too decrepit and fuddled to take any interest in what is going on in the world at large. I have the impression that this attitude may to some extent have been taken up in order to disarm political suspicion. Yang Ch'êng, whom Po so greatly admired, was supposed to have pursued a similar policy *c.* 790 while waiting for the right moment to take political action. Despite what Po says there *is* something 'constrained and forced' about his continual assertions that he is completely contented and happy. In particular the bibulous poems fail to convey any sense of exhilaration, contrasting in this respect very strongly with

some of those written at Hangchow, for example, the poem to Ling-lung.[1]

About the wine at his Mayoral Residence he wrote a series of poems, of which these are two:

*I have been Mayor for a whole year and confess to my people with shame*
*I have done little to gain their love and nothing to inspire their awe.*
*All I have compassed is slowly to improve the brewing of official wine;*
*Compared with the slop that it used to be it is now a heavenly nectar.*

*I remember how often in old days, when up for the examinations,*
*I would pawn my coat to pay for drinks on the shores of the Serpentine.*
*If then I could raise enough to drink at ten thousand the gallon*
*Why, when it does not cost me a farthing, go slow with Government wine?*

In the winter of 832 Liu Yü-hsi stayed for a fortnight at Lo-yang, on his way to be Governor of Soochow. It was the first time that Po had seen him since Yüan Chên's death:

*I said something about P'i-ling, and you hid your face in your sleeve;*
*You began to speak of Hsia-k'ou, tears fell upon my dress.*
*One finds out in later life that at meetings such as this*
*There is little sound of talk and laughter; much of tears and sighs.*

P'i-ling was a general name for the district which Yüan Chên had governed from 823 to 829, and Hsia-k'ou meant the Wu-ch'ang district, where he died. Seeing Liu off in a great snowstorm at the turn of the year Po congratulates Soochow on getting its third poet-governor in the space of half a century. The other two were of course Wei Ying-wu in 785 and Po himself in 825.

[1] See above, p. 155.

# CHAPTER XIII

In the fourth month of 833, after holding the position of Mayor considerably longer than was then usual, Po resigned on grounds of health and resumed his nominal post of Social Secretary to the Crown Prince. Li Tê-yü had recently returned to power and those who had offended him in the past were hastening to take cover. Thus Po's friend Chang Chung-fang, who had opposed the granting of a posthumous title to Li Tê-yü's father, thought it prudent to resign from his post at Ch'ang-an and seek a sinecure at Lo-yang. I do not think it is fanciful to suggest that, even at Lo-yang, Po thought it better not to be too conspicuous. In a poem written just after his resignation he congratulates himself on the fact that 'the world' (i.e. the regime) seems to have forgotten his existence; were it to remember about him, even his known lack of ambition and quiet manner of life would not suffice to protect him.

Many friends died: in 832, Ts'ui Ch'ün, in 833 Ts'ui Hsüan-liang, who in his will asked that Po Chu-i should be given his jade chime-stones and lute (*ch'in*) in return for writing his tomb-inscription. One of the few surviving friends of early days, Li Shên, whom Po had not seen since 822, was in Lo-yang for a short while in 833, before taking up the post that had previously been held by Yuan Chên at Yüeh-chou. Parting from Li Shên at the bridge over the Lo River, Po reminds him how in old days at Ch'ang-an they could scarcely scrape together enough to pay for a little coarse muddy wine; and now they are pledging each other's healths out of golden cups! But 'the coachman has raised his coral-studded whip, the horses are tossing their heads'. It is time to part once more.

In the autumn Li Tê-yü proposed that the composition of poems and *fu* should be dropped altogether from the examinations, which should henceforward consist only of essays on moral and political questions. He would perhaps have liked to suppress the examinations altogether. His grandfather had passed the Literary Examinations; but since then the family 'had not kept a copy of the *Wên-hsüan* (the anthology which was the stand-by of literary aspirants) in the house', and owing his own position to patronage he thought poorly of 'cold scholars', that is to say, of those who (like Po Chü-i) had come to the fore without influential family backing It was his opinion that 'important positions in the Government ought to be held by the sons and brothers of high officials. And why? Because from their earliest years they get practice in the discussion of current political themes and acquire a natural pro-

ficiency in governmental matters. A knowledge of correct departmental procedure and Court etiquette comes to them of itself, without any need for special training. "Cold scholars", even if endowed with exceptional ability, may after they have passed their examinations and obtained appointments, begin to know something about the duties appertaining to some particular grade or rank; but they always lack mature experience. That is why the rise to fame of such "sons and brothers" is not a thing to be scoffed at.'

It is possible that the examinations in the spring of 834 were held on the new plan; but in the summer of that year Li Tê-yü fell from power, and in the tenth month the Board of Rites announced that in the spring of 835 candidates would once more be required to write poetry.

Since the death of Yüan Chên Po's principal partner in the pastime of poetical exchange had been Liu Yu-hsi. In the winter of 833 Po writes to him that he has arranged the poems that they have recently exchanged under a title that may be roughly translated 'Poetical Interchange between Soochow and Lo-yang'. The series began with the poems of farewell that Po wrote when Liu left Lo-yang for Soochow in the winter of 832. In this letter Po notes how often it happens that striking lines and indeed remarkable whole poems arise from the traps which the combatants set for one another and the straits to which they are driven in the process of extricating themselves. It is often easy for a modern reader to see that the writer of a reply is being hard put to it to follow his opponent's rhymes; the points at which the original writer is deliberately laying pitfalls for the 'answerer' (and to do so was certainly an important part of the game) are more difficult to recognize.

He returns at this period to the theme of the 'singing-girl on horseback'[1] upon which he had moralized ten years ago. This time no moral is drawn. He describes the courtesan riding in winter on her dappled pony, her knees covered by a flowered apron and her black gauze mantilla secured by a silver comb. 'What is it that she reminds one of? Why, of Wang Chao-chün', the Chinese girl who was sent off to the desert to marry the Tartar Khan. It is just so that the pictures of Chao-chün show her, 'riding in all her finery through the snow'. This poem, difficult to translate satisfactorily owing to its artificial parallelism, has an elegance akin to that of certain eighteenth-century Japanese woodcuts.

Early in the winter of 834 Po's old friend Li Tsung-min, now the leader of the party opposed to Li Tê-yü, was recalled from Southern Shansi and became a Chief Minister. At about this time Po made an excursion to the mountains north of Lo-yang and thought of climbing the Heavenly Altar Peak (as Yüan Chên had done thirty years before).

[1] See above, p. 13.

But his heart failed him and instead he wrote a poem which he sent to the new Minister Li Tsung-min and to a Taoist hermit called Chou. It appears that long ago, on the threshold of their careers, Li Tsung-min and Chou had climbed the Heavenly Altar and, moved by the grandeur of the scene about them, had both sworn to dedicate themselves to some great achievement, worthy of their energy and gifts, either in public affairs or in the quest of Taoist enlightenment. Now both of them have fulfilled this vow; Li carries the Golden Seal at his belt, Chou's coat is covered with the Jade Fungus, symbol of high Taoist initiation. Thinking that the mountain will be interested to know what has become of its two old-time votaries Po inscribes the poem on a rock.

In 834 Liu Yü-hsi was removed from Soochow and became Governor of Ju-chou, a much less important place, fifty miles south-east of Lo-yang. Early in 835 Po had a dream about him:

*Last night I saw you in a dream;*
*When I woke up, my mind worked slowly,*
*I did not remember you had moved to Ju-chou,*
*But thought about you as still at Soochow.*
*Soochow is hundreds of miles away;*
*Ju-chou is little more than fifty.*
*Yet even so, we can meet only in dreams,*
*So that near and far to us are the same thing.*
*And having thus levelled near and far*
*Let us do the same with glory and disgrace.*
*Do you sleep well? How is your appetite?*
*Tell me when you write only of things like this.*
*Are you making poetry, now that your health has improved,*
*Since the New Year, have you once been drunk, or no?*
*How do terrace and tower, and wind and light,*
*As you have them to-day, compare with Soochow?*
*I want to know all that passes through your mind;*
*You must never again be 'too lazy to write'.*

Po had recently married his daughter Lo Tzu to T'an Hung-mo, a teacher at Four Gates, a college for the sons of officials of the seventh and eighth ranks. We know very little about this young man. He may well have been the son of a Mr. T'an who was one of Po's colleagues when he was Collator in 803. Ten years later T'an Hung-mo was still an official of the eighth rank (the lowest but one), so that the match certainly did not turn out to be a very brilliant one. Having got this always irksome and difficult piece of family business off his hands, Po decided to pay a short visit to the farm at Hsia-kuei, where his cousin Po Min-chung had been living in retirement while in mourning for his mother, who died at the farm in the first month of 833. The object of

Po's visit was presumably to see Po Min-chung before (as was likely to happen when the twenty-five months of mourning expired) he was summoned to a fresh provincial post. He also seems to have taken this opportunity of visiting his wife's cousin Yang Ju-shih, who was Governor of T'ung-chou, not far north of Hsia-kuei. In a poem in which he asks his cousin to expect him some time after the Lenten Festival (early in the third month) he compares himself to Hsiang Ch'ang who, after marrying off his children, disappeared into the country and was never seen again. The comparison was a loose one, for Po was back in Lo-yang before the end of spring. He travelled in great comfort, accompanied by cup-bearers and musicians:

*With me are servants skilled in pipe and string;*
*On horseback follow bearers of ladle and cup.*
*Now and again, with the spring wind in my face,*
*I bid them stop and pour me out a drink.*

We hear nothing about his time at Hsia-kuei. On his return journey he discovered, riding in a litter borne high on the shoulders of the carriers, that 'one can be as comfortable on a journey as at home'. But the converse was of course also true; one could be as comfortable at home as on a journey, and in the remaining eleven years of his life he never travelled again. He was all the more glad to be home because the weather, in the ensuing summer, was intolerably hot. Bald, lean and completely at leisure he was (as he thankfully reflects) uniquely qualified to face a heat-wave. He wrote at this time two pretty quatrains that are often quoted:

*Two mountain-monks sit playing draughts*
*In the cool shade that the bamboo-leaves have thrown*
*Across the board. One cannot see them through the green,*
*But sometimes one hears the sound of a piece being moved.*

*A young girl steering a small punt*
*Comes back with white lotus stolen from the lake.*
*She cannot hide her tracks, for the little boat*
*Through the floating weeds has cut a tell-tale path.*

During this summer he sent his *Works*, complete up to date, in sixty scrolls, to the Eastern Forest Monastery at Chiang-chou, asking as a favour that they should not be lent to visitors or ever be taken outside the monastery gates. On the ninth day of the ninth month he was appointed Governor of T'ung-chou, to replace Yang Ju-shih who had been given a post in the Board of War. He declined the Governorship on grounds of health; the salary was tempting, but (as he several times says) he felt 'lazy about T'ung-chou' and a better expedient for raising money was open to him. He sold his house in the Hsin-ch'ang Ward at

Ch'ang-an, and received a price 'amply sufficient to provide for me in my old age'.

Meanwhile tragic events were at hand in the Capital. Li Hsün, whom we have seen plotting with Po's friend Shu Yüan-yü at Lo-yang in 832, had now taken into his confidence a certain Chêng Chu whom the governing class despised because he had practised a useful profession—that of physician. In the autumn of 835 Li Hsün and Chêng Chu devised between them a triple plan for the rehabilitation of the dynasty: (1) end the domination of the eunuchs; (2) recover Kansu from the Tibetans; (3) bring the north-east of China, now in the hands of quasi-independent war-lords, under the full control of the Central Government. This was the plan itself; but there were certain necessary preliminaries. The political see-saw, which made the carrying out of any long-term programme impossible, must cease. Li Tê-yü had already been relegated to distant banishment by his opponents. These opponents, including Li Tsung-min and Po's relatives by marriage, the Yangs, were also banished. Large armies would be required to carry out the plan, and it was presumably in the hope of obtaining recruits that on Li Hsün's proposal an examination of monks was held. Those who could not 'recite the Scriptures' were to be unfrocked, and would thus become available for conscription. But Chêng Chu decided that having already alienated the supporters of the two political parties, it would be dangerous to antagonize so powerful an interest as that of the Buddhists, and the examination was suspended.

In the tenth month one of the principal eunuch leaders, Wang Shou-ch'êng, died (he was believed to have been poisoned by order of Li Hsün and Chêng Chu), and the original plan was to round up the eunuchs when they were assembled at Wang's funeral, which was to take place some weeks after his death. But as often happens in cases of conspiracy, a hastily conceived and ill co-ordinated plan was at the last moment substituted for the original programme, and carried out about a week before the date fixed for the funeral. The new plan was to decoy the principal eunuchs, including the generals of the two Palace Armies, into the courtyard of a barracks in which a band of desperadoes had been hidden. One of the conspirators accordingly announced at early Court on the twenty-first of the eleventh month that Sweet Dew (a kind of manna) had fallen near these barracks. The Emperor, who was presumably privy to the plot, asked the chief eunuchs to go and see whether the report was true. Just as they were entering the barracks gate, a squall of wind blew aside a curtain behind which the assassins were hiding. The eunuchs beat a hasty retreat and returning to the Audience Hall hustled the Emperor back to the Palace. The soldiers and police who had been enlisted to carry out the conspiracy fell upon

the eunuchs and killed about a dozen of them. But soon a thousand soldiers of the Palace Army arrived and led by their eunuch generals began a general slaughter of all those supposed to be connected with the conspiracy. Three Chief Ministers were executed. One of them was Wang Yai, who was supposed to have been responsible for Po's banishment to Chiang-chou; another was Chia Su, who had been Po's fellow candidate at the Examinations in 800 and with whom he had remained on friendly though not intimate terms. The third was Shu Yüan-yü who, as we have seen, had from the beginning been a party to the conspiracy. It is evident from the numerous poems addressed by Po to Shu Yüan-yü from 832 to 834 that he had become an intimate and much-loved friend. Another friend of Po's who became implicated in these tragic happenings, though he escaped unharmed, was the learned monk Tsung-mi (A.D. 780–841), with whom Li Hsün, who managed to escape from Ch'ang-an in disguise, took refuge for a time in the hills to the south of the city. Tsung-mi visited Po at Lo-yang in 833, and it may well be at this time that Li Hsün made his acquaintance. Arrested on the charge of having sheltered Li Hsün, Tsung-mi admitted that he was aware of the conspiracy. He had sheltered Li Hsün because it was the principle of his religion to help those in trouble wherever he found them and regardless of the consequences. The eunuch general who had arrested him was deeply impressed by his courage and piety, and eventually released him. During the days that followed looting and rioting broke out in the city. No authority but that of the eunuchs any longer existed, and executions of everyone remotely connected with the conspiracy went on, without trial or appeal of any kind, for several weeks.

