

魯迅：弟兄

## Brothers

By Lu Hsun (1881-1936)

Translated by William A. Lyell, Jr.

THERE WAS never any official business to take care of at the Bureau of Public Welfare. A few clerks sat around the office chatting about their family affairs as was their custom. Ch'in Yi-t'ang, the stem of a water-pipe cupped in his hands, was coughing so hard that he couldn't catch his breath, and his colleagues had no choice but to stop talking until he did. At length he raised his flushed and swollen face and spoke while still trying to catch his breath: "And yesterday they went at it again. Fought all the way from inside the house right out to the front gate. No matter how I yelled, I still couldn't stop them." Beneath a few scattered strands of gray whiskers his lips were still trembling. "Number Three says that the loss that Number Five took on public bonds cannot be counted as a family debt and he ought to make good the sum himself."

"See, it was still over money," observed Chang P'ei-chun expansively as he rose from a dilapidated lounge-chair, his deepest eyes radiating benevolence. "I really can't see why brothers of the same family should be so petty about what's your's and what's mine. After all, it all amounts to the same thing in the end, doesn't it?"

"Ah, but where else can one find a pair like you and *your* brother, Chang P'ei-chun?" asked Ch'in Yi-t'ang.

"It's just that we don't divide things up between us so closely that's all. What's mine is his and what's his is mine. The concepts of *money* and *property* simply never enter our thoughts and so we never have any trouble. Whenever I hear of a family that's about to split up, I always tell them how it is with me and my brother and beg them not to be so picayune. If you'd just do the same thing with your son and show him the light, Mr. Ch'in —"

"I can't do any good," said Mr. Ch'in

shaking his head.

"It probably wouldn't work out at that," observed Wang Yueh-sheng. Wang gazed admiringly into Chang P'ei-chun's eyes. "There aren't many in the world like you and your brother. I've never seen the likes of it. Why, there's simply no trace of a selfish thought in either one of you. That's a very rare thing."

"Fought all the way from inside the house right out to the front gate," mumbled Ch'in Yi-t'ang.

"Is your younger brother as busy as ever?" asked Wang Yueh-sheng.

"He still teaches eighteen hours every week and has ninety-three compositions to correct on top of that. It's simply too much for one man to handle. He's been out on sick leave these past few days, you know. Has a temperature. Probably a touch of cold."

"Now that's something you really ought to be careful about," said Yueh-sheng in serious tones. "This morning's paper said there's a seasonal epidemic going around right now."

This unexpected intelligence gave P'ei-chun quite a start. He asked immediately, "Epidemic of what?"

"I'm not really all that clear about it myself—some kind of fever or other, I think."

P'ei-chun strode off hurriedly to the reading room. Yueh-sheng sighed and escorted P'ei-chun's flying figure through the door with admiring glances. Then he directed his attention to Mr. Ch'in. "There really aren't many like that around anymore. Why, the two of them are like a single individual. If all the brothers in the world were like that, how would trouble get started in a family in the first place? I wish I could learn how to—"

"Said that money lost on public bonds

couldn't be treated as a family debt," continued Mr. Ch'in bitterly as he put the touch-paper he had just used to light his water-pipe back into its holder.

For a short while the office was sunk in silence, a silence that was soon broken by P'ei-chun's footsteps and the sound of his voice calling to the office-boy. He sounded as though he were on the brink of some great disaster; he was stammering and his voice trembled as he spoke. He told the office-boy to phone Doctor P'u, P'u-t'i ssu<sup>1</sup>, and tell him to go over to Chang P'ei-chun's place at the T'ung Hsing Apartments to pay a house call.

At this point Yueh-sheng realized that P'ei-chun must really be wrought up. To be sure he had always known of P'ei-chun's faith in Western medicine, but he also knew that P'ei-chun lived on a limited income and was very frugal. Since, despite all this, he had just now called the best known and most expensive doctor in the area, Yueh-sheng knew it must be something serious. He went out to see what was the matter and saw P'ei-chun standing there, pale as could be, listening while the office-boy made the phone call.

"What is it?"

