

## I. Dynasty 372

### Chapter 372: Hydrogen Balloon

“Hydrogen balloon?”

Xiao Ming, who had been thinking about the development of agriculture and livestock, nearly spat out the tea in his mouth.

Ziyuan, seeing this, smiled and asked, “Your Highness, what’s this hydrogen balloon? You seem so excited.”

“Hehe, this hydrogen balloon is a great thing. It’s far more practical than the hot air balloon,” Xiao Ming replied.

As he was about to head to Chang’an, Xiao Ming had been troubled by the hot air balloon issue.

During the recent war, hot air balloons had been very useful, and even Luo Quan had been envious. Before returning to Chang’an, Luo Quan had persistently asked Xiao Ming for one, but Xiao Ming had refused.

However, Xiao Ming knew that he couldn’t keep it hidden forever. When he went to Chang’an, he would definitely bring both the hot air balloon and the fire guns.

Xiao Ming would never send the matchlock gun, as he strictly controlled the technological gap between weapon types, making sure to profit from military sales.

Therefore, he planned to take the matchlock guns, and with Xiao Wenxuan's personality, now that there was a firearms camp, he might even establish another firearms battalion to intimidate smaller forces.

But the problem was, it was fine to use matchlock guns as a cover, but the hot air balloon had become a headache for him. He hadn't expected that in this critical moment, Lin Wentao had created the hydrogen balloon.

Compared to the hot air balloon, the hydrogen balloon could fly higher, making it far more advanced.

Once the hydrogen balloon came out, the hot air balloon would essentially become obsolete. So, it might be better to give the hot air balloon to Xiao Wenxuan to strengthen his position in Xiao Wenxuan's eyes.

After all, Xiao Wenxuan would likely ask for these items later, so it was better to give them voluntarily than to have him demand them.

These outdated items didn't have much use for him anyway. He could sell them to the Imperial Guards for money, which would be even more profitable.

Moreover, the more weapons he sold to the Imperial Guards, the tighter he could control Xiao Wenxuan. When court officials attacked Xiao Wenxuan, he would have to consider the issue of ammunition for the Imperial Guards' cannons and firearms, making it harder to take action without him.

So, as long as Xiao Wenxuan didn't rebel, he would have free reign in Chang'an. Because of this, he didn't want to keep the hot air balloon and fire guns a secret. Using them as an excuse, some malicious people might make trouble.

By giving them away now, he could prevent gossip and make sure no one questioned him later.

Putting aside these concerns, after hearing that Lin Wentao had made the hydrogen balloon, Xiao Ming immediately became excited. He told Ziyuan to prepare a horse and headed to Bowen Academy.

Bowen Academy had played an important role in the war against the barbarians, contributing both the hot air balloons and Lu Tong's quicklime bombs.

When they were at Shanhai Pass, Niu Ben had praised the quicklime bombs. Once detonated, they could quickly incapacitate large numbers of enemies. This was far more powerful than the simple gunpowder bombs.

This war had further proven that technology was the key to winning battles.

When Xiao Ming arrived at Bowen Academy, he saw a brand-new hydrogen balloon hovering in the small square in front of the academy. Lin Wentao and others were discussing something in the square.

Liang Yubin and He Cheng had already returned to the academy and were now with Lin Wentao.

Seeing Xiao Ming approach, the students gathered around. Lin Wentao said, “Your Highness, this is the hydrogen balloon.”

Xiao Ming looked up at the balloon. It was as big as a hot air balloon, floating in the air, with four ropes tied to the four directions.

“How did you produce the hydrogen?” Xiao Ming was most concerned about this question.

The difference between the hot air balloon and the hydrogen balloon was simply the gas inside the balloon—air versus hydrogen.

Even without heat, the hydrogen balloon would have some lift, making it much more efficient and safer than the hot air balloon.

When Lin Wentao heard the question, his face lit up with excitement. He explained, “We must thank the students from the Chemistry Department. They were the ones who produced the hydrogen. Without them, this hydrogen balloon wouldn’t have been possible.”

Lin Wentao pointed to a large ceramic jar behind him, shaped like a gourd, and said, “Your Highness, the hydrogen is produced from here and pumped into the balloon.”

Xiao Ming immediately recognized the setup.

Just by glancing at the surrounding materials, he understood how the hydrogen was being produced.

“Imprudent,” Xiao Ming sighed. “How much sulfuric acid and scrap iron did it take?”

Despite his concerns, Xiao Ming didn’t want to be too harsh since he had given them the freedom to experiment. He simply made a complaint and turned to the student standing aside.

The student, from the Chemistry Department, confirmed that they had used sulfuric acid and scrap iron to produce hydrogen, which was then pumped into the balloon using this apparatus.

Looking at the excited faces of the students, Xiao Ming didn’t want to spoil the mood. Though the method was a bit primitive, producing hydrogen was always a step-by-step process.

He said to Lin Wentao, “Good work. The hot air balloon played a vital role in the war, so as a reward, I’m preparing to grant you a title of nobility. However, this will have to wait until the generals from Qingzhou return so we can award it together.”

“Thank you, Your Highness!”

Lin Wentao and the other students smiled widely, clearly thrilled by the reward. They had worked hard on the hot air balloon, and now they were finally being recognized.

Xiao Ming smiled. It was time to award some titles to encourage the students at Bowen Academy.

Currently, Qingzhou's technology level wasn't even close to Europe's, but with Bowen Academy, they could catch up quickly and eventually surpass it.

After learning about the creation of the first hydrogen balloon in Qingzhou, Xiao Ming asked Liang Yubin and He Cheng to operate the balloon. He wanted to see just how high it could fly compared to the hot air balloon.

Liang Yubin and He Cheng were equally excited. They had become somewhat obsessed with hot air balloons and now couldn't get enough of the hydrogen balloon.

The two of them climbed into the balloon. The people below loosened the ropes, and the hydrogen balloon immediately rose higher and higher.

"Your Highness, we're off!" Liang Yubin and He Cheng shouted excitedly. From the ground, their figures became smaller and smaller, eventually turning into tiny black dots in the sky.

"This is incredible!" Lin Wentao exclaimed, astonished at how high the hydrogen balloon was flying.

Xiao Ming nodded with satisfaction. "Hot air balloons can only reach a few hundred meters, while hydrogen balloons can soar thousands of meters high."

However, as he watched the two men flying higher and higher, Xiao Ming began to worry.

The hydrogen balloon technology was still new, and he didn't want anything to happen to them. But his worry was unnecessary. After a while, Liang Yubin and He Cheng lowered the altitude and quickly returned to Bowen Academy.

Seeing this, Xiao Ming sighed in relief. Now he could take the hot air balloon to Chang'an, hoping to sell it for a good price.