Po Chu-i alludes to these events in a number of poems, expressing himself, however, in language so illusive, guarded and veiled that they are not easy to translate. The best known poem of the series is called 'The Twenty-first Day of the Eleventh Month of the Ninth Year: written under the stress of emotion'. Under the title is a note that he spent this day at the Hsiang-shan Monastery, near Lo-yang. The allusion in the fifth line is to the famous poet and musician Hsi K'ang who when executed for political reasons in A.D. 262 asked for his lute (*ch'in*) and died serenely fingering the strings. The sixth line refers to the death in 208 B.C. of the statesman Li Ssu. When being led to execution along with his son he turned to him and said, 'If only we were still at Shang-ts'ai, chasing the hare with that brown dog of ours!'

*The turns of fortune have no pattern, they cannot be foretold;*
*'Retire quickly!' is a rule as good as the gift of prophecy.*
*On the day when you 'white-headed went to your common fate'*
*I was making all alone for the quiet of the green hills.*
*You had not time like Hsi K'ang to ask for a plain lute;*

*Like Li Ssu you thought too late of the brown dog at home.*
*The unicorn ends as dried meat, the dragon as a mince-pie;*
*Far happier the fate of the tortoise, dragging his tail through the mud.*

'White-headed went to your common fate' is an allusion within an allusion. It refers to the joint execution of Shih Ch'ung and P'an Yo in A.D. 300, and the phrase itself, quoted by P'an Yo just before his death, is itself an allusion to one of his early poems which he now took to be prophetic. Finally the tortoise-comparison is based on a well-known story in *Chuang Tzu*.[1] The poem sounds pedantic when thus explained; but the stories it refers to were in those days extremely familiar, and the many allusions would have been understood immediately. No doubt Po had in mind, when he wrote the poem, all the high Ministers who were put to death on that fateful day. It must, however, have been to Shu Yüan-yü, his almost daily companion till recently, that his thoughts chiefly turned. But pity for the victims and sense of personal loss, in this as in most other poems of the series, were swallowed up in an overwhelming sense of thankfulness that he had himself resisted all temptations to re-enter public life. And by 'thankfulness' I do not mean gratitude to Providence but rather satisfaction at the manifest rightness of his decision to content himself with a relatively humble position at Lo-yang. 'Prudence rewarded' is the theme of poem after poem in this series. In a piece cautiously entitled 'Historical Theme' (the note 'written in the eleventh month of the ninth year' was probably added later) he contrasts the fate of various ambitious politicians of antiquity with the happier lot of those who withdrew from public life in good time, and ends by saying that 'happiness and disaster are not made by Heaven'. Elsewhere he recalls that fire only breaks out in 'sleek' houses, the storm only capsizes the over-laden boat; and again, 'The fish that keeps to the bottom of the pool has nothing to fear from the hook; the bird that soars above the clouds evades the fowler's net'. 'If one comes to grief in this world it is mostly one's own fault.' He contrasts the crane that stands silent and motionless all day on the frozen pond with the 'crows and kites fighting for food, the sparrows fighting for a nest'.

Probably to the autumn, when the members of the two established political parties were being banished one after another, rather than to the time of the actual *coup d'état*, belong two poems in which he contrasts their fate with his own agreeable seclusion: 'I begin to think that every day I sit at Lo-yang in peace and quiet is worth at least ten thousand pieces of gold.' And in the second poem, addressed to someone (probably his wife's cousin Yang Yü-ch'ing) who had recently been banished to the south, he says, 'In old days you laughed at me for coming to Lo-yang. But the insect that people leave alone is the one that does

[1] See *Three Ways of Thought*, p 86.

not sting; the tree that is not cut down is the one that is poor timber. Whether we are "lucky" or "unlucky" depends chiefly on ourselves.'

Shortly after Po declined to go as Governor to T'ung-chou the post was accepted by his friend Liu Yü-hsi, and Po himself was given a higher position (Junior Tutor) in the Crown Prince's mythical Household at Lo-yang, at a salary of 100,000 cash a month. Well might he confess that he was now 'not painfully poor'!

The years were bounding by like 'a hoop rolled down hill'. He was, in Chinese reckoning, 65. 'Even if I live to be 70, I shall only see five more springs', he reminds himself, and mounts his horse to ride off into the hills. 'Whatever may happen to my outward looks as year follows year, the excitement I feel when spring comes will never lose its hold.' If in the early spring he catches sight from far away of a garden with trees already in bloom he still, as in his younger days, rushes straight to the spot and boldly walks in, 'no matter if the owner be rich or poor, a stranger or a friend'.

On the third day of the third month, 837, Li Chio, Mayor of Lo-yang, held a great celebration of the spring Purification Rite on the banks of the Lo River. The last harvest had been good and politically things had quieted down at the Capital more quickly than might have been expected. The eunuchs had over-reached themselves. The indiscriminate slaughters that had marked their few weeks of absolute power had alienated even those who disapproved most strongly of the recent conspiracy and its leaders. Gradually the Without (the hereditary official class) resumed control, under two able administrators, Li Shih and Chêng T'an; a short period of order and stability set in. Everybody, for the moment, was on his best behaviour. The Emperor proudly called attention to the fact that he was wearing a shirt that had been to the wash three times.

On the day of the Purification the veteran statesman P'ei Tu, who was now Warden of the Eastern Capital, invited a number of friends to a boating-party. Po and Liu Yü-hsi (who had now returned from T'ung-chou) were both there, as also Po's son-in-law T'an Hung-mo. Huge crowds lined the banks to watch the boats pass.

*'When we came home we needed no lamp;*
*The new moon lay west of Phoenix Tower.'*

In the summer Niu Sêng-ju, on whose political advice Po and Yüan Chên had so much relied in early days, was made Warden of the Eastern Capital and became Po's constant companion in the next few years. Niu was deeply involved in party strife, being one of the leaders of the Yang party, but Lo-yang was a sort of No Man's Land, where even Party leaders could be safely associated with, 'in however dangerous a state

the outside world might be'. In a poem addressed to Niu Sêng-ju in the autumn, inviting him and Liu Yü-hsi to his house, Po is at pains to make it clear that he is not angling for political assistance: 'The way to success leads through perilous storms; in the city, at the gates of the mighty, there is no rest. Do not imagine I have not thought it out! Once and for all, in the world there is nothing that I crave.'

In the winter of 837 his daughter Lo Tzu had a child. Unfortunately it was a girl, but Po contents himself with the reflection, 'At last I have something to hold in my arms and hug. What does it matter whether it is a girl or a boy?' His most celebrated production of the ensuing year was the 'Life of the Master of Wine and Song', a fanciful account of himself written in imitation of T'ao Ch'ien's 'The Master of the Five Willows'. It opens with the words 'The Master of Wine and Song has forgotten his name, birth-place and official rank. He has not the haziest notion of who he really is. He went from one official post to another for thirty years, and when he was growing old, settled down at Lo-yang.' Here he devotes himself to 'wine, music and poetry'; but in addition to these pursuits he studies Buddhism, 'mastering the doctrines of the Lesser, Middle and Great Vehicles. His friend in religion is the monk Ju-man, from the Sung-shan Range'. Ju-man plays a large part in the legend of Po Chü-i as developed in later times; but this is one of the few references to him in Po's authentic works. He was a pupil of the great Dhyāna master Ma-tsu. There is a story that the Emperor Shun Tsung (A.D. 805) was deeply impressed when paradoxically told by Ju-man that Buddha 'lived without ever having come to life and vanished without ever having disappeared', and from that moment 'conceived a deep respect for the Dhyāna Sect'. We should probably know more about Ju-man had not so many of Po's later poems been lost.

'In fine weather,' he continues, 'or when there is something beautiful to be seen, those who care for such things always come to visit him. First he dusts his wine-jar and then opens his poetry-boxes. When the wine has gone round several times he takes his lute (*ch'in*), tunes it to the First Mode, and plays "Autumn Thoughts". Then, if in the right mood, he tells his servants to tune the instruments of the ballet-orchestra and gets them to play the music of "Rainbow Skirts and Feather Jackets". On very festive occasions he tells a little singing-girl to sing a dozen or so verses of the Willow Branch tune, using the new words.' Here it should be explained that this was a popular tune to which Po and several of his contemporaries had written words. 'Only when they have enjoyed themselves to the very utmost of their capacity and are thoroughly fuddled do he and his friends part.

'From time to time he wanders off to see a neighbour, rambles about the Ward where he lives, goes on horseback through the streets of the city or is carried in a sedan-chair into the open country, just as he feels inclined. With him in the chair he carries a lute, a cushion and several volumes of poetry by T'ao Ch'ien or Hsieh T'iao. On the carrying-poles of the chair to right and left hangs a jar of wine. When he has enjoyed enough scenery, drunk enough and played enough and no longer feels in the mood for such things, he turns straight back and goes home. Such has been his life for ten years.'

To the reproaches of his wife and family the Master replies: 'Moderation is a quality that is rarely found. Most men give way to some special hobby or addiction, and I am no exception. Suppose that by ill-chance my passion had been for accumulating riches, suppose I had built a splendid house and filled it with treasures, and so in the end had brought ruin upon myself, would not that have been worse? Suppose that by ill-chance my taste had been for gambling and that by playing for high stakes I had lost all I possessed, and so brought my whole family to destitution, would not that have been worse? Or again, I might have been addicted to alchemy, spent years on a low diet and thinly clad, melting lead and burning mercury, and in the end so far from achieving anything, done myself great injury. Would that not have been worse? Fortunately I cared for none of these things; my only addiction has been to the wine-cup and to verse. To these I have abandoned myself, recklessly if you will, but what harm has been done? Certainly none to compare with the results of the other follies I have mentioned.'

In this document I see (perversely, as many readers will think) the climax of the propaganda by which Po had for long past been trying to persuade the world that he was politically innocuous. At the beginning of 838 Yang Ssu-fu, a kinsman (though a rather remote one) of Mrs. Po, became a Chief Minister. All past experience showed that he and his party were unlikely to be in power for more than a year or two. When they fell, all those connected with them, whether in politics or by marriage, would be in danger. The fact that his wife was, like Yang Ssu-fu, a 'Yang of Hung-nung' would in any case make him suspect, and if the opposition came into power, old though he was, he might at any moment be uprooted from his comfortable sinecure at Lo-yang and sent once more to some barbarous region in the south. There is a story that when someone showed Po's *Works* to the leader of the Opposition, Li Tê-yü, Li refused to look at them saying, 'I never liked the man and have no wish to change my opinion'. Most anecdotes about the celebrities of the period are obviously political propaganda, put about to discredit the leaders of one party or the other. The above story was no doubt put about by Li Tê-yü's enemies to show how mean and prejudiced he was.

It is probable, however, that he and Po had no liking for one another; Li Tê-yu was at Lo-yang for a considerable part of 836, but though Po had dealings with almost all the prominent men who were from time to time stationed at Lo-yang, he and Li Tê-yü do not appear to have met. When in the autumn of 840 Tê-yü entered upon a long period of power, he made a pretty clean sweep of people that he disliked, and it may be that Po was only left in peace because he was too old and too ill to be worth dislodging.

At the Capital the situation was again becoming very unsettled. Early in the year (838) an attempt was made to assassinate the Chief Minister Li Shih, who had been standing up manfully against the eunuchs. It was generally believed that the assassin was in the pay of the eunuch Ch'iu Shih-liang, chief promoter of the indiscriminate executions and butcheries in 835, who still occupied a high position at the Palace.

The spring of 839 found Po in a very depressed mood, hardly going out anywhere. He sees 'no one that is not white-headed'; for 'young people are impatient of the old and make friends only with one another'. A new generation has grown up, in which he feels he has no part. During the New Year holiday he climbed all alone to the top of the Heavenly Palace Tower:

*The sun is shining warmly on the tower, the doors are wide open;*
*Alone I climb to greet the spring, and drink a cup of wine.*
*The endless crowds I left below stare up amazed*
*That the oldest holiday-maker of all should be the first to climb.*

In the second month he wrote an inscription to be put up in a Buddhist library which he had planned when he was Governor of Soochow. It had now been completed at a cost of 3,600,000 cash, which one may reckon as something vaguely in the neighbourhood of £1,800, and housed 5,058 scrolls. He ends (significantly, in view of the despoiling of Buddhist monasteries and institutions a few years later) with an appeal to the 'high Ministers of our land, as also the heads of *chaityas* (Buddhist institutions), almoners (*mamati*) and the like', to reverence and protect the building, and enlarge it if necessary. He hopes that 'if any Scripture is missing, the gap will be filled, and that if the building cracks, it will be repaired. . . .' 'Those who see to this will be true disciples of Buddha and will attain to endless blessings; those who act otherwise will prove that they are not true disciples and will pay the penalties set forth in the *Vinaya* (monastic rules).'

Next day he wrote a note concerning a copy of his *Works* which he was sending to the same library, no doubt by the same messenger. It will be thought strange, he says, that he should send his 'utterly sordid writings' as an offering to a Buddhist library. He does so, he explains,

owing to a prayer that he has for long been in the habit of repeating. It runs like this: 'May the worldly writings of my present incarnation, all the wanton talk and fine phrases, be changed into a hymn of praise that shall glorify the doctrines of the Buddha in age on age to come, and cause the Wheel of Law forever to turn.'

