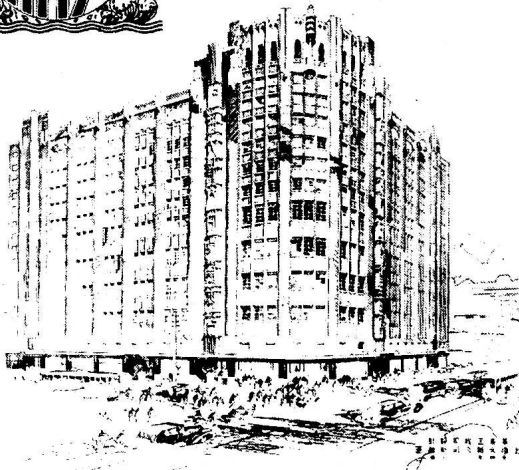
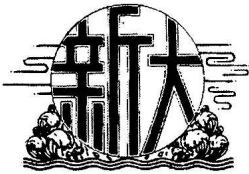


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THE LITTLE CRITIC

EDITED BY LIN YUTANG

Chinese Satiric Humour

I HAVE come across a Ming edition of a collection of jokes by Chiang Chinchih (江進之), some of whose fables I translated and published in this column some time ago. This particular collection seems to have gathered within its covers a great number of jokes current in the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, with many malicious shafts against monks, scholars, misers, quack doctors, hen-pecked husbands and so forth, with a predilection for satiric humor. Below are some of the ones I like:

The solicitor for contributions.—A robber and a monk met a tiger on a mountain path. The robber got ready his bow and arrow to attack the tiger, but that seemed to have produced no effect on the tiger who steadily advanced nearer in spite of the robber's threatening arrow. In that desperate situation, the monk who held in his hand a book of receipts for soliciting contributions to his temple, threw the book at the tiger and the tiger ran away. Back in his cave, the tiger cub asked his father, "Why are you not afraid of the robber but of the monk?" And the old tiger replied, "Because I could fight with the robber when he came near, but what was I to do if the monk came and asked me for contributions?"

(In this connexion I wish to point out that Confucius himself was a very great satirist, or was reputed to be. The story goes that Confucius was one day walking on a mountain and met a woman weeping by the side of a new grave. "What are you weeping for?" asked Confucius. And the woman replied, "My son has just died. He was eaten up by the tiger. This is the third case in the family now, for years ago a tiger had eaten up my husband, and before him a tiger had eaten up my father." "Why don't you move to some other place then?" asked Confucius. "Because this is the only place where we don't have to pay the government taxes," replied the woman.)

* * * *

The village bully.—There was a village bully who was short of cash towards the New Year's Eve. His wife was asking him how he was going to get the money to pass the New Year and he had just replied, "Don't worry", when he saw a barber pass the door. He called the barber in and told him to shave off his eyebrows. When the barber had shaved off one eyebrow, the rogue shouted, "What are you doing? I'll bring you to the magistrate for shaving off my eyebrow." The barber was afraid of being put in prison and gave him three hundred cash. The rogue was thus enabled to pass his New Year, but on New Year's Eve his wife remarked, "Now, you should have really shaved off both eyebrows. You look so funny to have only one eyebrow and shaved off the other." "Don't worry," replied the rogue, "I know what I'm doing. We have to pass

the fifteenth of the first moon yet, and I am reserving that other eyebrow for the occasion."

* * * *

The gentry.—There was once a gentry scholar who made a living by undertaking repairs of bridges, roads and temples. On such pretexts, he could always solicit contributions and pocket large sums for himself. When he died, Yenlo, the King of Hell, looked into his life record and sent him into a dark cell in hell in common with other souls. One day the gentry ghost got up and harangued his fellow ghosts in hell as follows: "This is a place of darkness and iniquity. We must change it into a better world to live in. You contribute a dollar each to me, and I will have a window put in our cell."

* * * *

The quack doctor.—One day a quack doctor killed a fat patient. The family of the deceased wanted to sue him, but the affair was finally settled by the doctor undertaking to bury the dead man at his own cost. The quack doctor, however, was very poor himself, and being unable to hire people, he undertook to bury the corpse himself with the help of his wife and two children. The four of them were carrying the heavy corpse of the dead man, when the doctor's gentle wife remarked to her husband, "My dear husband, next time you go out curing people, you should choose a thin patient."

* * * *

The cuckoo.—There was a silly fool whose wife had a lover. Once he came back at night, and as the lover ran away through the window, he caught one of his shoes. This he put under his pillow thinking that he would use it as evidence and prosecute him at court next day. During his sleep, however, his wife secretly exchanged it with one of her husband's own shoes. On waking up next morning, the husband looked carefully at the shoe and finding it to be his own, apologized to his wife, "I am very sorry for last night. I didn't know it was I myself who jumped out of the window."

