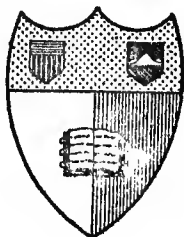


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古 今 詩 選

CHINESE POETRY

IN ENGLISH VERSE

Chas. M. Mason

BY

2/4/13

HERBERT A. GILES

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PROFESSOR OF CHINESE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

LONDON

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*Dear Land of Flowers, forgive me! — that I took
These snatches from thy glittering wealth of song,
And twisted to the uses of a book
Strains that to alien harps can ne'er belong.*

*Thy gems shine purer in their native bed
Concealed, beyond the pry of vulgar eyes;
And there, through labyrinths of language led,
The patient student grasps the glowing prize.*

*Yet many, in their race toward other goals,
May joy to feel, albeit at second-hand,
Some far faint heart-throb of poetic souls
Whose breath makes incense in the Flowery Land.*

H. A. G.

Cambridge: October 1898.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN

Don't come in, sir, please!

Don't break my willow-trees!

Not that *that* would very much grieve me;
But alack-a-day! what would my parents say?

And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

Don't cross my wall, sir, please!

Don't spoil my mulberry-trees!

Not that *that* would very much grieve me;
But alack-a-day! what would my brothers
say?

And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

Keep outside, sir, please !

Don't spoil my sandal-trees !

Not that *that* would very much grieve me ;
But alack-a-day ! what the world would say !

And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

*Odes*¹

TO A MAN

You seemed a guileless youth enough,
Offering for silk your woven stuff;²
But silk was not required by you:
I was the silk you had in view.
With you I crossed the ford, and while
We wandered on for many a mile
I said, "I do not wish delay,
But friends must fix our wedding-day
Oh, do not let my words give pain,
But with the autumn come again."

And then I used to watch and wait
To see you passing through the gate;
And sometimes when I watched in vain,
My tears would flow like falling rain;

But when I saw my darling boy,
I laughed and cried aloud for joy.
The fortune-tellers, you declared,
Had all pronounced us duly paired;
“Then bring a carriage,” I replied,
“And I’ll away to be your bride.”

The mulberry-leaf, not yet undone
By autumn chill, shines in the sun.
O tender dove, I would advise,
Beware the fruit that tempts thy eyes! ^{3*}
O maiden fair, not yet a spouse,
List lightly not to lovers’ vows!
A man may do this wrong, and time
Will fling its shadow o’er his crime;
A woman who has lost her name
Is doomed to everlasting shame.

The mulberry-tree upon the ground
Now sheds its yellow leaves around.

Three years have slipped away from me,
Since first I shared your poverty;
And now again, alas the day!
Back through the ford I take my way.
My heart is still unchanged, but you
Have uttered words now proved untrue;
And you have left me to deplore
A love that can be mine no more.

For three long years I was your wife,
And led in truth a toilsome life;
Early to rise and late to bed,
Each day alike passed o'er my head.
I honestly fulfilled my part;
And you, — well, you have broke my heart.
The truth my brothers will not know,
So all the more their gibes will flow.
I grieve in silence and repine
That such a wretched fate is mine.

Ah, hand in hand to face old age! —
Instead, I turn a bitter page.
Oh for the river-banks of yore;
Oh for the much-loved marshy shore;
The hours of girlhood, with my hair
Ungathered, as we lingered there.
The words we spoke, that seemed so true,
I little thought that I should rue;
I little thought the vows we swore
Would some day bind us two no more.

Odes

THE CRICKET

The cricket chirrups in the hall,

The year is dying fast;

Now let us hold high festival

help Ere the days and months be past.

Yet push not revels to excess

That our fair fame be marred; *損傷*

Lest pleasures verge to wickedness *不正當的*

Let each be on his guard.

Odes

THE HUSBANDMAN'S SONG

Work, work, — from the rising sun
Till sunset comes and the day is done
 I plough the sod
 And harrow the clod,
And meat and drink both come to me,
So what care I for the powers that be?

Anon

YAO'S ADVICE

With trembling heart and cautious steps

Walk daily in fear of God.....

Though you never trip over a mountain,

You may often trip over a clod.

Anon

INSCRIPTION ON A WASH-BASIN

Oh, rather than sink in the world's foul tide
I would sink in the bottomless main;
For he who sinks in the world's foul tide
In noisome depths shall for ever abide,
But he who sinks in the bottomless main
May hope to float to the surface again.