"The paper says . . . says that what's going around is scarlet . . . scarlet fever. When I, when I came to the bureau this afternoon that's just what Ching-fu's face was like—red all over . . . The doctor's gone out on his rounds already? Ask them . . . ask them to try to get him by phone and tell him to come right away. The T'ung Hsing Apartments . . . the T'ung Hsing Apartments . . ."

He waited while the office-boy completed the call, then rushed into the office to fetch his hat. Wang Yueh-sheng, caught up in P'ei-chun's excitement, rushed in after him.

"If the Chief checks in, tell him that I'm taking a few days' leave. Say that someone's sick at home and that I've gone to see a doctor," he said bobbing his head somewhat disconnectedly.

"You just go along to your brother and don't worry about a thing. The Chief may well not check in today anyway," said Yueh-sheng.

WHEN HE got out to the street it didn't even occur to him to look for a bargain in rickshaw rides the way he usually did; as soon as he spotted

a fairly strong puller who looked as though he could really haul a rig, he asked the price, clambered aboard and said: "All right, but make it fast!"

The apartments were as peaceful and quiet as ever and as always the houseboy who worked there sat outside playing his *hu-ch'in*. As he entered his brother's bedroom, he felt his heart begin to pound still harder for his brother's face was flushed even redder than it had been before and now he was even panting. P'ei-chun put out his hand and felt Ching-fu's forehead—it was red hot again!

"I wonder what I've got? It's nothing serious, is it?" Ching-fu asked and the anxious look in his eyes revealed that even he felt that something was not quite right.

"Nothing to worry about . . . probably only a cold," P'ei-chun answered evasively. Ordinarily he was an implacable enemy of superstition, but this time he felt that there was something unlucky about Ching-fu's appearance and tone of voice, as though the patient himself had some sort of premonition. Such thoughts made P'ei-chun even more ill-at-ease and he immediately walked out of the room. In a low voice he called to the houseboy outside, and had him call the hospital to find out if they'd located Dr. P'u yet.

"Yes, I understand. They haven't found him yet," the boy said into the receiver.

At this point, sitting or standing, P'ei-chun was on pins and needles. However, in the midst of all this anxiety his thoughts took a new tack. Suppose it really wasn't scarlet fever, after all? Since no one seemed to be able to get hold of Dr. P'u, then how about Dr. Pai? For although Pai Wen-shan who lived in the same apartment house was a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine, he might at least be good for determining the name of the disease. P'ei-chun remembered uncomfortably that he had in the past often attacked traditional Chinese medicine in the course of arguments with Dr. Pai. Furthermore, Dr. Pai might well have heard that P'ei-chun was trying to find the German doctor by telephone . . .

Despite everything, P'ei-chun finally called in Dr. Pai. Pai Wen-shan didn't seem to mind a bit. He immediately donned his tortoise-shell dark glasses and came over to Ching-fu's room. He took his pulse, carefully scanned his countenance, and

<sup>1</sup> Chinese transliteration of a German doctor's name.

then loosened his clothing to take a look at his chest. Perfectly calm and collected, Dr. Pai took his leave and returned to his own quarters, followed by P'ei-chun.

He asked P'ei-chun to sit down, but didn't venture to say anything more. P'ei-chun couldn't keep himself from asking straight out: "My dear Wen-shan, what's wrong with my brother after all?"

"*Hung-pan-sha*, see for yourself; the spots have already come out."

"Then it's not scarlet fever?" P'ei-chun's spirits began to lighten a bit.

"The Western doctors call it 'scarlet fever'; we Chinese doctors call it '*hung-pan-sha*'."

This made P'ei-chun's hands and feet suddenly go all cold and clammy.

"Can it be cured?" he asked, spirits sinking.

"It can. But it all depends on your family's luck."

P'ei-chun came out of Pai Wen-shan's apartment so thoroughly confused that he himself could not have explained how it was that he had actually gone so far as to ask Pai Wen-shan for a prescription. As he passed the telephone, he remembered Dr. P'u again. He put another call in to the hospital. They said that they had located Dr. P'u but that he was very busy and probably wouldn't get to see Ching-fu until very late, possibly even the next morning. P'ei-chun left instructions that Dr. P'u was to see his brother today by all means.