# CHAPTER XIV

On the fifth day of the tenth month, 839, Po had a stroke, which crippled his left leg. His mind seems to have been quite unaffected and, as he himself notes, he wrote more poetry after his illness than he had been writing before it. A series of fifteen 'Poems During Illness' dates from only a few weeks after his attack. In the fifth of these he asks what there would have been left for him to do in life, even if he had kept his health. He has fulfilled all his family obligations, he has no duties of his own: 'What better moment could I have chosen for quietly being ill?' The eighth poem is one that I translated years ago:

*Dear friends, there is no cause for so much sympathy;*
*I shall certainly manage from time to time to take my walks abroad.*
*All that matters is an active mind, what is the use of feet?*
*By land one can ride in a carrying-chair; by water be rowed in a boat.*

In the ninth he bids good-bye to a friend who is returning to the Sung-shan range, south-east of Lo-yang:

*From climbing the hills and walking by streams I am cut off for ever;*
*Fountains and rocks and curling mists—whose will they be now?*
*When you reach the flanks of Sung-shan chant this verse,*
*That the six and thirty peaks may know they will not see me again.*

In the tenth poem, as so often in his later works, Po refers to the *Sūtra of Vimalakīrti*. According to Buddhist legend Vimalakīrti was so holy that nothing could defile him. He spent his time in brothels and wine-shops, and became the symbol of those who live in the world yet are not of the world. Over and over again Po in his later poems compares himself to this saint, particularly at times when, as now, he was ill. For Vimalakīrti's illness and the difficulty of finding anyone holy enough to go and enquire after him form the framework of the famous Sūtra. The present poem is called, 'On giving up treatment by moxa'. The Chinese moxa consists of dried twigs of common mugwort rolled into a pellet, placed upon the part of the body to be cauterized and ignited by means of a burning-glass or mirror. In the Sūtra, Vimalakīrti says: 'To what shall I liken this body? It is like a floating cloud that in a moment changes and disappears.' Po's poem runs:

*In Buddhist teachings what parable should guide me now that I am ill?*
*Have I not heard that the body in a trice 'changes and disappears'?*
*Lest Vimalakīrti should look and laugh, I have given up my treatment;*
*What use to take fiery mugwort and cauterize a cloud?*

Knowing that he would soon reach the retiring age and be living on

half-pay, shortly after his stroke Po made a list of his household effects and current expenses with a view to effecting the necessary economies. It was obvious that he had better get rid of his horse, and at the same time he made up his mind to dismiss Fan Su, commonly called Willow Branch owing to her skill in singing the popular song of that name, who had been with him for about ten years. The prospect of parting with a singing-girl and a horse reminded him (as it would still remind many Chinese to-day) of the romantic legend of Hsiang Chi who at the time of the battle of Kai-hsia (202 B.C.) parted first with his favourite singing-girl, named Yü, and later with the horse upon which he had so often rode to victory. When he parted from Yu he sang:

*My strength could pluck up mountains, my spirit covered the world;*
*The times have turned against me; Piebald will not budge.*
*Piebald must carry me onward, Piebald must be made to move,*
*But Yu, alas, Yu, alas, what shall I do with Yu?*

Using the rhythm of this song Po made the 'Song of Past Feelings'[1] in which he tells how, when the moment came to part with Fan Su and his horse, he could not bring himself to do so:

*Dear horse, stop your sad cries,*
*Sweet Su, dry those bitter tears.*
*For you, my horse, shall be put back in your stall;*
*And Su, in the women's room. . . .*
*Must I in a single day*
*Lose the horse I rode and the girl I loved?*
*Su, O Su,*
*Sing me again the Song of the Willow Branch,*
*And I will pour you wine in that golden cup*
*And take you with me to the Land of Drunkenness.*

The respite, at any rate as regards Fan Su, was only a short one. She left in 840 on the last day of spring:

*Fan Su and spring-time left on the same day;*
*Only my illness stayed behind to keep me company.*

Some of his dancers and musicians stayed on as general servants, to help in the garden or make up medical prescriptions.

The parting from Fan Su stirred up memories of an earlier love:

*Long ago, beyond the River, I left Peach Leaf behind;*
*Last year in the upper room I parted from Willow Branch.*

There are only three references in Po's works to Peach Leaf, whom he left behind at Soochow when he came back to the Capital late in 826. Her real name was Ch'ên Chieh-chih, and it is probable that she was an 'official' singing-girl, attached to the Governor's office at Soochow. Paddling about on his little pond in the autumn of 840, when he had

[1] See *More Translations*, p. 63.

partially recovered from his attack, Po suddenly noticed three characters written on a rock that he had brought from near Soochow. It was the name 'Ch'ên Chieh-chih', carved on it fifteen years ago—a token of 'things of the past, about which no one else knows'. Strangely enough the poem that gives the strongest impression of Po's attachment to Peach Leaf is one in which, writing apparently in 832, he says how utterly his old feeling for her has vanished. For title it has the two characters 'Chieh-chih':

*Our happy love, where is it now?*
*Our tears, our sadness—all have vanished away,*
*Seeming no more than the dream of a single night—*
*Those two years when we were never apart.*

In the winter of 839 he believed that he was dying, and when in the spring he began to recover a little he felt like someone who, having packed for a long journey and reconciled himself to the thought of departure, finds that there is no need to hurry away. The improvement, however, was not very marked, and he tells Liu Yü-hsi, who had written to congratulate him upon it, that he must not imagine him cured: 'the difference that the improvement has made is only very small'.

In the spring of 840 he paid the painter Tu Tsung-ching (who is otherwise unknown) thirty thousand cash to make a picture of the Western Paradise of Amitābha, praying that 'all who are old as I am, or as ill, may be freed from their pain and brought to happiness, may cease from evil and do good, so that in their next incarnation they may not be born again in this world, but at once behold the Western Land'. At about the same time he commissioned a painting of the Paradise of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, dedicating it in similar terms. Whether this implied a hope that those for whom he prayed (including himself) would, when the Future Buddha comes, be transferred from the Paradise of Amitābha to that of the Future Buddha, it would be hard to say. Such dedications were looked upon as alternative methods of salvation, and the relation between them was, I think, not clearly thought out. A curious story, connected with Po's cult of the Future Buddha Maitreya, is told in a collection of anecdotes called *I Shih*, which dates from the second half of the ninth century: 'In the first year of Hui Ch'ang (841), when Li Shih-lêng was Inspector General of Ch'ê-tung (the region just south of the Yangtze delta) a merchant met with a hurricane which blew his ship far out of its course. At last, after more than a month, he came to a great mountain, upon which the clouds, the trees, the white cranes were all of strange and magical form unlike any that he had ever seen in the World of Men. Presently someone came down from the mountain-side and having asked how he had got there and heard the merchant's story, told him to tie up his boat and come

on shore. "You must present yourself to the Heavenly Master," he said. He then led the merchant to a vast building that looked like a Buddhist or Taoist monastery. After his name had been sent in, the merchant was brought into the presence of a venerable Taoist whose hair and eyebrows were completely white. He was seated at the upper end of a large hall, with some twenty or thirty attendants mounting guard over him. "Being a man of the Middle Kingdom," the aged Taoist said, "it must be by some special ordinance of Fate that you succeeded in reaching this place. For this, I would have you know, is the fairy mountain P'êng-lai. But as you are here, I expect you would like to have a look round." And he told one of the attendants to take the merchant round the Palace precincts and show him the sights. He was led on, past jade terraces and trees of halcyon brightness that dazzled him as he passed. They went through courtyard after courtyard, each with its own name, till they came at last to one the gate of which was very tightly locked and barred. But he was allowed to peep in, and saw borders full of every kind of flower. In a hall that opened on to the garden was a cushioned couch, and on the steps that led up to the hall incense was burning. The merchant asked what courtyard it was. "This", said his guide, "is the courtyard of Po Lo-t'ien. But he is still in the Middle Kingdom and has not yet come to take possession of it." The merchant made note of what he had heard, and when after a voyage of some weeks he arrived back at Yüeh-chou, he told the whole story to Li Shih-lêng, who in turn sent a full report to Po Chü-i. Po had always striven for re-birth in the Paradise of Maitreya, and he replied by sending to Li two poems:

*A traveller came from across the seas*
*Telling of strange sights.*
*'In a deep fold of the sea-hills*
*I saw a terrace and tower.*
*In the midst there stood a Fairy Temple*
*With one niche empty.*
*They all told me this was waiting*
*For Lo-t'ien to come.'*

*Traveller, I have studied the Empty Gate;*[1]
*I am no disciple of Fairies.*
*The story you have just told*
*Is nothing but an idle tale.*
*The hills of ocean shall never be*
*Lo-t'ien's home.*
*When I leave the earth it will be to go*
*To the Heaven of Bliss Fulfilled.*[2]

[1] Buddhism.

[2] The Paradise of Maitreya; see above, p. 197.

'So wrote Po; but one who could discard the smoke and dust of the world as easily as a slipper and throw away the high headgear of office as though it were dirt can have had little in common with the ordinary run of purblind gropers, and who knows whether he was not an Immortal, doomed for a while to sojourn among men?'

These two poems actually occur in Po's works, and he appends a note in which he says that they were written in reply to 'Li, of Ch'ê-tung'. There is, I think, not very much doubt as to what actually happened. Po's immense popularity in Japan had already begun, and some merchant, visiting Japan, was asked whether Po was still alive and was told that if he ever came to Japan, a wonderful reception awaited him, or words to that effect. Hearing of this, Li Shih-lêng wrote a story somewhat on the lines of the one just translated, transposing the merchant's report into a typical Taoist tale, in which Japan (as often in poetical language) figures as one of the Islands of the Blest. Li Shih-lêng's story was, I imagine, an elegant trifle, meant to flatter and amuse Po, of whose illness Shih-lêng had no doubt heard; and Po replies in the same spirit. But the temporary triumph of the Taoists at the expense of the Buddhists was just beginning, and Po may well have been glad of an opportunity to assert the fact that he, at any rate, had no intention of renouncing Buddhism.

About this time Secretary Huang-fu, whose daughter Tortoise or some other nephew had married, received an appointment in Chiang-chou (South-Western Shansi) and Po was carried to the outskirts of Lo-yang to see him off. In his poem of farewell he speaks of a pretty grandchild that 'solaces both our aged hearts'. The word I have translated 'pretty' is often used as a term of affection and can apply to either sex. Not long afterwards Po's daughter Lo Tzu had another child; this time (to his great delight) it was a boy. But an 'outside grandson', that is to say the son of a daughter, could not become the 'heir' who was to carry on the ancestral rites, so that from a family point of view he was much less interesting than a child in the male line.

In the first month of 840 the Emperor Wên Tsung died, and the eunuchs put forward as his successor (in place of the duly appointed Heir Apparent, Prince Ch'êng-mei) a younger brother of Wên Tsung. The new Emperor, aged 26 at the time of his accession, is known to history as Wu Tsung. The passing over of the lawful heir to the Throne was strongly opposed by Po's relative-by-marriage, the Chief Minister Yang Ssu-fu who thus incurred the enmity of Wu Tsung's backers both inside the Palace and without. In the summer Yang lost his Chief Ministership, but retained for the moment several other high offices. He wrote to Po constantly at this time, sending him among other things

a poem of philosophic resignation, the spirit of which Po greatly admired:

*You did not exult when your principles were practised, nor grieve*
*when you lost your power;*
*You packed or stretched with the freedom of a cloud, so that nothing*
*came amiss.*
*When destinies were yours to mould, you plied your craft well;*
*When the great river was safely crossed, you became an empty boat.*

Yang also sent numberless other presents, such as tea, medicine and warm clothes; but best of all, he read and admired Po's autobiographical sketch, *The Master of Wine and Song*, at which, according to Po, 'everyone else laughed'. Three months later Yang Ssu-fu was banished to the south, and in the ninth month his great enemy Li Tê-yü became Chief Minister, remaining in power till shortly before Po Chü-i's death, during five of the most eventful years of T'ang history.

On the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month a new library at the Hsiang-shan Monastery, south-east of Lo-yang, was formally opened, to the accompaniment of 'feasting, singing and dance', and Po, at the request of the monks, wrote an account of the planning and completion of the work. Two months later he sent them a collection of the poems he had written at Lo-yang in the last eleven years, again apologizing for presenting worldly literature to a Buddhist library, and mentioning (as he did to the Soochow library) his constant prayer that in a future incarnation his poems might be 'reborn' as hymns of praise. He hopes that in a future life he will revisit the monastery and see his writings once more, presumably in their converted state. It may well be, he says, that he will then 'be conscious of the things of to-day, for history shows many examples of men who have remembered previous incarnations. The monk Chih-k'ai, for example (A.D. 531–597), could well recollect having, in a previous life, heard Buddha preaching the Lotus Scripture on the Holy Mountain, and Yang Hu (A.D. 221–278) according to a well-known story identified a gold bracelet that he had worn in a previous existence.

Four poems, which stand together in Po's *Works* and seem to belong to 840, well illustrate his feelings at this time. The first is called 'Inscription written By Me in my Small Garden':

*I have never battled to buy a fine house,*
*I have never fought to own great lands.*
*What I had to fight for, having got a place of my own,*
*Was to sit tight for more than ten years.*
*I turn and look at the houses of the Top Clans*
*Lined up in the heart of this great town—*
*White walls flanking red gates,*

*Splendidly staring across the wide streets.*
*Where are the owners? All have gone away;*
*They were called to high posts and never came back.*
*The lakes they dug only the fish enjoy;*
*The woods they planted belong only to the birds.*
*Happier far the owner of a small garden;*
*Propped on his stick he idles here all day,*
*Now and again collecting a few friends,*
*And every night enjoying lute and wine.*
*Why should he pine for great terraces and lakes*
*When a little garden gives him all that he needs?*

The second poem is called 'Sitting Quietly; written during my Illness':

*I have got wine, but am not well enough to drink;*
*I have got poems, but am too weak to chant them.*
*My head is giddy, I have had to give up fishing;*
*My hand is stiff, I have stopped playing my lute.*
*All day the silence is never broken;*
*No worries reach me in my place of quiet retreat.*
*My body is reconciled to its crippled state;*
*My heart finds refuge in its own mysteries. . . .*
*I sit quietly beside the small pond*
*Waiting for the wind to stir the lapels of my dress.*

The next poem is one of the many warnings against alchemy that Po wrote in his later years. It had a particular appropriateness, for the new Emperor had surrounded himself by Taoist magicians and was engrossed in searching for the Elixir of Life. Love of life, says Po in this poem, has no limits. Those who die young envy those who live into the middle years, and these in turn envy those that live to old age. But the aged themselves are not content, and must needs seek immortality:

*In the morning they swallow the Essence of the Great Sun,*
*In the evening they sup on Marrow of Autumn Stone.*
*But the boon they seek turns only to disaster.*
*How many are those whom drugs have led astray!*
*Whether by means of them men seek to foster*
*Their wanton lusts, or stretch the span of their years.*
*But all in vain, for gods and men are ruled*
*By dark decrees that cannot be gainsaid.*
*Moreover, in the world there is a True Way*
*And what it tells us is far other than this.*
*'Only ignore life, and life will thrive!'*
*Such is the lesson that one named Lao has taught.*[1]

[1] Cf. *Tao Tê Ching*, Ch. VII.