Anon

UNPOPULARITY

Among birds the phœnix, among fishes
the leviathan holds the chiefest place;
Cleaving the crimson clouds,
the phœnix soars apace,
With only the blue sky above,
far into the realms of space;
But the grandeur of heaven and earth
is as naught to the hedge-sparrow race.
And the leviathan rises in one ocean
to go to rest in a second,
While the depth of a puddle by a humble
minnow as the depth of the sea is reckoned.
And just as with birds and fishes,
so too it is with man;

NEGLECTED

Green grows the grass upon the bank,
 The willow-shoots are long and lank;
 A lady in a glistening gown
 Opens the casement and looks down.
 The roses on her cheek blush bright,
 Her rounded arm is dazzling white;
 A singing-girl in early life,
 And now a careless roué's wife
 Ah, if he does not mind his own,
 He'll find some day the bird has flown!

Mei Shêng, 2nd cent. B.C.

PARTED

The red hibiscus and the reed,
The fragrant flowers of marsh and mead, —
All these I gather as I stray,
As though for one now far away.
I strive to pierce with straining eyes
The distance that between us lies.
Alas that hearts which beat as one
Should thus be parted and undone!

Mei Shêng

AMARI ALIQUID

The autumn blast drives the white scud in
the sky,
Leaves fade, and wild geese sweeping south
meet the eye;
The scent of late flowers fills the soft air
above,
My heart full of thoughts of the lady I love.
In the river the barges for revel-carouse
Are lined by white waves which break over
their bows;
Their oarsmen keep time to the piping and
drumming.....

Yet joy is as naught
Alloyed by the thought
That youth slips away and that old age
is coming.

Liu Ch'ê, B.C. 156—87.⁵

GONE ⁶

The sound of rustling silk is stilled,
With dust the marble courtyard filled;
No footfalls echo on the floor,
Fallen leaves in heaps block up the door....
For she, my pride, my lovely one is lost,
And I am left, in hopeless anguish tossed.

Liu Chê

THE AUTUMN FAN.

O fair white silk, fresh from the weaver's
loom,
Clear as the frost, bright as the winter
snow —
See! friendship fashions out of thee a fan,
Round as the round moon shines in heaven
above;
At home, abroad, a close companion thou,
Stirring at every move the grateful gale;
And yet I fear, ah me! that autumn chills,
Cooling the dying summer's torrid rage,
Will see thee laid neglected on the shelf,
All thought of by gone days, like them
by-gone.

*The Lady Pan, 1st cent. B.C.*⁷

Man, a poor traveller on earth below,
Is gone, while brass and stone can still
outlast.

Time is inexorable, and in vain
Against his might the holiest mortal
strives;

Can *we* then hope this precious boon to
gain,

By strange elixirs to prolong our lives?...
Oh, rather quaff good liquor while we may,
And dress in silk and satin every day!

Anon, 1st cent. B.C.

A FIRST-BORN

The wanderer reaches home with joy
From absence of a year and more;
His eye seeks a beloved boy —
His wife lies weeping on the floor.

They whisper he is gone. The glooms
Of evening fall; beyond the gate
A lonely grave in outline looms
To greet the sire who came too late.

Forth to the little mound he flings,
Where wild-flowers bloom on every side ...
His bones are in the Yellow Springs,
His flesh like dust is scattered wide.

“O child who never knew thy sire,
 For ever now to be unknown,
 Ere long thy wandering ghost shall tire
 Of flitting friendless and alone.

“O son, man’s greatest earthly boon,
 With thee I bury hopes and fears.”
 He bowed his head in grief and soon
 His breast was wet with rolling tears.

Life’s dread uncertainty he knows,
 But oh for this untimely close!

*K'ung Jung, Died A.D. 208.*¹¹

To the fair epidendrum
 the prairie gives birth;
And the clouds in the sky,
 they come not at call;
And the fickle breeze rises,
 alas, but to fall.
And so I am left
 with my thoughts to repine,
And think of that loved one
 who ne'er can be mine.

Fu Mi. 3rd and 4th cent. A.D.

AFTER PARTING

Thy chariot and horses
 have gone, and I fret
 And long for the lover
 I ne'er can forget.

O wanderer, bound
 in far countries to dwell,
 Would I were thy shadow! —
 I'd follow thee well.

And though clouds and though darkness
 my presence should hide,
 In the bright light of day
 I would stand by thy side!

Fu Mi

TRUE PLEASURES

The bright moon shining overhead,
The stream beneath the breeze's touch,
Are pure and perfect joys indeed, —
But few are they who think them such.