(A similar story to this has been told in other Chinese humorous books. Once upon a time, a monk had committed adultery and was exiled to a distant place. The guard accompanying him, who happened to be a silly fool, was strictly charged to prevent the monk from escape. Every morning he would count over the things in his charge, which were four: the monk, his handcuffs, a light Yoke around his neck and the guard himself. One night during his sleep, the monk managed to free himself and having shaved off the guard's hair to look like a monk, he changed into the guard's dress and escaped. When the latter woke up next morning, again he began to count the four things and touching his own shaved head, he said, "There's the monk, and the Yoke, and the handcuffs, but where have I gone to?"

* * * *

The miser.—There was a certain miser who hearing about the reputation of a greater miser than himself, went

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to the other miser's home to become his disciple. As usual, he had to bring some present to his new master, and brought with him a bowl of water with a piece of paper cut in the form of a fish. The great miser happened to be away from home and his wife received him. "Here is my fish as a humble present from your new pupil," remarked the visitor. The miser's wife received it with thanks and brought up an empty cup and asked him to have tea. After the pupil had pretended to drink tea, the miser's wife again asked him to help himself to the cakes by drawing two circles in the air with her hand. In came the master miser and when he saw his wife drawing two circles as imaginary cakes, he became very angry with his wife and said, "Why, are you giving two cakes away! You should have drawn only a semi-circle!"

* * * *

The hen-pecked husband.—One day a wife was very angry with her hen-pecked husband and wanted to torture him with a special instrument for cracking finger-bones. There being no such instrument at home, she sent her husband to borrow it from a neighbour. The husband was grumbling all the way as he passed out of the house, considering it as adding an insult to injury. "What are you grumbling at?" shouted the wife. The husband was frightened and immediately turned round and said, "I was only saying that we should provide such an instrument at home."

* * * *

The cheat.—There was a famous cheat in town who had a brilliant son. At twelve, his son mentioned to him the desire to go about in town and practice his father's profession on his own account. The father was standing by the window upstairs while the son was standing in the courtyard below. "How can you cheat people at your young age?" said the father to his son. "If you can cheat your own father now and make me come downstairs, I shall be satisfied that you are qualified to carry on my profession." "Oh, that's too easy," replied his young son. "It's easy to cheat a man and make him come downstairs. I can even cheat a man upstairs which is much more difficult. If you don't believe, I'll try it on you now." "Can you really do it?" asked his father, greatly pleased. "Of course I can," replied his son. "You come downstairs and I'll cheat you upstairs in three minutes." So the father came down and the son went up and as the boy was then standing by the window upstairs and smiling, his father said, "Now I'm here, why don't you begin?" "I have cheated you already," replied the son. "You wanted me to cheat you downstairs, and now you are downstairs."

LIN YUTANG.

BOOK REVIEW

EDITED BY QUENTIN PAN

The Next Five Years

Pp. xvi & 320. London, MacMillan, 1935

THIS is an essay in political agreement. It is signed and endorsed by many persons who belong to different schools of political and economic thought. Among them, one notices the names of such important public figures as Lord Allen of Hurtwood, Lord Amulree, Sir Norman Angell, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, Lord Dickinson, the Earl of Lytton, Sir Arthur Salter, the Archbishop of York and Viscountess Rhondda. The universities are represented by Professor Samuel Alexander, Professor Lascelles Abercrombi, Professor Ernest Barker, Right Honourable H. A. L. Fisher, Dr. L. P. Jacks, Professor Julian Huxley, Professor J. H. Muirhead, Professor Gilbert Murray, Professor Norman Kemp Smith and the Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge. Among the men of letters, Messrs. H. G. Wells, Siegfried Sassoon, Jerald Heard and C. E. M. Joad are also on the list. The stage is represented by Dame Sybil Thorndyke, while the publishing world is represented by Mr. Harold MacMillan.

Many of the signatories joined a year ago in signing two manifestoes defending the principles of political liberty and democracy and outlining a constructive policy. Since then, a representative group, consisting mainly of signatories of those manifestoes, has considered in a series of meetings how the outlines of the policy there sketched should be filled in. As a result of the discussions of this group, the present book has been written under the direction of a drafting committee, consisting of Lord Allen of Hurtwood, Mr. W. Arnold Forster, Principal A. Barratt Brown, Mr. Geoffrey Crowther, Sir Arthur Salter, and Mr. Harold MacMillan. In jointly signing the Foreword and commending the book, the reader is given to understand that the signatories do not therefore commit themselves to endorsement of every detail of the proposal, nor do they renounce any of the individual views as to the way in which society should ultimately be organized. But they are in agreement on the general policy there proposed, believing that it embodies a far-reaching but attainable program action for the next five years.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, which deals with economic policy, it urges first, national development by means of capital expenditure, especially in times of depression; second, organization of industry with the help of the State; third, reform of the monetary and banking system; fourth, restoration of international commerce and a revival of British export trades, with continuation of a moderate protective tariff; fifth, an increase in home production of certain foodstuffs and the avoidance of any drastic or general restriction of import of food; and sixth, the extension and improvement of the educational

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