The fourth poem is addressed to Liu Yü-hsi and may well belong to 841, when Po's condition had greatly improved:

*Two days ago I drank in your house,*
*And yesterday we feasted at Mr. Wang's,*
*To-day you have done me the honour of coming to my home,*
*In three days we have had three meetings!*
*When there was singing we both let ourselves go;*
*When wine came round, we egged one another on.*
*And now, to please me, drink this cup to the dregs*
*While both of us together utter the same prayer.*
*Let us first pray that the world may be at peace,*
*And next pray that our bodies may grow sound and strong.*
*Let our third prayer be that in our last years*
*We may see each other more than ever before.*

Liu Yu-hsi was taken ill at about the same time as Po and was also suffering from lameness. To about the same time belongs 'A Dream of Mountaineering':

*At night I dreamt I stoutly climbed the hills,*
*Going out alone with my staff of holly-wood.*
*A thousand crags, a hundred hundred valleys—*
*In my dream-journey none were unexplored,*
*And all the while my feet never grew tired*
*And my step was strong as in my young days.*
*Can it be that when the mind travels backward*
*The body also returns to its old state?*
*And can it be, as between body and soul,*
*That the body may languish while the soul is still strong?*
*Soul and body, both are vanities,*
*Dreaming and waking, both alike unreal.*
*In the day my feet are palsied and tottering;*
*In the night my steps go striding over the hills.*
*As night and day are divided into equal parts*
*Between the two I* get *as much as I* lose.

It is necessary at this point to turn for a while towards public events. In doing so it will be convenient to carry the story considerably beyond 841. For twenty years the Uighurs, China's northern neighbours, had been at war with the Kirghiz, a tribe whose headquarters were on the upper Yenisei, about a hundred miles north of the Sayan Mountains, in what is now Western Siberia. The Kirgiz, of whom a long and interesting account is given in the *New T'ang History*, had fair hair, blue eyes and pale skins. They spoke a Turkic dialect akin to Uighur and used Uighur writing, but were Shamanists not Manicheans. They were in the main pastoral, but also practised agriculture. In 840 they sacked

the Uighur capital, Ordu-balık, on the upper Orkhon, and the Uighur tribes, who had for some time past been fighting among themselves, dispersed, a very considerable body trekking southward to the Chinese frontier, in the hope of obtaining assistance from the Chinese Government. Among their other booty the Kirghiz captured a Chinese Princess who had been given in marriage to the Uighur Khan in 821. Being anxious to cultivate good relations with China the Kirghiz sent her with an escort to Ch'ang-an. But on the way the whole party was captured by the Uighurs who had planted themselves on the Chinese frontier. A Kirghiz mission that arrived at Ch'ang-an in the winter of 842 at once asked after the Princess, and when they heard what had happened declared that they were ready to 'climb to Heaven or go down into the earth' to recover her. But after their victory over the Uighurs the power of the Kirghiz had extended south-westwards into Turkestan rather than towards China, and they do not appear ever to have intervened in affairs on the Shansi frontier.

Since the destruction of Ordu-balik the Uighurs had been without a permanent centre of administration, and they proceeded to use the Princess as a bargaining point in an effort to secure the cession of Chên-wu, a walled town north-east of the Yellow River bend. Some members of the Chinese Government were in favour of a campaign to liquidate the Uighurs; but Li Tê-yü thought it immoral to take advantage of their difficulties. 'Who', he asked, 'would take the life of a bird in distress, even if it flew straight into his arms?' He reminded his colleagues that the Uighurs had done good service in helping the Chinese Government to crush the An Lu-shan revolution, and pointed out that they had not as yet violated the frontier or given any trouble.

But during 842 the Uighurs, who were very short of food, made repeated raids into Chinese territory, and feeling against them in China began to run high. Several hundred who lived in Ch'ang-an were arrested and executed. In the autumn the Chinese Government decided to dislodge the Uighurs from the frontier and at the same time recapture the Princess. This delicate operation was entrusted to a certain Shih Hsiung (d. A.D. 848), with instructions to avoid a pitched battle on the spot, which would have endangered the Princess's life; but to surprise the enemy with a sudden attack, such as would be likely to make them retreat precipitately, leaving the Princess behind. The Uighurs were encamped just outside Chên-wu. Shih Hsiung, in the middle of the night, lit torches that had been placed all round the walls and to the accompaniment of a tremendous din of drums drove huge herds of horses and cattle towards the camp. The blaze of light, the thunder of hoofs and the din of the drums hypnotized the Uighurs into instant flight. The Princess was recaptured and brought back to

Ch'ang-an in triumph on the twenty-fifth day of the second month, 843.

The military history of ancient peoples teems with examples of similar 'surprises', always crowned by complete success. Indeed the really surprising thing about such episodes is that, after infinite repetition, anyone should still have been surprised.

While passing through Southern Shansi on his way back to Ch'ang-an Shih Hsiung shot a 'red heron'. Red was a lucky colour; moreover the sudden appearance of a red bird was one of the omens that foretold the victory of the legendary King Wu over his enemy, the tyrant Ch'ou. Some time after the ninth month of 844, when Shih Hsiung became President of the Board of War, Po was shown a picture of this bird and wrote a poem in which he alludes to the recapture of the Princess and the red bird that shot across the armies of King Wu 'like a falling star'. It is among the very few of his later poems which refer directly to current happenings in the outside world.

The Tibetans were at this period also much weakened by internal dissensions, and some members of the Chinese Government were in favour of an attempt to recover China's lost possessions in Central Asia. Li Tê-yü opposed this, asking where troops could be found to garrison reconquered territories and (even if they could be levied) how it would be possible to provision them. For a long time past, he pointed out, even the defence of the northern frontier had taxed China's military power to the utmost. He was indeed at the moment more interested in internal reforms. There seemed at last to be a chance of dealing with the eunuch question. Yang Ch'in-i, the eunuch who had been attached to Li Tê-yü as observer when he was Commander at Yangchow (A.D. 837–840) and now held a high position at Court, was himself in favour of reducing the power of the eunuchs. In the autumn of 844 it was decreed that the eunuch-observers should no longer have the power to give military orders, except to a small personal bodyguard. In the summer of 845 the eunuch-generals of the Palace Armies were called upon to resign their commands, and it was intended to enroll their forces in the Regular Army. Yang Ch'in-i, who was now General of the Left, obeyed; but Yü Hung-chih, the General of the Right, refused, and the measure does not seem to have been carried through. As will be seen, the attempt to deprive the eunuchs of their military power was closely connected with a far better known event—the attack on Buddhism which culminated in 845.

To give a full account of the restrictive measures against Buddhism, which were spread out over the four years 842–845, would overload my narrative of Po Chü-i's life just when it is reaching its conclusion. Moreover, though we can be sure that, as a devout Buddhist and the friend of many monks, he cannot have been indifferent to what was

happening, owing to the loss of so much of his later work we do not know what his reactions were, and consequently the events in themselves have only a limited relevance to his biography. I will therefore merely give a summary of the successive measures, followed by a brief discussion of why they were taken. In the winter of 842 a monk named Hsüan-hsüan claimed that he could secure the defeat of the Uighurs by 'sword-wheel magic'. On being tested, he was found to be a complete impostor, and on the petition of Po's friend Little Li, who had become a Chief Minister in the spring, it was decreed that various categories of monks and nuns were to leave the monasteries and convents and return to lay life. Among them were those who practised magic conjurations, who 'hold their breath', or (in the case of monks) who could be shown to be deserters from the army; also those who kept wives or in other ways were not observing their Vows. Monks and nuns having money or goods, lands and so on were to hand them over to the authorities, or if they preferred to keep them, must return to lay life and in future pay the Biennial Tax and other dues. The eunuch Ch'iu Shih-liang, who was in charge of Buddhist establishments at Ch'ang-an, managed to get the carrying out of the measure postponed for several months; but early in 843 over 3,000 monks and nuns were laicized. It was also decreed that in future monks were only to be allowed to have one male slave each and nuns, two female slaves.

In the winter of 844 a number of small monasteries were closed; the older monks were transferred to large monasteries and the younger ones unfrocked. The age limit was then raised by a series of steps, and by the summer of 845 all monks under 50 had been sent back to lay life. Very much more drastic measures were taken in the late summer and early autumn, and in the eighth month it was officially announced that 260,500 Buddhist monks and nuns had been laicized and 2,000 Nestorian Christians, Zoroastrians and Manicheans. 'Vast quantities of good land' and 150,000 slaves had been acquired by the State. The empty monasteries were stripped of all useful materials and such metal images as the monks did not successfully conceal were melted down and coined. By a subsequent order only twenty monks were left at Lo-yang.

These measures are depicted as proceeding rather from the Emperor Wu Tsung and his Taoist advisers than from the Ministers. The 'Life' of Li Tê-yü in the *Old T'ang History* contains not a single allusion to anti-Buddhist measures, and the very similar account of him in the *New T'ang History*, though it includes an anecdote about the escape of monks into the semi-independent provinces of the north-east, does not suggest that Li Tê-yü was responsible for the anti-Buddhist measures. Tê-yü himself seems to have been a Syncretist rather than a strict Taoist. In 826 he interested himself in the erection, at a shrine on the

Mao Shan in Kiangsu, of statues of Yin Tzu (the legendary teacher of Lao Tzu), Lao Tzu and Confucius. But he also wrote a hymn to Kāśyapa, the disciple of Buddha, and a poem in praise of a Buddhist 'Meditation Seat'. His Memorial of congratulation to the Emperor on the measures against the monasteries is definitely anti-Buddhist in tone, as became a good Courtier, but here again he appears as a Syncretist, with an equal admiration for the Confucian tradition and the teachings of the early Taoists. Tê-yü, as senior Chief Minister, must of course have sanctioned the measures against Buddhism (there is even some evidence that he may have initiated the first tentative steps in 842); but it is probable that his motives in doing so were economic rather than sectarian. The economic and social motives for such measures are clear enough. It is obvious that a population of about 20,000,000 (in areas subject to the Central Government) could not afford to support a parasite class of nearly 300,000, who owned slaves, land and property of all kinds without paying a penny of taxation; nor could armies be maintained or the Law operate if deserters and criminals could always avoid arrest by vanishing into a monastery.

As we have seen, most of Po Chü-i's works from 843 to the time of his death in 846 are lost. In those that survive there is no allusion to the measures against Buddhism, and we can only speculate about his attitude to them. It is probable, I think, that he would have on the whole approved of the earlier measures, even perhaps of the order (dating from the fourth month of 845) by which practically all monks under fifty were laicized; his own monk-friends were in most cases well over fifty. At the sweeping measures that followed later in the year he may well have been aghast. Apart from his distress at the destruction of works of art and his anxiety about elderly monk-friends who were left without any means of support, he must have been worried about the fate of the three copies of his collected works which, ironically enough, he had housed for safety in Buddhist monasteries. Moreover, there was one important social service which the monasteries and convents had sporadically discharged, and which broke down completely in 845: for many months there was no provision for the upkeep of hospitals, which had been maintained by selling the produce of special Mercy Lands belonging to the monasteries, and it was not till late in the winter that alternative lay arrangements began to be made. We can well imagine the distress with which Po, sufficiently well-to-do to be nursed at home, heard of the plight of 'cripples and sick men left without support'. But not a single poem or other piece of writing survives which would appear to date from the latter part of 845.

In order to give some idea of what was going on in the world during Po's last years of life I have made a considerable digression, and carried

the story well beyond the time of his illness and partial recovery. We can now go back to his personal affairs at the turn of 840 and 841. By someone who was going to Chiang-chou he sent a poem to be inscribed on the walls of his cottage on the Lu Shan and also shown to the monks of the two Forest Temples:

*He that thirty years ago was master of this cottage—*
*Though to-day he is still in the world, his hair is white as silk.*
*For climbing mountains and exploring streams he has not now the strength;*
*You would not find him as he used to be when Marshal of Chiang-chou.*
*He has gradually vanquished the Demon of Wine and does not get wildly drunk;*
*But the Karma of Words still remains; he has not abandoned verse.*
*Should you on your journey happen to pass by the Incense Burner Peak*
*Take this riding to the Eastern Forest, that the reverend monks may know.*

He was able in 841 to visit his old friend Ju-man on the Sung-shan, and parted from him with the poem:

*I have given you the trouble of coming with me to the bottom of the hill,*
*But this is a parting fraught with emotion such as men must seldom feel.*
*I am seventy, you are ninety, and we part knowing well*
*That if we ever meet again it will be in another life.*

Ju-man survived at any rate for another year; for in the spring of 842 Po sent a painter to make a portrait of him.

Sixty-nine (seventy according to Chinese reckoning) was the retiring age for civil servants, and in 841, after taking the 100 days' sick-leave on full pay to which he was entitled, Po retired from the Service on half-pay, with the rank of President of the Board of Punishments, his resignation apparently taking effect from the beginning of the next year. The following song, written partly to tease in a very gentle fashion those who had expectations of coming into his property when he died, seems to date from the early part of 842:

*You have done well, you have done well, Po Lo-t'ien,*
*To have been seconded to Lo-yang for thirteen years!*
*You had hardly reached seventy when you hung your Cap on its peg;*
*Before your half-pay began you put away your Coach,*
*Free in spring to enjoy with friends the pleasures of the countryside,*
*To join the monks of the mountain-temple in their Meditations at night.*
*To household matters for two years I have not given a thought,*
*The kitchen stove is seldom lit, grass grows at my gate,*
*The cook's boy said this morning there was no more salt or rice;*
*The serving-maids were complaining to-night that their dresses were full of holes.*
*My wife and children are not pleased, my nephews are depressed,*
*While I, lying drunk on my bed, could not be happier than I am.*

*However, let me sit up and tell you about my plans—*
*How I mean to dispose step by step of the little that I possess.*
*First I shall sell those ten acres of orchard in the Southern Ward,*
*Next, my five hundred acres of field near the eastern wall.*
*After that I mean to sell the house in which we live*
*And shall get in all a round sum of two million cash.*
*Half of this shall go to you to pay for food and clothing;*
*The other half I shall keep myself and spend on meat and wine.*
*It is likely enough that having reached my seventy-first year,*
*Dim of eye, white of lock, and dizzy in the head,*
*Long before I have had time enough to use up all this money*
*Like the morning dew when sunshine comes I shall vanish to the Realm of Night.*
*But if I have to wait for a while, I shall raise no objection—*
*Shall sup when hungry, drink when I choose and sleep sound in my bed.*
*There is much to be said for being alive and much for being dead;*
*You have done well, you have done well, Po Lo-t'ien!*

His health had so far improved that he even toyed with the idea of visiting the Yangtze Delta and eating once more its 'sweet Basil and perch'. But he seems to have had a relapse, for on the last day of 841 he writes to Lu Chêng, the Mayor of Lo-yang, who was seeing the Old Year out with a great drinking-party:

*To-night you sit where torches blaze, the wine-cup at your lips,*
*While I stay dismally in bed, medicine my only supper.*
*But to lie all night groaning on a pillow is enough to make any one ill;*
*A pleasant party at the Mayor's house does more good than doctors.*
*To-morrow, whether well or ill, I shall not stay at home*
*And you must join me, for unless you come 'no party is any fun'.*

It is clear from several poems written in the last years of his life that Po, having successfully 'hidden' himself at Lo-yang till his official career was over, began to wonder whether he had not after all been too cautious. True, he had avoided, by his obstinate refusal to side with either political party, the risk of suffering such disasters as had befallen so many of his friends. He had not been marched to execution under the Lonely Willow Tree, he had not languished in barbarous and pest-ridden outposts 'beyond the Ranges' or across the sea. But he had escaped these things at the cost of what, given his immense reputation, could only be regarded as an unsuccessful public career. All his fellow Doctors at the Han-lin Academy (P'ei Chi, Wang Yai, Tu Yüan-ying, Ts'ui Ch'ün and Li Chiang) had in due course become Chief Ministers. Li Chiang, it is true, had been assassinated, and Wang Yai beheaded by the eunuchs in 835; but the other three had, despite political ups and downs, at any rate died in their beds. Families that had produced even

one Chief Minister were permanently raised to a select social category. It is evident from several passages in his works that Po sometimes wondered whether, if not for his own sake then at any rate for the glory of the family in general, he ought not to have taken the risk of becoming a Chief Minister, which could no doubt have been arranged at one of the periods when his wife's relations were in power. There is a story that one of Po's nephews once asked him how it was that all his colleagues at the Han-lin Academy had become Chief Minister, while only the Po family lacked this distinction. Po, we are told, only laughed and said, 'Wait a little!' In 841 his young cousin Po Min-chung had spent some time at Lo-yang and Po Chü-i saw that he possessed both the ability and the ambition to add this final lustre to the family record. And indeed three months before Po's death, Po Min-chung duly became a Chief Minister, and so raised the Po family to the highest category in China's governing class, just as the Yüan family had been raised by Yuan Chên's brief Premiership in 822.

