

I. Dynasty 373

Chapter 373: The Use of Hydrogen

Under the bright sunlight, the hydrogen balloon slowly descended from the sky, and suddenly, cheers erupted.

The students from Bowen Academy who had participated in the hydrogen balloon experiment were all excited. To them, this was yet another step forward in technology.

These students, who had once been called useless, were now able to create great things with their knowledge and hands.

And most importantly, their achievements had been recognized by Prince Qi, and they would even be awarded titles of nobility.

This recognition was both an honor and an encouragement.

In the past, they studied hard, hoping to rise up one day. Now, through applying their knowledge, they could achieve the same goals, and they realized there was no need to waste their entire lives on the imperial exams.

What mattered more was that they were increasingly in love with their homeland. They were willing to dedicate their lives to transforming their hometown into an ideal world.

“Good!” Xiao Ming clapped and cheered along with them.

His eyes swept across the students, and in their eyes, he saw not just passion for science, but also a longing for the future.

He was very pleased. It seemed that the ideological education course he had specifically added to the academy was making an impact on these students.

This course mainly focused on guiding the students' mindset—emphasizing love for their homeland, loyalty to the country, and the need to fight for the rise of the Six Prefectures.

Of course, the “country” they referred to was Xiao Ming's territory, and the loyalty was directed toward him, not Xiao Wenxuan.

In fact, because the vassal states had a weak relationship with the imperial court, the people of Xiao Ming's territory only recognized him as their ruler.

Especially in his territory, the people only acknowledged him and not the court.

It was simple—since they had received no substantial benefits from the imperial court, they saw Xiao Ming as their true ruler.

“Your Highness, I'm afraid I'm late.”

Just as the hydrogen balloon landed, Lu Tong hurried over, out of breath.

Xiao Ming smiled. "You're a little late, but the good news is, your hydrogen balloon was a success. But I have to say, your greatest contribution isn't the hydrogen balloon."

Lin Wentao, standing nearby, laughed and said to Lu Tong, "You were right all along. Since His Highness said it, the hydrogen balloon must be more impressive than the hot air balloon. But don't get too smug, our physics students are gearing up, and they'll definitely surpass you."

Lu Tong laughed heartily and said, "I don't deserve any credit. All the credit is in the textbooks. You physics students just need to study the books more."

He paused for a moment, then turned to Xiao Ming and said, "Hydrogen can burn and even refine metals. Is Your Highness planning to use hydrogen to refine tungsten?"

"Mm, you're right," Xiao Ming said. "The charcoal method for refining tungsten creates too many impurities, but using hydrogen will give us pure tungsten powder." He continued, "I plan to set up a specialized metal smelting factory. Not just tungsten powder, but we'll also smelt other rare metals there. The Chemistry Department will need to cooperate with this."

With the development of industry, the demand for various metals would continue to rise. Establishing an early-stage metal smelting factory was crucial, whether it was for gold, silver, copper, or other metals, as smelting remained a difficult task in this era.

Moreover, Xiao Ming's goal was to extract minerals from all over the world, so a well-established smelting system was very important. He needed more than just raw ores.

Lu Tong nodded and said, “Yes, Your Highness. However, the Chemistry Department is a bit understaffed. Perhaps you could consider recruiting more students this year.”

“We also need more students in the Physics Department,” Lin Wentao added, not willing to be left behind.

Xiao Ming frowned. Both Lu Tong and Lin Wentao were some of the first students at Bowen Academy, and he had personally taught them.

After two years of study, they had mastered elementary and middle school chemistry and physics, and even some high school-level knowledge. However, the reason they hadn’t yet implemented many of the things in the textbooks was due to a lack of materials and a weak industrial foundation.

Now, with the increasing specialization of industry, the students at the academy were becoming involved in practical construction. As a result, they were starting to run into shortages.

“Since that’s the case, you can each recruit your own students. You’re no longer the people who knew nothing. You can make decisions on your own, but just make sure to report it to the government office and inform me,” Xiao Ming said after a moment of thought.

Lu Tong and Lin Wentao nodded. This was a further delegation of power from Prince Qi to them. Now, they were expected to handle things themselves, with only the obligation to report back to Xiao Ming.

After discussing this, Xiao Ming instructed Lu Tong and the artisans from the Machinery Department to finalize the process for hydrogen refining tungsten and develop a complete refining procedure.

He then rewarded the students who participated in the project before they left.

He also briefly spoke with Liang Yubin and He Cheng, telling them to prepare for their upcoming trip to Chang'an.

On the way back, Xiao Ming felt that his approach was correct. Now, he needed to turn the knowledge he had gathered into textbooks for the students to implement.

However, the textbooks were still few in number, so there was more work to be done. His next step was to gradually improve Qingzhou's industrial system.

After dealing with hydrogen balloons and related matters for the entire afternoon, Xiao Ming only met with the merchants from the Chamber of Commerce the next day to discuss the supplies they had provided for the northern campaign.

"Your Highness, here are the details of the supplies provided by the merchants."

In the Chamber of Commerce president's office, Li Kaiyuan handed Xiao Ming a ledger.

Opening the ledger, Xiao Ming carefully reviewed it. For this northern campaign, Cao Zhengyang alone had provided supplies worth 100,000 taels.

These supplies included grain, silver, ores, and other goods.

Aside from Cao Zhengyang, local Qingzhou merchants had also contributed significantly. Although Qingzhou merchants didn't have as much money as Cao Zhengyang, many more of them had participated.

Each contributed five or ten thousand, adding up to more than 500,000 taels.

According to Pang Yukun, the northern campaign had consumed around 500,000 taels in supplies, but Xiao Ming had not only avoided a loss but had actually made a profit of 100,000 taels.

Smiling, Xiao Ming looked at the 103 merchants seated around him. He then spread out a large map on the table.

It was a map of Youzhou.

He then addressed the merchants, "What I say is final. Now is the time for you to reap the rewards. I want everyone to know that following me means there's profit to be made."