Anon

A RECLUSE

A scholar lives on yonder hill,
 His clothes are rarely whole to view,
 Nine times a month he eats his fill,
 Once in ten years his hat is new.
 — A wretched lot! — and yet the while
 He ever wears a sunny smile.

Longing to know what like was he,
 At dawn my steps a path unclosed
 Where dark firs left the passage free
 And on the eaves the white clouds dozed.

But he, as spying my intent,
 Seized his guitar and swept the strings;
 Up flew a crane towards heaven bent,
 And now a startled pheasant springs.....
 Oh, let me rest with thee until
 The winter winds again blow chill!

T'ao Ch'ien, A. D. 365—427

A PRAYER

Ye fluttering birds in plumage gay
 That to and fro direct your flight, —
 The Western Mother's¹⁴ court by day,
 The far-off mountain-peaks at night, —
 Oh, be my messengers and go
 And bear to her these words of mine:
 I ask for nothing here below
 Save length of years and depth of wine!

T'ao Ch'ien

SIC TRANSIT

A tower a hundred feet erect
Looks round upon the scene which girds;
'Tis here at eve the clouds collect,
At dawn a trysting-place for birds.

Here hills and streams the observer hold,
Or boundless prairie mocks the eyes:
Some famous warriors of old
Made this their bloody battle-prize.

The centuries of time roll on,
And I, a traveller, passing there,
Mark firs and cypresses all gone,
And grave-mounds, high and low, laid
bare.

The ruined tombs uncared-for stand —
Where do their wandering spirits hide? —
Oh, glory makes us great and grand,
And yet it has its seamy side.

T'ao Ch'ien

That in her life joy rarely comes
to bring relief.....

Oh for the humble turtle's flight,
my mate and I;

Not the lone crane far out of sight
beyond the sky!

Pao Chao, died A.D. 466

FORGOTTEN

To learn the art of fencing, forth
I wandered, with my master, north.
I saw an ancient battle-plain
Engirt by hills which still remain;
And while I gazed upon the scene,
A wide expanse of sky and green,
I thought how like a summer's day
Each warrior's name has passed away.

Chiang Yen,
A. D. 443—504

ULTIMATE CAUSES

Trees grow, not alike,
 by the mound and the moat;
Birds sing in the forest
 with varying note;
Of the fish in the river
 some dive and some float.
The mountains rise high
 and the waters sink low,
But the why and the wherefore
 we never can know.

Hsiao Yen

A.D. 464—549

REGRETS

My eyes saw not the men of old;
And now their age away has rolled
I weep — to think I shall not see
The heroes of posterity!

Chên Tzū-ang,
A. D. 656—698.

AGAINST IDOLS

On Self the Prophet¹⁶ never rests his eye,
His to relieve the doom of humankind;
No fairy palaces beyond the sky,
Rewards to come, are present to his mind.

And I have heard the faith by Buddha taught
Lauded as pure and free from earthly
taint;
Why then these carved and graven idols,
fraught
With gold and silver, gems, and jade,
and paint?

The heavens that roof this earth, mountain
and dale,
All that is great and grand shall pass
away;
And if the art of gods may not prevail,
Shall man's poor handiwork escape decay?

Fools that ye are! In this ignoble light
The true faith fades and passes out of sight.

Ch'ên Tzū-ang

THE RETURN

Bowed down with age I seek my native place,
Unchanged my speech, my hair is silvered
now;
My very children do not know my face,
But smiling ask, "O stranger, whence art
thou?"

*Ho Chih-chang, born
A. D. 659*

BY MOONLIGHT

Over the sea the round moon rises bright,
And floods the horizon with its silver light.
In absence lovers grieve that nights should be,
But all the livelong night I think of thee.
I blow my lamp out to enjoy this rest,
And shake the gathering dewdrop from
my vest.

Alas! I cannot share with thee these beams,
So lay me down to seek thee in my dreams.

Chang Chiu-ling,
A. D. 673—740

AT ANCHOR

I steer my boat to anchor
 by the mist-clad river eyot,
 And mourn the dying day that brings me
 nearer to my fate.
 Across the woodland wild I see
 the sky lean on the trees,
 While close to hand the mirrored moon
 floats on the shining seas.

Mèng Hao-jan

OVERLOOKED

Beneath the bamboo grove, alone,
I seize my lute and sit and croon;
No ear to hear me, save mine own;
No eye to see me, save the moon.