The poem which most clearly reflects Po's feeling that, though he had achieved security, he had done so at a heavy cost, is called 'The Bat in the Cave'. There was, it should be explained, a popular belief that after a thousand years rats grow wings and turn into bats:

*On its thousandth birthday the rat turned white and changing into a bat*
*Hid in the depths of a sunless cave, to avoid net and snare.*
*As a means of keeping out of harm's way the plan worked very well;*
*But is even safety worth the price of a life spent in the dark?*

In the seventh month of 842 Liu Yü-hsi died. Since Yuan Chên's death he had been Po's most intimate friend. 'True,' he writes, 'I have in recent years made many new acquaintances; but it is their faces I know, not their hearts. Let no one think it is a happy thing to live to great age. For the thoughts of the aged dwell upon the past, and each thought brings pain.' This was probably written in 843 and from about the same time dates a poem called 'Inscribed at the Rock Fountain':

*People wonder why it is that so persistently*
*I wander round and round the fountain and pause beside the rocks.*
*The reason is, I know that soon I shall be too deaf to hear*
*The sound of the fountain, too dim of sight to see the shape of the rocks.*

Of what he wrote in 844 less than a dozen short poems are all that remains. There is, in these at any rate, hardly any mention of his illness. He seems to have been in excellent spirits, speaks (as we shall see) of this being the happiest time of his life and of himself as the happiest man in Lo-yang. He enjoyed talking over old times with Niu Sêng-ju, who was Warden of the Eastern Capital from 842 till the winter of 844. Remembering his and Yüan Chên's old habit of asking Niu for political advice he laughingly addressed to him one day, when the two

elderly friends had been drinking heavily together, the following quatrain:

*My dusty cap-strings bob about, tickling my white locks;*
*Helped to my feet, half-fuddled, I ask your Excellence*
*In the rules on Superannuation is there any clause that bars*
*The subsequent singing of mad songs or reeling in a drunken dance?*

'Looking back on my career,' he writes, 'I used to think that the times when I was a Governor were the best. I enjoyed myself thoroughly and gave a lot of pleasure to my guests. I dressed well and ate well, and so did my wife and children. But since I came to the Eastern Capital I have found my quiet life there even more enjoyable. To be "specially posted" proved better than being a Governor; but the time since I retired altogether has turned out to be the happiest time of all.'

And in another poem (dated 844) he says:

*The world has allowed me to hand down a thousand of my poems,*
*Heaven has let my years draw out to more than three score.*
*I count over the happy chances that have helped me all my life—*
*In Lo-yang there cannot be a luckier man than I.*

In saying that 'the world has allowed' his poems to be preserved he is thinking, perhaps, of poets such as Tu Fu, of whose work only a minute fraction—in the proportion of 'one blade of grass to the whole of Mount T'ai', as Han Yü rhetorically puts it—was believed to have survived.

In 844 the monks of the Pei-chih Monastery, at the suggestion of Po Chü-i, widened a dangerous defile on the I, a tributary of the Lo River which gives Lo-yang its name. 'Ships and barges when passing this point frequently capsized and were damaged or destroyed. Often in the depths of winter the cries of sailors or of coolies harnessed to the boats, who had been flung into the freezing water bare foot and scantily clad, could be heard all night. I had long been determined, if it should ever be in my power to do so, to help these unfortunate people. In the fourth year of Hui Ch'ang the same idea occurred to Tao-yü, a monk of the Pei-chih Monastery, and he drew up a plan for widening the gorge. The poor gave their labour, the benevolent supplied the necessary materials, and at one stroke not only was a danger-point that had impeded traffic for centuries entirely removed, but endless future suffering avoided.' It may well be that, at a time when the attack on Buddhism was already in full swing, Po was particularly pleased to see the monks demonstrating that their existence could on occasion be of practical use to the community.

Perhaps to this year and certainly to the period between 843 and 846 belongs a set of twelve fables about birds and beasts. Po tells us that he had for a long time past been writing little pieces of this kind, sometimes to warn himself against avarice or other vices of old age, sometimes

merely to raise a smile. Yüan Chên and Liu Yü-hsi had both tried their hand at something of the same kind and had been intrigued by the novelty of the experiment. 'Now, as I read these pieces over to myself those two friends seem to rise up before me, and I cannot but feel sad.' The fables teem with allusions to Taoist and Buddhist literature, as also to popular beliefs about the habits of birds and beasts, some of which Po explains in footnotes. Several of the pieces seem to refer to contemporary happenings. For example,

*When the Midget-gnat finds itself caught in the web of the Dwarf-spider*
*They wrestle, rolling over and over, till both of them are dead.*
*Much like men of this Fleeting World who as age draws on,*
*Elect to spend their last moments in paying off old scores!*

This surely refers to the long drawn out political duel between Li Tê-yü and Niu Sêng-ju, which had now lasted for nearly a quarter of a century. In the winter of 844 when Li Tê-yü was 57 and Niu Sêng-ju was 65, Tê-yü who might well have allowed his old enemy to end his days quietly at Lo-yang chased him away first to T'ing-chou in semi-barbarous Fukien, and then (in the eleventh month) hundreds of miles further south, to Hsün-chou in Kwantung. Another fable which may also refer to current events is said by Po in a footnote to be about 'something which saddens me':

*The beast that is wounded by knife or spear will always bellow in its rage;*
*The bird that is caught in net or line twitters a doleful cry.*
*How comes it that the little lamb, although it has a voice,*
*Dies meekly at the butcher's gate, without one sound?*

It goes without saying that this is an allegory; Po's own footnote implies as much. Who or what then was the lamb that submitted silently to its fate? It is just possible, I think, that this is a reference to the virtual extinction of Buddhist monasticism in 845. There were at the time many high Buddhist dignitaries of great influence and authority and many highly placed lay patrons of Buddhism. Yet so far as we know, except by a few war-lords in outlying provinces, not a voice was raised in defence of the monasteries. This, if my suggestion can be accepted, is Po's only reference to the measures against Buddhism; but I do not feel by any means sure that I am right.

The following poem which refers to the popular belief that the swallow never builds on the fifth or sixth days of the ten-day week and that the magpie will not nest when the Year Star (Jupiter) is in the ascendant, is clearly without any hidden implications:

*The swallow bans Five and Six, the Year Star is the magpie's bane;*
*How comes it that the feathered tribes can know of such things as this?*
*I can only suppose that the Phoenix King promulgates a bird-calendar*
*In which the lucky and unlucky days are all clearly marked.*

On the twenty-first day of the third month of 845 Po gave a party to six other septuagenarians. As a matter of courtesy the Mayor of Lo-yang and another high official, both under seventy, were also invited. And so, if we are to take literally the poem that Po wrote on the occasion, was his little grandson of five, for he says:

*If I stagger in my drunken dance my grandson will hold me up.*

To Po the most interesting of his guests was probably Lu Chên (aged 81). On his arrival at Lo-yang some years before he had shown Po a collection of his poems. Many of them, he was touched to discover, were addressed to Yüan Chên. Yüan and Lu seem to have first become intimate about 804. Then in 809 they both lost their wives, and the common grief drew them still closer together. They continued to correspond in verse for many years.

On the first day of the fifth month of 845 he wrote the following note at the end of his *Works*:

'The first collection of my works, in fifty chapters (*chuan*) has a preface by Yüan Chên; to the second collection, in twenty chapters, I wrote a preface myself. There are now five additional chapters, to which I append this note. The whole collection in seventy-five chapters contains 3,840 pieces, great and small, in prose and verse. One copy is in the library of the Eastern Forest Monastery on the Lu Shan, another is in the library of the Nan-ch'an Monastery at Soochow, another is in the Tower of the Depository of Monastic Rules in the courtyard of the Begging-bowl Pagoda at the Shêng-shan Monastery in Lo-yang; another is in charge of my nephew Tortoise and another in that of my daughter's son, T'an Ko-t'ung, each of whom is to keep it in his house and hand it down to his descendants. With the copies that are in Japan, Korea and other countries and those that are in private hands at Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang I am not here concerned. Apart from this there also exists a collection of poems exchanged between myself and Yüan Chên in seventeen chapters, one of similar exchanges between myself and Liu Yü-hsi in five chapters and one consisting of poems about excursions and entertainments at Lo-yang in ten chapters. The writings contained in these separate collections have all been included in the main collection. Other works currently attributed to me but absent from the *Collected Works* are not authentic.'

Po mentions, as we have just seen, the copies of his *Works* which were in Japan. Of his immense popularity in that country I have already spoken, in connection with the traveller's tale that represented him as being eagerly awaited in a magic island in the East. At what date his poetry was first brought to Japan we do not know;[1] but strangely enough on the very day that he wrote the note at the end of his *Works*, the

[1] Certainly as early as 838.

Japanese Buddhist pilgrim Jikaku, fleeing from China disguised as a layman, set out from Ch'ang-an with a copy of Po's *Works* in his luggage, and passed through Lo-yang a week or two later. For several centuries to come 'The Literary Collection' or even 'The Collection' without further qualification meant in Japan the *Works* of Po Chü-i. The literature of the period abounds in references to them. For example, Murasaki, the authoress of the *Tale of Genji*, tells us in her diary that despite the prejudice against women studying Chinese, which was thought an unladylike occupation, 'Since the summer before last, very secretly, in odd moments when there happened to be no one about, I have been reading with Her Majesty the two books of Ballads. There has of course been no question of formal lessons; Her Majesty has merely picked up a little here and there, as she felt inclined. All the same, I have thought it best to say nothing about the matter to anybody.' The Ballads that she read with the Empress, to whom she was Lady-in-Waiting, were those contained in chapters three and four of Po Chü-i's *Works* as we have them to-day.

In the *Tale of Genji* the numerous references to Chinese poetry are all to poems either by Po or by his friends Yüan Chên and Liu Yü-hsi. The great eighth-century poets were barely known in Japan till far later. Li Po's works were mentioned at the end of the ninth century, but were known only to a restricted circle. Tu Fu is not mentioned, I think, till the fourteenth century. There was therefore at least a symbolic truth in the story (see above, p. 197) that in a far-off island a very special niche was reserved for Po Chu-i.

Undoubtedly the most important event at the end of his life, not only to Po himself but to his whole family, was the rise of his cousin Po Min-chung to the rank of Chief Minister. To understand how this came about we must glance once more at the political situation in the last two years of his life. The position of the eunuchs had been much weakened by the almost simultaneous collapse, about 840, of the Uighurs and Tibetans. This meant that fewer troops were required to garrison the northern and western frontiers and that the power of the Palace Armies (the two special corps controlled by the eunuchs) relative to that of the Regular troops was correspondingly decreased. In 845, however, there began to be a general feeling against the dictatorial methods of Li Tê-yü, and for the moment hostility against him united the eunuchs and the civil officers of the Throne. The Emperor Wu Tsung was completely in Li Tê-yü's hands; but Wu Tsung's health was failing and the Heir Apparent (no suitable member of the younger generation being available) was his uncle, Prince Kuang, whom the enemies of Li Tê-yü, led by Po Min-chung and backed by the eunuchs, hoped to use as their tool. Kuang, the thirteenth son of the Emperor

Hsien Tsung, was born in 810. When a child he was thought to be a little wanting. At about the age of twelve he had a severe illness, during the course of which (so the story ran) he was suddenly seen to be illumined by a mysterious blaze of light. He sat up in bed and pressed his hands together in a ceremonial posture, as though in the presence of high officials. His wet-nurse, who was looking after him, thought that he was delirious and sent for his brother the Emperor Mu Tsung, who merely patted him on the back, saying, 'This boy is the one bright spot in the family; there is nothing amiss with his wits.' Kuang grew up silent and secretive, and at Wu Tsung's Court (840–846) 'trying to get a remark out of Uncle Kuang' was a favourite sport. But from the moment of his accession (Wu Tsung died in the third month of 846) it became clear that under this monumental silence lay buried great decision of character. As Emperor 'Uncle Kuang' at once took the initiative in clearing away the old regime. In the fourth month he moved Li Tê-yü and his principal supporters to provincial posts, and made Po Min-chung Chief Minister; not long afterwards he began moving the exiled opponents of Li Tê-yü, including Po's friend Niu Sêng-ju, to posts nearer the Capital. The Taoist Chao Kuei-chên, who had played a large part in securing the moves against Buddhism, was executed, and many other Taoist leaders were exiled. The measures against Buddhism were formally withdrawn in the fifth month, but they had probably ceased to operate after Wu Tsung's death.

Po thus lived to see what proved to be the final swing of the pendulum. Political vendettas of one sort and another continued till the end of the dynasty; but the longest and most famous feud in Chinese political history was over. Niu Sêng-ju died in 847; the last of the Yangs, Po's factious relatives by marriage, seem to have died at about the same time. Li Tê-yü died in 849 at that most dreaded place of exile, Yai-chou, in the island of Hainan.

