

*A Preface by Lin Ch'in-nan*

AROUND THE third or the fourth month of the year 1924 (the thirteenth year of the Republic), I arrived in Peking, and the first thing I did was to pay my respects to Mr. Lin Ch'in-nan. . . . I had told him about *Liu Fang Chih* (留芳記), the novel I was working on at that time, and had requested him to write a preface for it, which he kindly promised to do. On this occasion I showed him the manuscript of the novel, and asked him for the preface. He was at that time seventy-three years old, but appeared to be in robust health, full of talk and fun. . . . In no more than three days' time the preface was delivered to my house. It read as follows:

Preface: Over a decade ago, [the writer] Mr. Pao T'ien-hsiao (包天笑) made a translation of the second volume of *Joan Haste* (迦茵小傳) by Sir Henry Rider Haggard. I read and marvelled at it, so I dug out the original and completed the translation of the book. This I told T'ien-hsiao in a letter, so we became friends without having actually met. When he came to Peking three years ago, we had a good talk over some cups of wine, and he proved to be a kindred spirit. After the fall of the Ch'ing dynasty, I had written a novel *Ching-hua bi-hsueh lu* (京華碧血錄), which told about happenings in the Reform period and the Boxer Uprising in the last years of the Emperor Kuang-hsu (光緒). I knew as I wrote that certain parts of the story fell short of details. Now T'ien-hsiao's novel *Liu Fang Chih* contains a full account of the follies committed in those years, and what he wrote was well-based on facts.

The plot of the novel centres round Mr. Mei and his grandson. In this way of writing it bears resemblance to *The Story of Ta-wan*, a work by the Grand Historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien, and K'ung Shang-ren's drama, *The Peach Blossom Fan*. . . . K'ung Shang-ren actually wanted to tell the story of how the [Ming] Empire moved the capital to south of the Yangtze River then met its doom, but readers of the play would take it to be a romance between a talented scholar and a beautiful girl, without realizing that the author was venting his pent-up grief. T'ien-hsiao's novel also has this idea behind it. . . .

Lin Shu, a native of Fukien,  
Third month of the year 1924.

Mr. Lin, himself a master of prose and an outstanding historian, has over-praised me by comparing me to Ssu-ma Ch'ien and K'ung Shang-ren. Nevertheless, his preface carries a definite hint, which he has brought out by a gesture that can be compared to borrowing somebody else's cup of wine to perform one's own libation ceremony. The preface was written in a lovely, flowing hand on two sheets of letter-paper, and when I published *Liu Fang Chih* I crowned the book with his calligraphy reproduced on the very first page.

PAO T' IEN-HSIAO (1875-1973),  
*Memoirs of Ch'uan-ying Tower* (鈞影樓回憶錄) Vol. 2,  
Ta-hua Publishers, Hong Kong, 1973.