When he went into his brother's bedroom and lit the lamp, he saw that Ching-fu's face was more flushed than ever and that even more spots had appeared, spots that were redder than the earlier ones. His eyelids were all puffed up too. He sat down to wait and felt as though he were sitting on a bed of nails. As the night grew ever more silent and P'ei-chun's vigil grew ever longer, the honking of every horn struck his ears with heightened clarity. So much so that once, for no really good reason, he assumed that one of these honks was from Dr. P'u's car and jumped up to go out and greet him; but long before P'ei-chun got to the front gate the car had driven past. He turned about dazedly and made way through the courtyard. A bright moon had already climbed aloft in the Western sky and now cast the ghostly shadow of a neighbor's locust tree at P'ei-chun's feet,

eerily intensifying his already deep feeling of melancholy.

Suddenly a crow cawed. This was something that he was ordinarily used to hearing, for there were three or four nests in that locust tree. But this time he was strangely almost frozen with terror. Seized with fright, he tremblingly made his way into Ching-fu's room and saw him still lying there with his eyes closed. Now Ching-fu's whole face seemed bloated. But he wasn't sleeping. He had probably heard P'ei-chun's footsteps, for he suddenly opened his eyes, and the light from those eyes flickered in an unnatural and anguished way.

"Was it a letter?"

"No, no. It was me." Ching-fu had startled him and he wasn't quite collected. "It was me," he stammered. "I still thought it would be a good idea if we called in a Western doctor so you'd get better a bit sooner. He hasn't come yet . . ."

Without responding in any way, Ching-fu closed his eyes again. P'ei-chun sat next to the desk that stood before the window. All was silence save for the hurried breathing of the patient and the tick-tock of the alarm clock. Suddenly the sound of a horn in the distance pricked him to a state of high excitement. He listened as it drew closer, closer—until it seemed to be right outside the gate. It was going to stop, it seemed, but immediately he heard the sound of the car as it drove straight on past. This kind of thing happened so many times that he became familiar with the sounds of all kinds of horns: some sounded like a man whistling; some, like a roll of drums; some, like a man passing wind; some, like a dog barking; some, like a duck quacking; some, like a cow lowing; some, like the clucking of a startled hen; some, like sobbing . . . suddenly he felt terribly vexed with himself: why hadn't he paid attention before to the sound of Dr. P'u's horn so that he'd be able to recognize it now?

The lodger across the way hadn't come home yet. He had no doubt gone to the opera as always, or perhaps he had been out making the rounds of the sing-song houses. It was quite late now so that even the sounds of cars began to fade away. The strong, silvery moonlight that shone against the paper window caused it to give off a reflected white glow.

His high state of alertness was gradually slackened by the boredom of waiting, so slackened

he no longer paid attention to the horns. Now some scattered fragments and images took advantage of his temporary state of psychological laxity and worked their way to the surface of his consciousness. For the moment he seemed to *know* that Ching-fu had scarlet fever and, moreover, was going to die of it. What would he do about the family finances in that case? Could he support the entire family by himself? Even if they were to live in a small town, still with prices going up all the time . . . He had three children of his own. Add Ching-fu's two children to that and it would be difficult to even keep them in food and clothing much less send them all to school. And if he could only afford to send one or two of them to school, well in that case his own K'ang-erh was, of course, the brightest of the lot—but then everyone would criticize him for treating his brother's children so shabbily . . .

And what about the funeral? He didn't even have enough to buy the coffin, not to speak of the expense of shipping the body back to their hometown in the south. For the time being, he'd simply have to deposit it with some charitable guild . . .

Suddenly the sound of approaching footsteps in the distance made him jump up and walk outside before he realized that it was only the lodger across the way.

"O-u-r l-a-t-e em-per-or . . . da dee dum dum . . . at Pai Ti City . . . dum dee da da . . ." The man was singing snatches from a popular Peking opera. P'ei-chun was disappointed as soon as he heard the light, happy, humming—disappointed, then indignant, so indignant that he almost ran across the way to give the man a good piece of his mind. But before he had time to do that, he spotted the houseboy holding a lantern in one hand and its light shone on a shiny pair of shoes following behind him. In the faint light above the shoes P'ei-chun could make out a large, tall man with white face and black beard. This could be none other than Dr. P'u-t'i-ssu.