In the first week of 846, eating the Salad of Seven Fresh Herbs and the Wheaten Cakes that marked the festival of the New Year, Po thought of his friends Niu Sêng-ju, Yang Ssu-fu and Li Chio, at that time still in exile. What would they not give to be 'seeing the spring in Lo-yang'? It would be churlish not to make the most of it, and despite the protests of his family, who no doubt feared that he would overtax his strength, he went from party to party, from excursion to excursion. From this year and perhaps from the autumn, for he speaks of warm clothes and a lit stove, dates a poem that ends with the lines:

*They have put my bed beside the unpainted screen,*
*They have shifted my stove in front of the blue curtain.*
*I listen to my grandchild reading me a book,*
*I watch the servants heating up my soup.*

*With rapid pencil I answer the poems of friends,*
*I feel in my pocket and pull out medicine-money.*
*When this superintendence of trifling affairs is done*
*I lie back on my pillows and sleep with my face to the South.*

The two or three poems of 846 are his last surviving works. About the circumstances of his death nothing is known, save that it happened in the eighth month of that year. 'What in life I loved, felt, preferred, achieved or experienced, all my freedoms and restraints, down to the most trifling subjects and incidents, may be learnt from my Collected Works. There, in one chapter or another, all that there is to tell about me has been made known.' The story of Po Chü-i's life does indeed lie in his own writings, and when they cease all record stops as suddenly and undramatically as a clock that has run down.

# APPENDIX I

## PO'S MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS AND HEIR

In 841 or 842 Po wrote an inscription for his own tomb,[1] which is not usually included in his *Works*, but will be found in the anthology *Wên Yuan Ying Hua* (ch. 945). It bears the date 846 and he refers to himself as dying at the age of 74; but these particulars (as shown by internal evidence, such as the figure he gives for the total number of his poems) were clearly added after his death In it he names as his 'successor', that is to say, as the person who was to carry on the ancestral rites, a great-nephew called A-hsin. An eldest son could not be adopted for this purpose, as he was already the destined successor of his father A-hsin was almost certainly the second son of 'Tortoise' (Po Wei-tao), the eldest of the three nephews whom Po mentions. 'Tortoise' himself, being an eldest son, could not become Po Chu-i's successor. The skipping of a generation was usually avoided, but there was good precedent for it In A.D. 274 Hsun K'ai (*Chin Shu* 39), a great authority on ritual, having no son of his own, adopted a great-nephew as his successor in the lineage But some rough verses[2] by Po's wife make clear that A-hsin died soon after Po Chu-i and that another successor had to be found. The verses run:

*We had a noble son,*
*Who dressed poorly and stinted himself of food*
*That he might record the merits of his predecessor,*
*Intending to carve them on his grave stone.*
*But Heaven ordained otherwise,*
*Causing this good thought not to prosper*
*Now the present son has set up the stone,*
*In boundless pain and grief.*

Who was this 'present son', who became Po's heir after the death of A-hsin? According to the *New T'ang History*, ch 75, he was a nephew called Po Ching-shou. As he was not one of the three nephews whom Po enumerates in his tomb-inscription, he was presumably a nephew in the extended sense, that is to say, a first cousin once removed in the descendant (in this case, a father's brother's son's younger son) In 849 he came with Mrs Po Chu-i to Ch'ang-an and asked the best-known poet of the day, Li Shang-yin (*c* 810–*c*. 860), to write an inscription (C T W 780 12), for a memorial stone that was to be put up at the side of the avenue leading to Po's grave, which was a few miles south of Lo-yang. Of Po Ching-shou we hear nothing further; Po Wei-tao ('Tortoise') became Vice-Mayor of Ch'êng-tu, a post of considerable importance.

[1] As also one for Little Li, who died in the seventh month of 846.

[2] These verses were apparently carved on the Li Shang-yin memorial stone, probably under the main inscription. See *T'ang Wên Ts'ui*, LVIII.

# APPENDIX II

## THE TEXTS

THE best extant edition of Po Chu-i's *Works* is that printed in Japan in movable type in 1618 for Nawa Dōyen (1595–1648), pupil of the famous Confucian scholar Fujiwara Seika (1561–1619). Of this there is a copy in the British Museum It has been reprinted in the Basic Sinological Series and the *Ssu-pu Ts'ung K'an*. I have used the Basic Sinological Series, which has a certain number of trivial misprints, but is the most convenient edition to handle

The poems (without the prose) will be found in Wang Li-ming's *Po Hsiang-shan Shih Chi*, preface dated 1703, referred to by me as the *Poetical Works* I have also consulted the *Complete Poetry of the T'ang* (begun in 1703) and the *Complete T'ang Prose* (begun in 1814), as well as numerous anthologies in which Po's works occur. Variants are not as a rule numerous or important, except in the case of a few very popular works, such as the *Lute Girl* and the *Songs of Ch'in*, which probably circulated separately

Wei Ch'ing-chih (*c.* 1240) in *Shih-jên Yu Hsieh* ('Jade Powder from the Poets'), VIII 3, quotes the well-known poet Chang Lei (1052–1112) as saying, 'It is often thought that Po Chu-i came easily by his poems But once at a certain gentleman's house in Lo-yang I saw the original drafts of several poems by him There were so many changes and erasures that the final versions had hardly any resemblance to what he wrote to start with ' These changes may have been made partly at the time of composition; but they may also have been made in part at later dates, for Po speaks in 824 (LIII. 50) of the pleasure he gets from 'altering old verses' The variants are, however, relatively few because his poems, unlike those of Li Po, were not posthumously collected from friends, but were collected and edited by Po himself The earliest MS of Po's poems is Pelliot 2492 at the Bibliothèque Nationale (17 poems), dating probably from the ninth century

# ADDITIONAL NOTES

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| 11 | 1 | By '772' I mean the Western year which, though it begins a little earlier than the old Chinese year, corresponds in the main with the 772 of our calendar. |
| 11 | 3 | The modern provinces (such as Honan) did not exist in the ninth century. I use the names of these modern provinces merely for the convenience of readers who possess some geographical knowledge of modern China. |
| 11 | 33 | Mr. Wu, Po tells us in a note, was the elder brother of Wu Yuan-hêng, the Chief Minister who was assassinated in 815; he was, therefore, perhaps the Wu T'an mentioned in the *New T'ang History*, 74 A, fol. 37 |
| 13 | 34 | The last line of the poem achieves the association between 'parting' and 'grass' by an allusion to the 'Summons to a Hermit' (second century B.C.), one of the famous 'Elegies of Ch'u': 'My prince has wandered away and does not return; the spring grass is all a-growing and a-blowing' The poem will be found in *Wên Hsuan*, ch. XXXIII. The story (existing in many different versions) that Po at the age of 14 or 15 showed his spring grass poem to the famous poet Ku K'uang who, despite a strong prejudice against the younger poets, was immensely struck by it, is probably apocryphal. If such a thing had happened Po could hardly have failed to mention it in, for example, his letter on poetry to Yüan Chên (see above, p 107 *seq* ). |
| 15 | 34 | This passage of the *Ch'ieh Shih* is not found in the surviving editions of the book (which are known to be fragmentary), but it is quoted by Ch'ên Chên-sun (thirteenth century) in his brief chronology of Po's works, usually printed at the beginning of the *Poetical Works*. |
| 16 | 6 | A *fu* usually begins in prose and rises into rhymed verse. |
| 17 | 33 | All editions of the *Works* call him 'General Kao'; this is certainly a mistake for Ma. The two characters are identical in continuous cursive and confusion between these two surnames occurs elsewhere, e g the *Works* of Mêng Hao-jan (*Mêng Hsiang-yang Chi*), II. 21, where the title 'Given to Mr. Ma' has a variant 'Given to Mr. Kao' Po moralized again about Ma Sui's house in the third of the *Songs of Ch'in*. |
| 19 | 16 | 'robbed of breath . . .' See Chang Hêng's *fu*, 'The Eastern Capital', *Wên Hsuan*, ch. III. |
| 19 | 22 | It was in much the same terms that Han Yü, three years later, also appealed for patronage to Ch'ên Ching (Han Yü, *Works*, ch. XVII). |
| 25 | 1 | This grandmother was the niece (daughter of a younger brother) of Po Chü-i's grandfather and was therefore Po Chu-i's first cousin once removed as well as being his grandmother. Po's father had in fact married his first cousin's daughter (father's brother's daughter's daughter). Such a marriage was definitely forbidden by T'ang law (see *T'ang Lü Su I*, III. 2); but there is no evidence that any objection was raised in this particular instance. Law was only one of the standards by which moral issues were judged. |

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| 26 | 17 | For Ming-chun, see *Sung Kao Sêng Chuan*, ch. XXVII. |
| 26 | 28 | *kleśa*. In ordinary Sanskrit this word means 'suffering', and that was how it was generally understood by the Chinese. I do not know how it got the meaning defilement, which it seems to have in Pali Buddhism. |
| 29 | 40 | See Shelley Wang, *Life of Li Ho* (in Chinese), 1930, p. 17. |
| 29 | 43 | 'without a penny . . .' see *Works*, IX. 8, fifth poem. |
| 30 | 4 | The *Po Shih Liu T'ieh* was printed in the middle of the tenth century at Ch'êng-tu See *Sung Shih*, 479, fol. 22. |
| 33 | 16 | The poems (XIII. 61) written at Han-tan and Ming-chou, both in the southern tip of Hopei, seem to date from the winter of 803; but we know nothing further of his excursion in this direction. |
| 36 | 4 | Wang Pi. The pronunciation of the second element in the name is uncertain. |
| 36 | 21 | The *Shun Tsung Shih Lu* had been begun by a previous writer and Han Yu's version was in turn somewhat revised |
| 37 | 14 | Chief Minister. For this post, see p. 91. |
| 37 | 33 | There is no doubt that Wei is the Chief Minister to whom the letter is addressed. All the details given fit in with this, except the statement that Wei was appointed less than ten days after the Accession Actually fifteen days elapsed, and it is clear that ten is a textual error for twenty. |
| 41 | 37 | 'the duties were defined . . .' See *Old T'ang History*, 42. In the *New T'ang History* the text is so drastically cut down as to be unintelligible. |
| 43 | 3 | 'according to one passage . . ' Yuan, IX, 3 verso; translated by Hsu Sung-nien in *Anthologie de la Littérature Chinoise* (1933), p. 188 |
| 43 | 11 | In *Chinese Poems* (1946), p. 24 'Planting Bamboos', line 1, should read: 'I am unsuited to serve in a small town.' *1* is here used poetically for *hsien*. |
| 44 | 5 | The poem is best known in English as the 'Everlasting Wrong'. But *hên* here means 'the feeling of having done wrong', i.e. remorse. Compare *hui-hên*, the current term for 'remorse'. |
| 44 | 31 | *The Tale of Chi Pu*. See Lionel Giles, *Six Centuries at Tun-huang*, p 20. Chang Hu's joke (*T'ai-p'ing Kuang Chi*, 251) about the search for Yang Kuei-fei's soul in the 'Everlasting Remorse' reminding him of similar passages in Buddhist ballads about the search of Maudgalyayana for his mother's soul in hell was merely made to cap a similar joke of Po's about one of Chang Hu's poems |
| 46 | 41 | Writing in 809 Han Yu (*Works*, XXI) says that this post was given to 'those who had a general reputation for literary ability'. |
| 47 | 21 | Among the letters of appointment composed by Po in the Emperor's name are several which date from the period (811.4–814) when he had ceased to hold any official position For example, appointment of Chang Hung-ching as Chief Minister (XXXVII. 27); this took place in 814.6. Appointment of Li Chiang as Chief Minister (XXXVII. 28); this took place in 811.11. Of Ts'ui Ch'un as *shê-jên* (XXXVII. 30); date, 812 4 Posthumous honour for P'ei Chi (XXXVII. 31), who died in 813. Wei Kuan-chih appointed Chief Minister (XXXVII. 32); date, 814.12. Tu Yu's retirement (XXXVIII 34); date, 812.6. Wu Yüan-hêng appointed Chief Minister (XXXVIII. 42); date, 813.3. Han Yü appointed to the Board of History (XXXVIII. 44); date, 813.3. It looks as though when Po was preparing his first *Collected Works* |

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| | | in 824 he applied to the Han-lin for copies of documents composed by him, and was sent some wrong ones. It is strange, however, that he never troubled to look through them. |
| 47 | 36 | Li Shang-yin in his inscription on Po's monument, put up in 849 (*Complete T'ang Prose*, 780.10), says Po was examiner in 807. I here follow Po's own account, *Works*, XXX. 51. |
| 48 | 7 | In his preface to the *yo-fu* Po says they date from 809. In his preface to the *Songs of Ch'in* he says they date 'from the turn of the Chêng Yüan and Yuan Ho periods', which might mean about 804 to 810, but is very vague. Elsewhere (in the second lament on the death of T'ang Ch'u, *Works*, I. 10) he says he wrote the *Songs of Ch'in* 'at the beginning of Yüan Ho, when I was acting in a Censorial capacity', which means roughly 808–809 |
| 48 | 28 | The address to the soul of his wife's aunt (XXIII 83) is dated 'second year of Yuan Ho'. But the cyclical signs for day, month and year show that the 2 is a mistake for 3 |
| 48 | 35 | 'seven poems', i e. I. 9, XIV. 77, XIV 80, XV. 95, XVII. 2, XIX. 38, and LXIX. 81. |
| 49 | 20 | The chronology of Po's portraits is difficult. His own indications are inconsistent and it is possible that there were four portraits, belonging to 807, 811, 817 and 842 |
| 50 | 14 | For An Lu-shan's descent, see my forthcoming work on Li Po His original name was Ya-lo-shan, a transcription of something like Atlok-shan, which according to the *Old T'ang History* (200 A) is the Turkic for 'strife'. |
| 50 | 33 | 'Holy man' may, however, in this context merely mean 'Emperor'. |
| 51 | 20 | The Li came from the north-west not the north-east frontier. The Chêng came from Honan But the Lu came from Fan-yang, the starting-point of the revolution; the two main branches of the Ts'ui came from somewhat further south in Hopei, and the Wang from T'ai-yuan in Shansi. These families had in some cases only an historical connection with the localities after which they were named. Po's friend Li Chien (see above, p. 97) was a 'Li of Lung-hsi'. This did not mean that he possessed lands at Lung-hsi or indeed had ever set foot there. The year before Li Chien was born (A.D. 764) Lung-hsi was conquered by the Tibetans and had remained in their hands ever since. Po was a 'Po of T'ai-yuan', but he does not seem ever to have been there. |
| 51 | 20 | Apart from the Li family, these families were known collectively as the Shan-tung Clans, the term Shan-tung ('east of the Mountain') being applied to the whole area east of the Hua-shan and having nothing to do with the name of the modern province Shantung. |
| 52 | 2 | 'Sided with him'. See *New T'ang History*, 115.4, and *Wên Yüan Ying Hua*, 649. |
| 52 | 7 | See *New T'ang History*, 115, Life of Ti Jên-chieh, and 205, Life of Wu I-tsung. |
| 52 | 32 | In 807 fifteen out of twenty-three *chieh-tu-shih* (district commanders) were not sending in taxes or census returns; see *Mirror* under that year, and the Commentary of Hu San-hsing. |
| 52 | 32 | I use the term Tartar to cover Turk, Mongol and Tungus peoples. |
| 52 | 19 | A poem by Tu Fu. This is the fourth of the five 'Second Departure for |

