Preface

This is a retelling of a story from a favorite source of Chinese tales, a book best known to Western students of Chinese literature as *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. The title of this retold tale — “The Bookworm” — is a free rendering of the phrase *shū dāizi*, which literally means ‘the bookish fool’. (The character *dāi* ‘foolish, stupid’ and the term *dāizi* ‘fool, dolt’ occur so frequently in the story that the reader should memorize them at the outset.) The story reflects a favorite theme in Chinese literature — the Chinese love of the supernatural.

The original tale was written in the classical style. The present work is a free adaptation in very simple language that is intended as supplementary reading by students who have completed the first 42 lessons of my *Beginning Chinese Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963). The characters used in this version are limited to the 350 contained in those lessons except for another 25 that are specially needed to tell the story. As an aid to easy reading, all occurrences of the new characters are accompanied by their transcription.

In view of the increasing emphasis on the use of simplified characters, these forms are used throughout the story for both old and new characters. All the simplified forms used in the text are presented together with their regular variants in the Stroke Index of Characters. In addition the new characters appear in both their simplified and regular forms (the latter in parentheses) in the Notes and in the Pinyin Index.

The Notes present in sequential order the carefully limited number of new characters, terms, and structures, together with occasional translations of more difficult phrases. The Stroke Index of Characters lists all the new characters and simplified characters that occur in the story. Finally the Pinyin Index provides a cumulative glossary of all these items.

These aids are intended to make the story easy to read. Students should not spend time memorizing characters or terms or otherwise handling the material as a basic text.

The present volume is the third in a series of five supplementary readers to accompany *Beginning Chinese Reader*. The first is to be read after lesson 30, the second after lesson 36, the present volume after lesson 42, and the last two after lesson 48. The stories can, of course, be read by students who are learning Chinese from other beginning reading texts. All but the last of these five supplementary readers were written by Mrs. Yung Teng Chia-ye.

John DeFrancis