He ran up to the doctor as though he just discovered a hidden treasure and then led him into the sick room. The two men stood before Ching-fu's bed. The doctor held up a flash-light and directed its light at Ching-fu.

"Doctor, he has a fever . . .," said P'ei-chun breathlessly.

"When—did—it—begin?" Doctor P'u asked slowly, in halting but precise Chinese, while staring at the sick man's face, his hands thrust into his side trouser pockets.

"The day before yesterday. No, it was the day before . . . it was the day before the day before yesterday."

Dr. P'u didn't utter a sound. He perfunctorily took Ching-fu's pulse and asked P'ei-chun to hold the light again so that he might get a better look at his brother's face. He also asked that they draw back the quilt and loosen Ching-fu's clothing. After he had taken a good look at his body, he thrust out one finger and felt Ching-fu's stomach.

"Measles<sup>2</sup> . . ." said Dr. P'u T'i-ssu in a low voice as though talking to himself.

"Measles?" P'ei-chun's almost ecstatic voice seemed to have a slight tremor in it.

"Measles."

"Just plain measles?"

"Measles."

"Do you mean to say you've never had measles, Ching-fu?"

While he was happily asking Ching-fu this question, Dr. P'u had already started walking toward the desk and now P'ei-chun followed him. Dr. P'u put one foot up on the chair in front of the desk, pulled some stationery across the desk closer to him, fished a stubby pencil out of his pocket, and scratched several words on the paper that were not easy to make out clearly—this was the prescription.

P'ei-chun took the prescription from the doctor and said, "I am afraid the druggists are closed today."

"Tomorrow—will—do. Give it—to him—tomorrow."

"Will you be back to see him again tomorrow?"

"There's no need—for me—to see him—again. Don't let him—eat anything sour, hot—or too—salty. After his fever has gone down a bit—take his urine—and send it over to my—hospital. I'll examine it—and that will be—that. Put it in—a clean—glass bottle. On the outside—write his name."

Dr. P'u said all of this as he was walking; proceeding straight on his way out the front gate,

<sup>2</sup>Dr. P'u here gives the English word.

he also accepted a five dollar bill from P'ei-chun and thrust it into one of his pockets. P'ei-chun saw him all the way out and didn't turn around to come back in until the doctor had gotten into his car and driven away. Just as he came back through the gate, P'ei-chun heard a *geh-geh* sound behind and only then did he learn that Dr. P'u's horn was really rather like the lowing of a cow. "But," he thought to himself, "there's not much use in knowing that now."

Inside, now even the lamplight seemed happy. P'ei-chun felt as though he had everything under control; all about him peace and quiet reigned. And yet his heart still seemed empty. He gave the prescription and money to the houseboy who had followed him in and told him to fill the prescription at the Mei Ya Pharmacy first thing in the morning. Dr. P'u had specified that particular pharmacy and had said that Mei Ya alone had drugs that were totally reliable.

"The Mei Ya Pharmacy on the east end! That's the one you have to go to. Remember, the Mei Ya Pharmacy!" He directed this to the boy's back as the latter left.

The courtyard was filled with moonlight that was as white as silver. His singing neighbor had gone to sleep and all was silence. The rhythmic and happy tick-tock of the alarm clock on the desk was the only real sound to be heard; even the breathing that came from the sick bed sounded smooth and almost inaudible now . . . P'ei-chun sat down and before long he started feeling happy again. "So, old as you are, do you mean to tell me that you've actually never had measles before?" he asked in tones of amazement as though he had just happened upon a miracle.

" . . . ."

"You wouldn't remember yourself. We'll have to ask mother for the answer to that one."

" . . . ."

"But then mother's not here . . . So you've never had measles. Ha, ha, ha!"

WHEN P'EI-CHUN woke up in his own bed back in his own room the next morning, the sun had already begun to shine in through the paper window and now stabbed into his sleepy eyes. He couldn't bestir himself right away, however, for his four limbs all felt powerless; moreover, there was still some cold and clammy sweat on his back. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, he saw a child

standing before the bed, blood streaming from everyplace on her face. He was just about to hit her. In a flash this image faded away and he was once again sleeping alone in his own room with no one else around. He took the pillow case off the pillow and wiped the cold sweat off his chest and back with it. Then P'ei-chun got into his clothes and walked from his own room towards Ching-fu's room. On the way he saw his opera-loving neighbor in the courtyard rinsing his mouth out with water—obviously it must be very late. Ching-fu had awakened too and lay on his bed with his eyes wide open.