Wang Wei
A. D. 699—759

GOODBYE

We parted at the gorge and cried "Good
cheer!"

The sun was setting as I closed my door;
Methought, the spring will come again next
year,

But he may come no more.

Wang Wei

A RENCONTRE

Sir, from my dear old home you come,
And all its glories you can name;
Oh tell me, — has the winter-plum
Yet blossomed o'er the window-frame?

Wang Wei

TO A FIREFLY¹⁸

Rain cannot quench thy lantern's light,
Wind makes it shine more brightly bright;
Oh why not fly to heaven afar,
And twinkle near the moon — a star?

Li Po

A. D. 705—762.

NIGHT THOUGHTS

I wake, and moonbeams play around my
bed,
Glittering like hoar-frost to my wondering
eyes;
Up towards the glorious moon I raise my
head,
Then lay me down, — and thoughts of
home arise.

Li Po

COMPANIONS

The birds have all flown to their roost in
the tree,
The last cloud has just floated lazily by ;
But we never tire of each other, not we,
As we sit there together, — the moun-
tains and I.

Li Po

FROM A BELVIDERE

With yellow leaves the hill is strown,
A young wife gazes o'er the scene,
The sky with grey clouds overthrown,
While autumn swoops upon the green.

See, Tartar troops mass on the plain;
Homeward our envoy hurries on;
When will her lord come back again?...
To find her youth and beauty gone!

Li Po

“THE BEST OF LIFE IS BUT...”

What is life after all but a dream?

And why should such pother be made?
 Better far to be tipsy, I deem,
 And doze all day long in the shade.

When I wake and look out on the lawn,
 I hear midst the flowers a bird sing;
 I ask, “Is it evening or dawn?”
 The mango-bird whistles, “’Tis spring.”

Overpower’d with the beautiful sight,
 Another full goblet I pour,
 And would sing till the moon rises bright —
 But soon I’m as drunk as before.

Li Po

FAREWELL BY THE RIVER

The breeze blows the willow-scent in from
the dell,
While Phyllis with bumpers would fain
cheer us up ;
Dear friends press around me to bid me
farewell :
Goodbye! and goodbye! — and yet just
one more cup
I whisper, Thou'lt see this great stream
flow away
Ere I cease to love as I love thee today!
Li Po

GONE

At the Yellow-Crane pagoda¹⁹, where we
stopped to bid adieu,
The mists and flowers of April seemed
to wish good speed to you.
At the Emerald Isle, your lessening sail had
vanished from my eye,
And left me with the River, rolling onward
to the sky.

Li Po

NO INSPIRATION

The autumn breeze is blowing,
The autumn moon is glowing,
The falling leaves collect but to disperse.
The parson-crow flies here and there
with ever restless feet;
I think of you and wonder much
when you and I shall meet.....
Alas tonight I cannot pour my feelings
forth in verse!

Li Po

GENERAL HSIEH AN²⁰

I anchor at the Newchew hill,
 The autumn sky serene and still,
 And watch the moon her crescent fill,
 And vainly think on him by whom
 this shore was made renowned.
 Though mine is no ungraceful lay,
 He cannot hear the words I say,
 And I must sail at break of day
 And all this while the maple leaves
 are fluttering to the ground.

Li Po

A FAREWELL

Where blue hills cross the northern sky,
Beyond the moat which girds the town,
'Twas there we stopped to say Goodbye!
And one white sail alone dropped down.
Your heart was full of wandering thought;
For me, — my sun had set indeed;
To wave a last adieu we sought,
Voiced for us by each whinnying steed!

Li Po

BOYHOOD FANCIES ²¹

In days gone by the moon appeared
to my still boyish eyes
Some bright jade plate or mirror from
the palace of the skies.
I used to see the Old Man's legs
and Cassias fair as gods can make them,
I saw the White Hare pounding drugs,
and wondered who was there to take them.
Ah, how I watched the eclipsing Toad,
and marked the ravages it made,
And longed for him who slew the suns
and all the angels' fears allayed.
Then when the days of waning came,
and scarce a silver streak remained,
I wept to lose my favourite thus,
and cruel grief my eyelids stained.

Li Po

FROM THE PALACE

Cold dews of night the terrace crown,
And soak my stockings and my gown;
I'll step behind
The crystal blind,
And watch the autumn moon sink down.

Li Po

THE POET

You ask what my soul does away in the sky,
I inwardly smile but I cannot reply;
Like the peach-blossom carried away by the
stream,
I soar to a world of which you cannot dream.