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| | | the Frontier' poems Tu Fu goes on to speak of luxury imports, and it is possible that rice too was only meant for An Lu-shan and his staff Everything turns on whether one takes *yun-fan* in the sense of 'cloud-like sails' or 'masses of sails'. Many other sources (e g. *New T'ang History*, 225 A. 1) speak in a general way about An Lu-shan's purchases; but I do not think the sea route is mentioned elsewhere. |
| 27 | 42 | A passage in C.T W 967 seems to show that *chin-shih* had to be guaranteed in this way. H.T.S. 45 mentions guarantees only in connection with the Placing Examinations. |
| 55 | 35 | In the fourth line of the letter *êrh wan* (twice ten thousand) is a mistake for *i-wan* (once ten thousand) At no period did the Chinese get horses for as little as twenty-five pieces of silk, and we know that at this time they were paying fifty pieces. I do not think that Pelliot and Chavannes, *Un Traité Manichéen* . ., p. 241, have understood this passage correctly, nor is the date they give to the letter a possible one, for it contains a reference to the drought of 809 and occurs in the middle of a group of documents all of which can be shown to date from 809. The 'piece' of silk represented about a day's work The required amount could have been produced by 50,000 women each putting in ten days' work a year |
| 56 | 14 | See G. H. Luce, 'The Ancient Pyu', *Burma Research Society's Journal*, XXVII, Part 3, 1937 |
| 56 | 17 | The letter to the Pyu might conceivably date from 808, but the neighbouring documents date from 809, and that date is likely for the letter also. |
| 57 | 3 | The Palace Armies were known as 'Shên Ts'ê Armies'. Despite some evidence to the contrary, I incline to think that 'Shên Ts'ê' means 'Holy Plan'. |
| 59 | 3 | 'The Charcoal Seller.' Compare 170 *Chinese Poems*, p. 137; also the same story as told by Han Yu in ch I of his 'Reign of Shun Tsung'. |
| 59 | 27 | Line 15 of 'The Man who Dreamed of Fairies' (170 *Chinese Poems*, p. 132) should read: 'An-ch'i Shêng, Hsien-mên and the rest', these being names of Immortals. |
| 62 | 24 | *Yin* and *yang*. The female and male (negative and positive) constituents in Nature; see above, p 42. The theory that hate can kill runs strong in Far Eastern belief throughout the ages. |
| 66 | 13 | About four years later in his 'Escorting Ho Chien' (*Works*, XX 4) Han Yu speaks with great respect of Yang Ch'êng, and almost all we know about him is derived from the sympathetic account of Yang Ch'êng's career given in the fourth chapter of the *Reign of Shun Tsung*, written by Han Yu and others. |
| 67 | 27 | Yang Ch'êng's dates are usually given as 736–805; but there is no real evidence that he died in 805; it might well have been somewhat earlier. |
| 69 | 3 | The references to Yuan Chên show that the poem dates some time after the summer of 809 Fan Tsung-shih died at Lo-yang in 810; but the poem contains no indication whether it was written before or after his death |
| 69 | 5 | See Han Yu's epitaph on Yuan Chên's wife, *Works*, XXIV. 8 |
| 69 | 35 | The 'long ago' at the close of 'The Pitcher' is not literal. Actually the poem clearly dates from the spring of 810; but I have not thought it worth while to change the phrasing of the translation |

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| 70 | 1 | For Yuan's love-affair, see *Complete T'ang Poems*, Yuan Chên, ch. XXVII, and Po, XV. 81. For his wife's name, see *T'ang Shih Chi Shih*, XXXVII. 4. I do not believe that 'The Story of Ts'ui Ying-ying' (*More Translations*, p. 68) is really by Yuan Chên; but the question is too complicated to discuss here. See above, p. 82. |
| 74 | 29 *et seq.* | *The Lankāvatāra* has been translated by T. Suzuki; the *Saddharma-pundarīka* by Kern in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XXI The *Sūtra on the Twelve Virtues of Asceticism* has not been translated. The *Vimalakīrti* has been translated in the *Eastern Buddhist*, vols II to IV; for his legend, see below, p. 195. |
| 75 | 22 | To the period before his retirement, possibly to as early as 809, belongs the long poem 'Chu-Ch'ên Village', see *Chinese Poems* (1946), p. 136. The poem (I. 8) 'Climbing to the Lo-yu Gardens and looking into the distance', with its scornful question 'Who is this coming up the south-north road in his grand coach?' almost certainly refers to the return of Li Chi-fu and dates from 811.1. It sounds to us pretty harmless, but according to Po it 'caused the head of Government (i.e. Li Chi-fu himself) to "clutch his own wrist" (a sign of consternation)', and according to Yuan Chên (XXI. 2) this line was still 'on the lips of everyone at Ch'ang-an' in 816. The Lo-yu Gardens were a few miles south-east of Ch'ang-an, and from them one looked down on the road that ran southward over the Ch'in-ling hills. |
| 77 | 21 | About 1780 another famous scholar, Pi Yuan, got stuck on the Hua Shan and had to be first drugged into unconsciousness and then hauled down wrapped in a carpet. See Hsieh Chên-ting's *T'êng T'ai Hua Shan Chi*, 1804. |
| 78 | 24 | I use the word 'cotton' here in an extended sense. Actually cotton was not grown in China proper at this period. |
| 78 | 41 | 'foul driving'. Literally 'improper meeting', metaphor derived from hunting In the old days of hunting in war-chariots (down to the third century B.C.) one was not allowed to drive out of one's straight course in order to meet approaching game, presumably because if one did so one would take game belonging to another chariot in the hunting-line. Compare *Mencius*, III. 2. I. 4, and the long note on this phrase by Chiao Hsun (1763–1820) in his *Mêng Tzu Chêng I.* |
| 80 | 3 | Buckwheat is very susceptible to frost and ought to be cut (as the Chinese sources all stress) before the first frosts, even if part of the crop is still only in flower. I do not think, however, that this poem is intended as a criticism on the agricultural methods of the village. |
| 88 | 2 | One of a series 'in the manner of T'ao Ch'ien'. The 'four or five years' is of course inconclusive, but 814 seems to fit better than 813. Po parted from Yuan Chên in 810 and from his friends at the Capital in the summer of 811. |
| 91 | 35 | Tu Yu's grandson, i.e. Tu Mu (803–852). See *Complete T'ang Prose*, 755, fol. 21. Li K'an, the person into whose mouth the slander on Po is put by Tu Yu, seems to be fictitious. |
| 95 | 28 | For the second Mrs. Yüan, see *T'ang Shih Chi Shih*, LXXVIII. 5. 95. 28. |
| 100 | 14 | I shall not deal with the undated letter to the Master of Law Chi (V. 32) which raises the usual question: 'How is it that what is asserted in one Scripture is denied in another?' The interest of the letter is |

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| | | diminished by the fact that we know nothing of the Master Chi nor of the circumstances under which the letter was written. |
| 100 | 38 | Most of our knowledge about the prostitute quarter in Ch'ang-an comes from the *Pei Li Chih* of Sun Ch'i, written in about 890 |
| 102 | 17 | Taboo. *Ming-chiao* (literally, name-teaching) is here used in its narrower sense, i.e. the ritually correct use of words. It sometimes means Confucian ordinances and injunctions in general. |
| 102 | 27 | 'Someone ' According to some accounts this was Yuan Chên. But this is unlikely, as he was in mourning at the time and consequently debarred from public controversy. |
| 104 | 4 | 'Ten years later. . . .' Yuan Chên's preface to Po's *Collected Works* is dated 824.12 10; but Po himself in the preface to his later collection (828) speaks of the earlier collection as dating from 825. |
| 104 | 8 | The further story of the efforts to discover Wu Yuan-hêng's murderer or murderers is as follows: two days after the reward was offered information given by two officers of the Palace Army led to the arrest of eight men, who were put on trial and executed on the twenty-eighth of the sixth month. But the evidence produced was very inadequate and it was still felt that the mystery of Wu's death had not been cleared up. Five years later documents were found recording payments made for the assassination The persons named were arrested, and it seemed as though at last the mystery was solved But the defence of those named in the list proved to be that though they had received the payments, they had not committed the murder. What had happened (they said) was that, as soon as they heard of Wu's death, they went to a Separatist general who they knew wanted to get Wu Yüan-hêng out of the way, claimed to have committed the crime and received payment for their supposed services. It seemed as if this story, improbable though it sounded, was in fact true, and the mystery of Wu Yuan-hêng's assassination remained and still remains as impenetrable as ever. |
| 109 | 14 | Versions of the first, third and fifth of these poems will be found in Mrs. Ayscough's *Tu Fu*, vol. I, pp. 330, 332, 311, of the second poem in her *Fir-flower Tablets*, p. 109. The fourth is merely a piece of strategic advice couched in verse and has not, I think, been translated. No. 2 will also be found in my *Chinese Poems* (1917), of which there is a copy in the London Library. The couplet to which Po refers is from the long poem 'Journey to Fêng-hsien' (Ayscough's *Tu Fu*, vol. I, p. 193), written in 755 11 after arriving at Fêng-hsien and finding that his child had died of starvation During the journey he had passed close to the Hot Springs, where the Emperor and his mistress Yang Kuei-fei were disporting themselves. The whole poem is the fiercest denunciation of social injustice ever penned, and to suggest, as Po does, that only one couplet in it points a moral is grotesque |
| 111 | 7 | For T'ang Ch'u see *Old T'ang History*, 160, and Po's *Works*, I. 10. |
| 112 | 12 | After saying that his 'miscellaneous' poems may be discarded, Po pays a tribute to Wei Ying-wu, the poet who was Governor of Soochow when he stayed there as a boy, about 786 Wei's didactic poems are few, but they clearly had a great influence on Po Chü-i. For example, his 'Watching the Reapers' (*Chinese Poems*, 1946, p. 122) is a close |

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| | | imitation of Wei's 'Watching the Field-labourers' (*Kuan T'ien Chia*), to be found in ch. VI of all editions of his poems |
| | | The mention of Wei Ying-wu is relevant to what follows, because Wei's work was not appreciated till after his death But by coming a little too soon it interrupts the argument and I have thought it better to notice it here rather than in the main text of my book. |
| 113 | 12 | 'hundreds, thousands of years . . .' Po probably means 'in the distant future'. But it would be possible to interpret *ch'ien-pai* in the sense 'one thousand one hundred', and I should have liked to do so, for it was in 1915 that I began to read Po's poems. |
| 113 | 28 | The collection was to contain ballads by Chang Chi, songs by Li Shên, tone-pattern poems by Lu Kung and Yang Chu-yuan, and quatrains by Tou Mou and Yüan Chên's cousin Yuan Tsung-chien. Had the collection been made it might have preserved much that is now lost; for of these poets Yang Chu-yuan is the only one who is at all adequately represented by his surviving works. |
| 114 | 13 | If Po ever received Yuan's letter on poetry it must have been before he reached Chiang-chou; see Po's letter to Yuan, 817 4.10 (*Works*, XXVIII 34). |
| 116 | 22 | The 'Yuan Ho thirteenth year of XXIII. 86 is a mistake for 'twelfth year', as is shown by the cyclical signs and the mention of an intercalary month *Chinese Poems*, 1946, p. 169, should be placed in 817 and revised accordingly, i.e 'we are but two brothers', and 'this spring you came back'. |
| 117 | 20 | *Hsia-mo* does not mean 'toad', as usually translated, but *rana rugosa*, a Far Eastern species of frog. |
| 117 | 26 | 'a ballad to fit her tune.' *Fan* here has the same sense as in *fan-i*, 'translate'. Witter Bynner's 'a long song concerning a guitar' does not give the meaning. |
| 119 | 31 | Hsiung Ju-têng was a poet of some reputation. |
| 119 | 42 | As given in Yuan's *Works* (XX. 2) the poem is worded slightly differently |
| 122 | 11 | 'All these people ' This use of *t'a* as a demonstrative is a colloquialism the force of which it is impossible to render in English |
| 122 | 31 | *lien ch'u*. I think *ch'u* is a familiar form of the second person singular, as it appears often to be in the *Yu Hsien K'u* ('Cave of the Amorous Fairies'), where the Japanese editions gloss it as *nanji*, 'thou'. |
| 124 | 26 | Inscription by Liu K'o See *Bulletin de l'École d'Extrême-Orient*, XXIV. 59 It is said that Liu K'o was himself at one time a Buddhist monk |
| 125 | 18 | The visit to the Ta Lin certainly took place in 818, not 817 'Yuan Ho 2' should read 'Yüan Ho. 3'. |
| 125 | 35 | The three visitors of 798 were (1) Hsiao Ts'un (*T'ang Shu*, 202), son of the well-known literary man Hsiao Ying-shih. He had a house on the Lu Shan (2) Wei Hung-chien, passed the Palace Examinations in 785. (3) Li P'o, a famous recluse, appointed Omissioner in 806, but did not take up the post. One of Han Yü's most famous works is a letter to Li P'o, written in 808.12, urging him to put his services at the disposal of the State. |
| 135 | 14 | Imperial statement; see *T'ang Hui Yao*, 76. 3. |
| 135 | 17 | The reference is to *Chou Li*, XLIII (Basic Sinological Series). |
| 143 | 42 | Picture. See *Complete T'ang Poems*, XIV. 49. |