"How do you feel today?" P'ei-chun immediately asked.

"A little better . . ."

"Hasn't the medicine come yet?"

"Not yet."

He sat down next to the desk facing the bed and observed that Ching-fu's face wasn't as flushed as it was yesterday. But now his own head felt a bit dizzy and dream fragments began to flash and glitter again as they bobbed up to the surface of his consciousness.

He saw Ching-fu lying just as he was lying now, but he was a corpse and P'ei-chun was busy getting the body ready for burial. He was carrying the coffin on his back, all by himself, all the way from outside the front gate right into the house. The place looked like their old home back down south and he recognized several very familiar looking people who were standing off to one side praising P'ei-chun's brotherly devotion to Ching-fu . . . He had issued orders that K'ang-erh and K'ang-erh's younger brother and younger sister were to go to school. But there were two other children who were wailing and begging to be allowed to go too. He was harrassed to the limit by all their howling and yet, at the same time, he was aware that he was now in possession of the highest authority and virtually infinite power. The palm of his hand seemed three or four times its normal size and seemed to be made of steel—he used it to strike out at the face of Ho-sheng, one of his brother's children . . .

Because of the assault of these dream fragments P'ei-chun was so frightened that he wanted to get up and go outside—but in the end he didn't move. He also wanted to push these dream fragments down and forget them, but they were like goose quills swirling around in water—after a

few turns they'd always float to the top again.

Ho-sheng, blood all over his face, came in weeping. He jumped up on the sacrificial altar<sup>3</sup>. . . Behind him there followed a cohort of people that P'ei-chun knew as well as some he didn't. He realized that they had all come to attack him.

"I certainly would never lie to you. Don't be taken in by the lies of a child . . ." He heard his own voice saying these things.

Ho-sheng was next to him now and P'ei-chun raised the palm of his hand again . . .

Suddenly he woke up. He was exhausted and his back still felt a bit cold. Ching-fu lay in front of him and although his breathing was a bit fast, it was very even. The alarm clock on the desk seemed to tick with redoubled vigor.

P'ei-chun turned around and faced the desk; it was covered with a thin layer of dust. As he let his eyes rove over in the direction of the paper window, he saw that the number written on the wall calendar was "27".

The houseboy came in with the medicine and was also carrying a bundle of books.

"What is it?" Ching-fu asked as he forced his eyes open.

"The medicine," he answered, just having awakened from a subconscious state himself.

"No, I mean the bundle."

"Don't worry about that now. Just take your medicine." After he had given Ching-fu his medicine, he picked up the bundle and said: "It's from So-shih. It must be that volume called *Seasame and Lilies*<sup>4</sup> that you wanted to borrow from him."

Ching-fu reached out for the book, but as soon as he had looked at the cover and felt the gold lettering on the spine, he simply put it down by his pillow and, without making a sound, closed his eyes again. But after a bit, he said in a happy tone of voice: "When I start to get better I'm going to translate some of it, send it in to the Cultural Press, and make a little money. I wonder if they'll take it . . ."

ON THIS day P'ei-chun went to the Bureau of Public Welfare much later than usual; it was almost afternoon. The office was already filled with

<sup>3</sup> Presumably to lay his plaint before his dead father.

<sup>4</sup> The book title is given in English.

smoke from Ch'in Yi-t'ang's water pipe. Spotting P'ei-chun from a distance, Wang Yueh-sheng came running out to greet him. "Hey! You're here. Is your younger brother all right now? I think it's nothing to worry about. There's an epidemic of something or other every year. Nothing to worry about. Old Mr. Ch'in and I were just thinking about you. We both wondered what could be the matter that you hadn't come. Now you're here! Great! But look at yourself; you look more or less . . . There's no doubt about it. You do look a bit different from yesterday."