Li Po

TEARS

A fair girl draws the blind aside
And sadly sits with drooping head;
I see her burning tear-drops glide
But know not why those tears are shed.

Li Po

IN A MIRROR

My whitening hair would make a long long
rope,
Yet could not fathom all my depth of woe;
Though how it comes within a mirror's scope
To sprinkle autumn frosts, I do not know.

Li Po

SSŪ-MA HSIANG-JU ²⁵

'Twas here, from sickness sore oppressed,
 He found relief on Wên-chün's breast;
 'Twas here the vulgar tavern lay
 On mountain cloud-capped night and day.
 And still mid flowers and leaves I trace
 Her fluttering robe, her tender face;
 But ah! the phoenix calls in vain,
 Such mate shall not be seen again.

Tu Fu

THE HERMIT

Alone I wandered o'er the hills
 to seek the hermit's den,
 While sounds of chopping rang around
 the forest's leafy glen.
 I passed on ice across the brook
 which had not ceased to freeze,
 As the slanting rays of afternoon
 shot sparkling through the trees.

I found he did not joy to gloat
 o'er fetid wealth by night,
 But far from taint, to watch the deer
 in the golden morning light.....
 My mind was clear at coming;
 but now I've lost my guide,
 And rudderless my little bark
 is drifting with the tide!²⁶

Tu Fu

A PICNIC

The sun is setting as we loose the boat,
 And lightly o'er the breeze-swept waters
float.

We seek a corner where the bamboo grows,
 And fragrant lilies offer cool repose.

Here well-iced draughts of wine the men
prepare,

With lotus shredded fine by fingers fair

But now a black cloud gathering in the sky
 Warns me to finish off my verse and fly.

Tu Fu

THE PRESSGANG

There, where at eve I sought a bed,
A pressgang came, recruits to hunt;
Over the wall the goodman sped,
And left his wife to bear the brunt.

Ah me! the cruel serjeant's rage!
Ah me! how sadly she anon
Told all her story's mournful page, —
How three sons to the war had gone;

How one had sent a line to say
That two had been in battle slain:
He, from the fight had run away,
But they could ne'er come back again,

She swore 'twas all the family —
 Except a grandson at the breast;
His mother too was there, but she
 Was all in rags and tatters drest.

The crone with age was troubled sore,
 But for herself she'd not think twice
To journey to the seat of war
 And help to cook the soldiers' rice.

The night wore on and stopped her talk;
 Then sobs upon my hearing fell.....
At dawn when I set forth to walk,
 Only the goodman cried Farewell!

Tu Fu

IN THE HAREM

It was the time of flowers, the gate was
closed;
Within an arbour's shade fair girls reposed.
But though their hearts were full, they
nothing said,
Fearing the tell-tale parrot overhead.

Chu Ch'ing-yü

OH STAY

We shall meet, I believe you, again;
 Yet to part! — such a beautiful night.....
 Shall friendship and wine ask in vain
 What a head-wind would take as its right?

Ssü-k'ung Shu
8th cent. A.D.

SPRING JOYS

When freshets cease in early spring
 and the river dwindles low,
 I take my staff and wander
 by the banks where wild flowers grow.
 I watch the willow-catkins
 wildly whirled on every side;
 I watch the falling peach-bloom
 lightly floating down the tide.

Wei Ying-wu

8th cent. A.D.

REMEMBRANCES

In autumn, when the nights are chill,
I stroll, and croon, and think of thee.
When dropping pine-cones strew the hill,
Say, hast thou waking dreams of me?

Wei Ying-wu

BUDDHISM

A shrine, whose eaves in far-off cloudland
hide:

I mount, and with the sun stand side by
side.

The air is clear; I see wide forests spread
And mist-crowned heights where Kings of
old lie dead.

Scarce o'er my threshold peeps the Southern
Hill;

The Wei shrinks through my window to
a rill.....

O thou Pure Faith, had I but known thy
scope,

The Golden God had long since been my
hope!

Ts'ên Ts'an
8th cent. A.D.

LONELY

The evening sun slants o'er the village
street;
My griefs alas! in solitude are borne;
Along the road no wayfarers I meet, —
Naught but the autumn breeze across
the corn.

Kêng Wei
8th cent. A.D.

AT DAWN

Drive the young orioles away,
Nor let them on the branches play;
Their chirping breaks my slumber through
And keeps me from my dreams of you.