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| 148 | 20 | All these prayers, as the cyclical dates show, belong to 823. The 'Ch'ang Ch'ing second year' of the text is a mistake. |
| 149 | 34 | 'Eight years old.' 'Nine', according to Chinese reckoning. The 'seven' of VIII. 98 is apparently a mistake for 'nine'. |
| 151 | 33 | The name Lu-shui is written sometimes with a character meaning 'green' and sometimes with one meaning 'limpid' (literally, 'put through a strainer'). It is also the name of a tributary of the Hsiang River in Hunan. |
| 152 | 9 | Po seems to use *shêng* in the sense of the phrase or 'bar' that corresponded to a line of verse. Cf. LVI. 103, last line but one. |
| 155 | 34 | The Tun-huang dance-notation is discussed by Lo Yung and Yeh Yu-hua in *Fortieth Ann. Papers* (Nat. Univ., Peking), 1940; for a survival of the terms in eighteen-century Japan, see *Zoku Konyō Manroku*, by Aoki Konyō (*Hyakka Setsuin*, ch. vii). |
| 155 | 41 | Persian fiddle. I take the *hu-ch'in* to have been in T'ang as in later times a two-stringed instrument played with a bow. The *sê* ('psaltery') was a large twenty-five-stringed zither which rested on a low stand. |
| 156 | 4 | The hour of the Ox was 1–3 a.m.; the hour of the Fowl (Cock), 5–7 p.m. |
| 169 | 21 | The *Old T'ang History* (reign of Wên Tsung) gives third month, seventeenth day, as the date of Po's appointment to the Palace Library. But he speaks of himself as already holding it in a poem (LV. 84. 2) headed 'early spring'. |
| 171 | 29 | For Hui-hsiu, see *Sung Shu*, 71. 6. 'grey clouds' is in allusion to a poem by Chiang Yen (444–505) in imitation of the style of Hui-hsiu. |
| 173 | 35 | See *Shih Shuo Hsin Yu*, III. 1. 27, and commentary. |
| 176 | 38 | The Tun-huang MS is dated *jên-shên*, i.e. probably 853. The other two poems are by Shên Ch'uan-shih (died 835, fourth month, according to *Old T'ang History*, XVII. B, fol. 15) and the famous poet Wang Chien. Other items brought back by Jikaku were Wang Chien's poems and a picture of the 'inhabitants of Persia'. |
| 178 | 36 | Ts'ui appears to have quoted *Mencius*, I. 2. VII (Legge, p. 42), rather inaccurately, from memory. |
| 180 | 41 | 'Seventh month.' There are slight chronological difficulties, with which I will not here deal. |
| 186 | 4 | For the visit to Yang Ju-shih and subsequent arrival of Hsia-kuei, see *Poetical Works*, Supplement I, fol. 5. |
| 186 | 7 | For Hsiang Ch'ang (*c* A.D. 40) see *Hou Han Shu*, 113. |
| 191 | 20 | In the reference to 'the late Ju-man' in LXI. 67, 1. 2, the *-man* has been added by an ignorant scribe. The person meant is Chih-ju, who died in 835. For Ju-man (still alive in 842) see Takakusu, LI. 249 (*Ching-tê-lu*, 6) |
| 192 | 15 | 'brought ruin.' Some charge was generally trumped up against anyone who was too obviously rich, and his possessions were seized by the Government or the eunuchs. |
| 193 | 34 | For a discussion of the term *mamati*, see Sylvain Lévi, in *Journal Asiatique*, March and July, 1915. |
| 196 | 9 | For the battle of Kai-hsia see *Shih Chi*, ch VII. |
| 197 | 34 | 'curious story'. See *T'ai P'ing Kuang Chi*, 48 3. The *I Shih* is probably by Lu Chao who lived about 820–880. |

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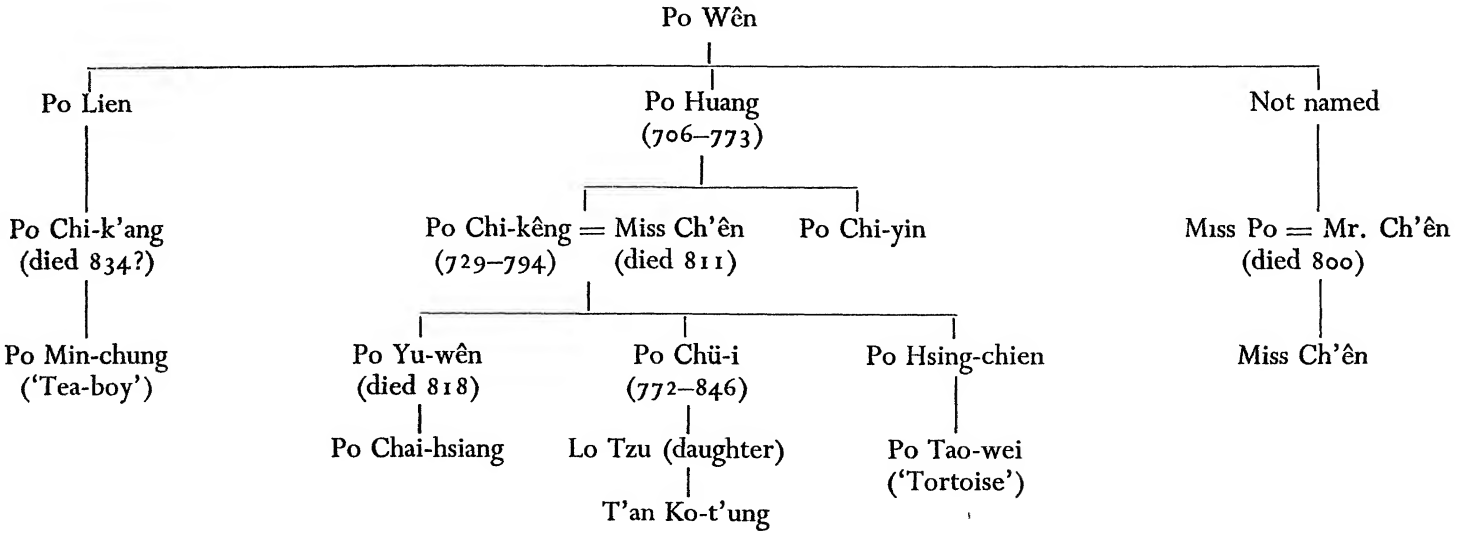
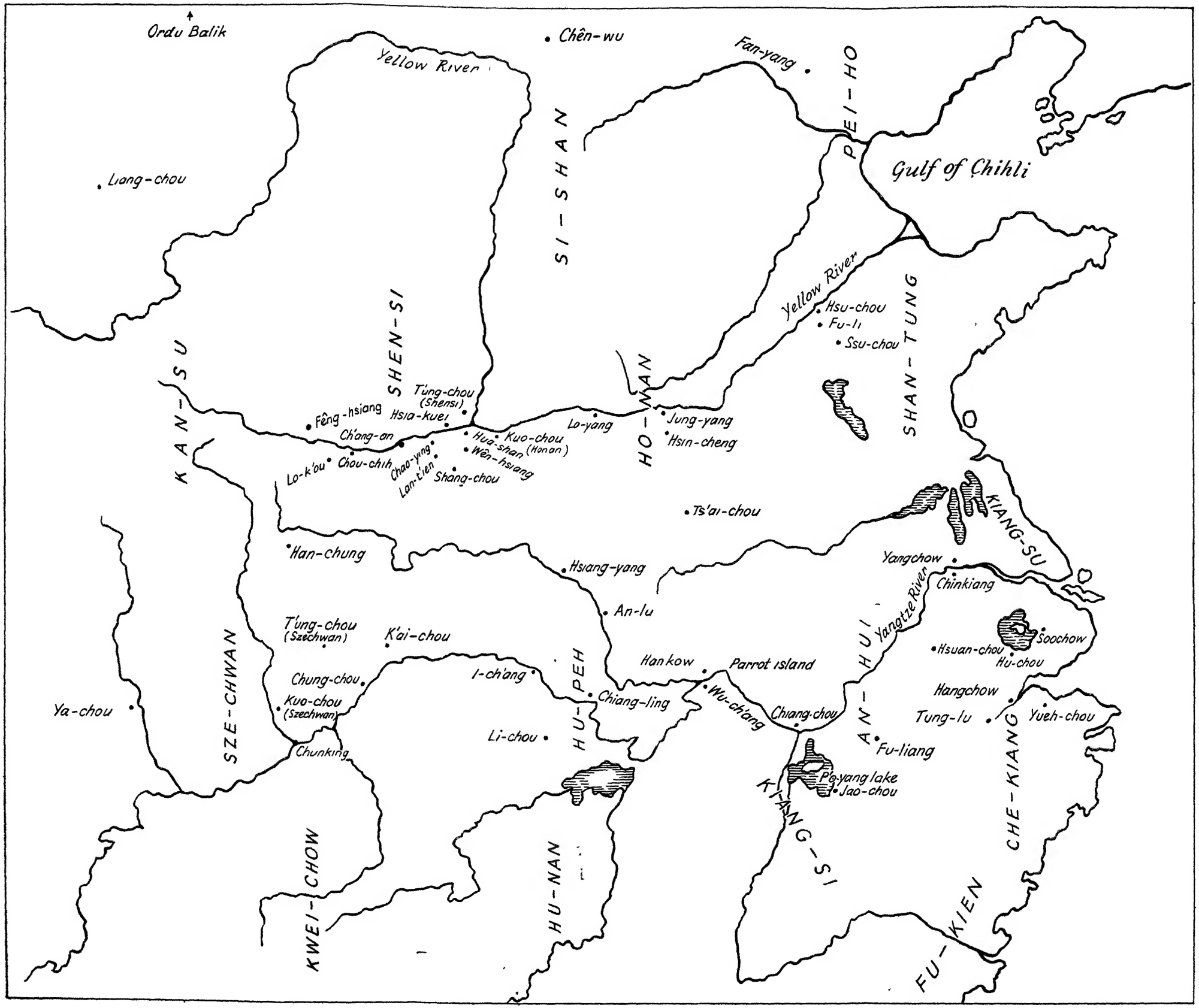
| 202 | 15 | For Liu's illness, see LXVIII. 60. |
| 203 | 31 | The execution of Uighurs in Ch'ang-an and elsewhere is mentioned only in the *Nyūtō Kōki* of Jikaku, p. 88. |
| 204 | 25 | The attempt to deprive the eunuchs of the command of the two Palace Armies is described by Jikaku, p. 100. |
| 204 | 39 | This account of the measures against Buddhism is chiefly based on Jikaku's book. |
| 205 | 31 | The materials taken from monasteries were used for public purposes. To what extent the buildings themselves were destroyed is not clear, as the term *fei*, used in this connection, does not necessarily mean more than 'abandoned'. But if roofing materials were taken a great deal of structural damage must have been done before the restoration of Buddhism in the summer of 846. |
| 207 | 22 | For Ju-man's portrait, see *Complete T'ang Prose*, 677. |
| 207 | 35 | 'Cap and Coach' are symbols of office. |
| 208 | 28 | 'No party is any fun.' Allusion to *Shih Shuo Hsin Yu*, B. I. 43, commentary. |
| 208 | 39 | Tu Yüan-ying died in 832. |
| 209 | 6 | 'There is a story . . .', see Li Shang-yin's *Works*, IV. 23. Compare the poem (Po, LXIX. 84. 6) 'Being visited by Chief Minister Li, Warden of the Eastern Capital . . .', and the line 'Five Ministers; one fisherman'. The Li in question was presumably Li Shih, Warden from 845 to 846; unless indeed Li is a mistake for Niu. Niu Sêng-ju was Warden in 842, a more likely date for the poem. |
| 209 | 40 | An inscription that Po wrote in the summer of 843, to be placed on some rocks in Niu Sêng-ju's garden, will be found in *Complete T'ang Prose*, 676. |
| 210 | 3 | 'tickling.' *chiang* is a misprint for *lieh*. |
| 212, | note | '838 . . .' The story of the Japanese Emperor Saga (reigned 810–823) quoting Po is probably apocryphal, see *Matsui . . . Ronbunshū*, 1933, p. 233, Kaneko H.: *Hakushi Bunshū torai ni tsuite*. |
| 215 | 8 | 'Restraints.' Reading *pi* not *yü*. |
| 215 | 13 | The actual number of pieces contained in the most complete extant edition of Po's *Works* (the Japanese edition of 1618) is 3,578. It would therefore seem (allowing for the fact that one or two certainly authentic pieces are not included in the 1618 edition) that we have lost about 260 works of prose and verse. Chapters 72 to 75 have disappeared altogether, and chapter 71 is obviously incomplete. The well-known statesman T'ao K'u (903–970 A.D.), who in 953 wrote an inscription recording the rebuilding of Po's household-shrine at Lo-yang, speaks of his *Works* as being in seventy chapters. T'ao was a Doctor of the Han-lin Academy and had been a librarian in the Hall of Assembled Worthies. It is evident from the inscription that he knew Po's *Works* well and it is probable that in speaking of 'seventy chapters' he is giving exact bibliographical information and not merely using seventy as a round number. It would seem that the last five chapters had disappeared or become rare by the middle of the tenth century, probably before the *Works* were first printed. The statements in the biographical notice of the *Old T'ang History* and of the bibliographical section of the *New T'ang History* that the *Works* were in seventy-five chapters are probably derived |

from Po's present statement and are not evidence that the compilers of these histories had seen an edition in seventy-five chapters.

The copies sent to monasteries may well have been lost when the monks hid their treasures in 845; those entrusted to Tortoise and the grandson may have perished in the fires that devastated Ch'ang-an during the Huang Ch'ao revolution (881–883). We are told that when Li K'o-yung recaptured the city in 883 'hardly a house was left standing'. We now that Po's wife went to Ch'ang-an in 849, and the rest of the family may have gone with her.

## THE PO FAMILY




Ordu Balik
Chên-wu
Yellow River
Fan-yang
PEI-HO
SI-SHAN
Gulf of Chihli
Liang-chou
KAN-SU
SHEN-SI
HO-WAN
Yellow River
SHAN-TUNG
Hsu-chou
Fu-li
Ssu-chou
T'ung-chou (Shensi)
Fêng-hsiang
Hsia-kuei
Ch'ang-an
Lo-yang
Jung-yang
Hsin-cheng
Hua-shan
Kuo-chou (Honan)
Wên-hsiang
Lo-k'ou
Chou-chih
Chao-yng
Lan-t'ien
Shang-chou
Ts'ai-chou
KIANG-SU
Han-chung
Hsiang-yang
Yangchow
Chinkiang
An-lu
Yangtze River
T'ung-chou (Szechwan)
K'ai-chou
Soochow
Hsuan-chou
Hu-chou
Hankow
Parrot island
Chung-chou
I-ch'ang
Hangchow
Kuo-chou (Szechwan)
Chiang-ling
Wu-ch'ang
Chiang-chou
Tung-lu
Yueh-chou
Ya-chou
SZE-CHWAN
Li-chou
HU-PEH
AN-HUI
Fu-liang
Chunking
Po-yang lake
Jao-chou
KIANG-SI
CHE-KIANG
KWEI-CHOW
HU-NAN
FU-KIEN