P'ei-chun also seemed to sense that the office and his colleagues were somewhat different from what they had been yesterday—somehow or other unfamiliar, even though everything else in the office was familiar to his eyes: a broken coat-hook, a spittoon with a chuck chipped out, a chaos of dust-covered case records, a rickety reclining chair with a missing leg, and Ch'in Yi-t'ang seated upon it, water-pipe cupped in his hands, coughing and sighing as he shook his head and said: "Just like always, they fought all the way from inside the house right out to the front gate."

"And that's just why," chimed in Yueh-sheng, "I think you ought to tell them about P'ei-chun and set them to copy him and his brother. Otherwise, they'll be the death of you yet, old man."

"Number Three says that the loss that Number Five took on public bonds cannot be counted as their joint responsibility and that Number Five ought himself to—ought to—ought to—" Yi-t'ang was doubled over coughing.

"Well, as the saying goes, 'No two hearts are the same'," said Yueh-sheng as he turned away to face P'ei-chun. "Well, then, there's nothing really seriously wrong with your brother?"

"Nothing serious. The doctor says it's measles."

"Measles? That's right. Come to think of it, I've heard that it's rampant among the children hereabouts. Three kids living in the same courtyard with me all have it. Absolutely harmless. And to think that you got so excited about it yesterday that even we outsiders couldn't help but be moved by your concern. As the saying goes, 'There is nothing like fraternal affection'."

"Did the Bureau Chief check in yesterday?"

"He made himself 'as scarce as the yellow crane', so to speak, all you have to do is go and sign in for yesterday and nobody will be the wiser."

"Said that Number Five ought to make it good himself," said Yi-t'ang as much to himself as anyone else. "These public bonds really do great harm to people. I can't make head or tails of them myself, but it seems that anyone who has anything to do with them ends up taking a beating. And yesterday by the time evening rolled around they were at it again. Fought all the way from inside the house right out to the front gate. Number Five said that since Number Three has two more children in school than he does that means Number Three has gotten more out of the family funds too. Got so mad . . ."

"The whole thing is getting more muddled all the time," said Yueh-sheng in despair. "And that's why when I see brothers like you, P'ei-chun, I respect you so much that I could 'throw myself on all fours' before you. It's the straight truth. I swear it. It's not just something I say to your face to flatter you."

P'ei-chun didn't say anything, but spotting a

messenger who had just entered the office with a piece of official business, he rushed over to him and took the documents into his own hands. Yueh-sheng followed P'ei-chun, stood behind him, and read aloud from the document in his hands:

" 'Citizen Ho Shang-shan and others hereby petition the Bureau of Public Welfare to immediately order its branch office to arrange a casket for and bury the body of an unidentified male who dropped dead in the eastern suburbs in order to maintain public health and promote the general welfare.' You let me take care of that," said Yueh-sheng. "Why don't you take off a bit early. I know you must be worried about your brother. You two are as affectionate as 'pied wagtails on the moor' as the saying goes."

"No!" P'ei-chun held onto the document. "I'll take care of it myself."

Yueh-sheng did not make a point of it. P'ei-chun was apparently in a very calm state of mind as he proceeded silently to his own desk where, his eyes still on the petition, he reached out and removed a somewhat corroded brass cover from the top of an ink box.

3 November 1925

### *Background to a Story<sup>1</sup>*

"Brothers" is one of the most intensely personal of Lu Hsun's tales. From early childhood, Lu Hsun (pen name of Chou Shu-jen, 1881-1936) had been very close to his younger brother, Chou Tso-jen (1885-1967). As young men they had been students together in Japan just prior to the Republican Revolution of 1911. Still later, they, their wives, and mother had all lived together in a single family compound in Peking during the early 1920's. Then, for whatever reason, the family was torn apart by discord and in 1923 the two brothers made a final break and maintained separate residences. "Brothers," written two years afterwards, undoubtedly reflects some of Lu Hsun's own musings about his relationship with his own younger brother. The plot itself harks back to 1917 when Lu Hsun and Tso-jen roomed together in the capital (the rest of the family was, at this time, still down south in the Chou's ancestral home in Shaohsing). Speaking of the plot, Lu Hsun's old friend, Hsu Shou-shang, has said

. . . most of it consists of experiences that Lu Hsun went through himself. It was probably sometime around the end of spring or the beginning of summer in 1917. He and his younger brother, Tso-jen, were both living in the Pu Shu Study of the Shaohsing Hostel in Peking.

<sup>1</sup> These background notes on Lu Hsun's "Brothers" are based in part on an article prepared by Professor Lyell,

who translated the story. As far as we know, this story has not been rendered into English before.—EDITOR.



LU HSUN  
Pencil drawing by  
Tao Yuan-ching

Tso-jen suddenly developed a temperature. There was an epidemic of scarlet fever going through Peking at the time. More than that one of our colleagues at the Ministry of Education had died during just such an epidemic the year before. All this made Lu Hsun especially apprehensive and he called in a German doctor by the name of Ti-po-erh<sup>2</sup> for a diagnosis. Only then did he discover that it was actually nothing more than a case of measles. The next day when he came to work at the ministry, Lu Hsun was in exceptionally good spirits and recounted to me in great detail how slow Dr. T. had been in coming and how quick he had been in making his diagnosis. And then he said, "To think that Ch'i-meng [Tso-jen], old as he is, has never had measles."<sup>3</sup>

Hsu also states tha Ching-fu is based on Tso-jen both in speech and mannerisms and that the Bureau of Public Welfare is in fact the Ministry of Education as it was in Peking during those days. But Hsu maintains that the business of dream fragments from P'ei-chun's subconscious (Hsu calls it that) is manufactured out of whole cloth.<sup>4</sup> Tso-jen, writing on the same subject, has said that the part about his illness is accurate enough, but that the business of the dream fragments may well be poetry. Curiously, however, Tso-jen in the same passage notes that when he was very ill during that period, Lu Hsun once said to him: "The thing that I'm afraid of is not that you may die, but rather the business of having to take care of your wife after you're gone."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Chinese phonetic representation of the German name.

<sup>3</sup> Hsu Shou-shang, *Wo so jen-shih te Lu Hsun* (The Lu Hsun that I knew), Peking: People's Press, 1952, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Hsu, *Wo so jen-shih te Lu Hsun*, pp. 63-65

<sup>5</sup> Chou Ch'i-meng (Chou Tso-jen), *Lu Hsun te ch'ing-nien shih-tai* (The period of Lu Hsun's youth), Peking: China Youth Press, 1957, pp. 90-91.



Toward the end of his life, during the years 1961-63, Chou Tso-jen completed his reminiscences. The manuscript was sent to Hong Kong and published there in two volumes. Here he again refers to the story "Brothers" and documents it with excerpts from his diary. This account is included in a section dealing with an attempt at imperial restoration which took place in May 1917, or the sixth year of the Chinese Republic.<sup>6</sup>

... The situation was very tense at the time, a sort of "lull before the storm", but personal misfortune struck first in the form of an illness that was serious or not depending on one's point of view. It was nothing more serious than an attack of measles, which all children come down with without harmful effects so long as it does not turn into pneumonia. On the other hand, it was serious in that I was after all no child, and for an adult in his thirties to contract this disease there was a certain element of danger. The patient runs a high fever, for one thing, and sometimes scarlet fever may threaten. But, on the diagnosis of a Western doctor, I was confident it was measles, though I couldn't understand why I had never had it during childhood, just as I was equally baffled by my having broken out in smallpox at the age of four. I did run a high fever, as it turned out, and for a while my condition appeared to be quite serious. Lu Hsun seemed to have been rattled, so much so that he decided to consult a German physician — a Dr. Ti-po-erh, one of the most respected foreign doctors in Peking, whose fee, though not as high as the Italian Dr. Ju-la, came to twelve dollars per house call. I will now include an excerpt from my diary of that year, beginning with the entry for May 8th:

- 8th, sunny, to Peita Library in the forenoon, returning 2 p.m. Feeling somewhat poorly since last night, seemed to run a fever, also exposed to the wind and came down with a headache. Took four quinine tablets.
- 9th, sunny and windy. Stayed home all morning.
- 11th, cloudy and windy. Took five tonic pills in the morning as laxative. Fever did not subside, also vomitted.
- 12th, sunny. To Shou Shan Hospital in the morning. Examined by a Russian doctor, Su-ta-k'o-fu, said it was the 'flu.
- 13th, sunny. Called in Dr. Ke-lin of the Germany Hospital in the afternoon, said it was measles. Had Mr. Ch'i Shou-shan come in as interpreter.
- 16th, sunny. Called in the German doctor, Ti-po-erh, in the forenoon. Mr. Ch'i again interpreted.
- 20th, sunny. Called in barber for a haircut in the afternoon.
- 21st, sunny. In the afternoon, Chi-fou sent a messenger over with a container of vegetable soup.
- 26th, sunny and windy. Wrote in my diary this morning; since the 12th, it has been two weeks that I haven't kept up. Afternoon, sent specimen of urine over to hospital for analysis, report was negative. Continued to take Ti-po-erh's medicine.
- 28th, sunny. Morning, Chi-fou sent over a container of steamed duck. Afternoon, received a small package from Wan Shan [book store] mailed on the 15th, containing the collected stories of So-lo-ku-po and K'u-p'u-lin.
- June 3rd, sunny. Took the last of Ti-po-erh's medicine at noon.

<sup>6</sup>Chou Tso-jen, *Chih-t'ang Hui-hsiang Lu* (Reminiscences of Chih-t'ang), Hong Kong: The T'ing T'ao Press, 1970, pp. 320-323.

5th, sunny. Left hostel at 9 a.m. for the University. Called again on Mr. Ts'ai [Yuan-p'ei], returned at 1 p.m.

This records the entire course of my illness. It did not span many days, and by (May) 20th I had been up and about. . . . In his book *P'ang-huang (Wandering)*, Lu Hsun had a story entitled "Brothers". It was written in 1925 and was an account of this episode. Although a mixture of "fact and poetry" it conformed largely to true happenings, particularly toward the end where he wrote:

He turned around and faced the desk; it was covered with a thin layer of dust. As he let his eyes rove over in the direction of the paper window, he saw that the number written on the wall calendar was "27".

He also told about receiving a package containing Western books, which jibed with my diary entry of the 28th, only in the story the title of the book has been changed to *Sesame and Lilies*. However, the story describes the patient as having an "anxious look in his eyes (revealing) that even he felt that something was not quite right". This is probably an example of poetic license, because I don't recall having had kind of feeling at the time or having entertained any fear of imminent death. Perhaps I did give that impression once or twice, but it could not have been my own feeling for the simple reason that I was by nature optimistic, sometimes to the point of insensitivity. After I recovered from my illness Lu Hsun talked about it one day, remarking that it was quite a joke my having had measles at that age. Then he added something to this effect: "At the time I was scared out of my wits and an unworthy thought cropped up in my mind — I thought that this time I would have to look after your family for sure." This same thought was expressed toward the end of the story "Brothers", where he told about a nightmare in which he maltreated the orphan. I can never understand why this thought had persisted in his mind even though eight years had intervened; perhaps the answer should be sought in the theories of Freud.

While one would not expect Lu Hsun's relatives and friends to display his dirty linen outside the house, it does nonetheless seem likely that in examining the disparity between conscious and subconscious levels on the part of Chang P'ei-chun, Lu Hsun may well have drawn on his own experience. Almost everything written about his relationship with his younger brother presents him in the role of strong, self-sacrificing big brother and it is probable that he saw himself in this light much as P'ei-chun viewed himself as the ideal, concerned, unselfish, self-sacrificing elder brother in the opening part of Lu Hsun's story. Lu Hsun's second wife, Hsu Kuang p'ing, in discussing her husband's relationship to Tso-jen, heavily emphasizes just this type of selfless devotion. She reports that after Lu Hsun had moved out of the family compound in 1923, once when he returned to pick up some things, he reminded Tso-jen that when they were young men studying together in Japan he, Lu Hsun, had cut short his stay and returned to China in order to make money to help support Tso-jen and his recently-acquired Japanese wife. Tso-jen is reported to have waved this aside with "What's past is past." Given all this, it seems at least quite likely that even the psychological part of "Brothers" was, in large part, autobiographical. "Brothers," however, remains a story and not autobiography; it stands as tribute to Lu Hsun's capacity for transmuting autobiographical elements into the stuff of fiction.

<sup>7</sup>Hsu Kuang-p'ing, *Lu Hsun hui-yi lu* (Remembrances of Lu Hsun), Peking: Writers' Press, 1962, p. 58.