Ka Chia-yün

8th cent. A.D.

NOSTALGIA

'Tis autumn, and I watch the streams
Which towards my dear home flow;
I span the distance in my dreams,
And wake to deeper woe.

I cannot read to ease my care,
But solace seek in wine,
And think of friends all gathered there —
When will that lot be mine?

Chang Wei
8th cent. A.D.

AT THE WARS

See the young wife whose bosom ne'er
 has ached with cruel pain! —
 In gay array she mounts the tower
 when spring comes round again.
 Sudden she sees the willow-trees
 their newest green put on,
 And sighs for her husband far away
 in search of glory gone.

Wang Ch'ang-ling
8th cent. A.D.

A MESSAGE

Onwards tonight my storm-beat course I
steer,
At dawn these mountains will for ever
fade;
Should those I leave behind enquire my
cheer,
Tell them, "an icy heart in vase of jade."

Wang Ch'ang-ling

HOPE

Last eve thou wert a bride,
This morn thy dream is o'er.....
Cast not thy rouge aside,
He may be thine once more.

Ch'üan Tè-yü

A.D. 759—818

THE WOUNDED FALCON

Within a ditch beyond my wall
I saw a falcon headlong fall.
Bedaubed with mud and racked with pain,
It beat its wings to rise, in vain;
While little boys threw tiles and stones,
Eager to break the wretch's bones.

O bird, methinks thy life of late
Hath amply justified this fate!
Thy sole delight to kill and steal,
And then exultingly to wheel,
Now sailing in the clear blue sky,
Now on the wild gale sweeping by,
Scorning thy kind of less degree
As all unfit to mate with thee.

But mark how fortune's wheel goes round;

A pellet lays thee on the ground,
 Sore stricken at some vital part, —
 And where is then thy pride of heart?

What's this to me? — I could not bear
 To see the fallen one lying there.
 I begged its life, and from the brook
 Water to wash its wounds I took.
 Fed it with bits of fish by day,
 At night from foxes kept away.
 My care I knew would naught avail
 For gratitude, that empty tale.
 And so this bird would crouch and hide
 Till want its stimulus applied;
 And I, with no reward to hope,
 Allowed its callousness full scope.

Last eve the bird showed signs of rage,
 With health renewed, and beat its cage.
 Today it forced a passage through,
 And took its leave, without adieu.

Good luck hath saved thee, not desert;

Beware, O bird, of further hurt;
Beware the archer's deadly tools! —
'Tis hard to escape the shafts of fools —
Nor e'er forget the chastening ditch
That found thee poor, and left thee rich. ³⁰

Han Yü

A.D. 768—824

HOURS OF IDLENESS

A little lake of mine I know,
 Where waving weeds and rushes grow,
 And in its depths by day and night
 The water-monsters swarm and fight.
 Ah, how I loved to idle there!
 But now I can no longer bear
 To pass my days in that sweet spot,
 And lost in meditation rot.
 A sense of duty gives me pause,
 Obedient to my Master's³¹ laws;
 Our span of life is all too short
 To waste its hours in empty sport.

Han Yü

MEDITATIONS

The leaves fall fluttering from the trees,
And now, responsive to the breeze,
Rustling with weird uncanny sound,
Are dancing merrily around.

On my lone hall the dusk has come
And there I sit in silence dumb.

My servant glides into the room
And with a lamp dispels the gloom.
He speaks; I give him no reply.

He proffers food; in vain. Then I
Move to escape his wondering looks
And seek a refuge in my books.

Alas, the men who charm me so
Perished a thousand years ago!

And while I muse o'er human fate

My heart grows less and less elate

“O boy, whose eyes stare from your head,

“Put up those books and get to bed,

“And leave me to the dreary naught

“Of endless, overwhelming thought.”

Han Yü

DISCONTENT

To stand upon the river-bank
 and snare the purple fish,
My net well cast across the stream,
 was all that I could wish.
Or lie concealed and shoot the geese
 that scream and pass apace,
And pay my rent and taxes with
 the profits of the chase.
Then home to peace and happiness,
 with wife and children gay,
Though clothes be coarse and fare be hard,
 and earned from day to day.
But now I read and read, scarce knowing
 what 'tis all about,
And eager to improve my mind
 I wear my body out.

I draw a snake and give it legs,
 to find I've wasted skill,
 And my hair grows daily whiter
 as I hurry towards the hill.³²
 I sit amid the sorrows
 I have brought on my own head,
 And find myself estranged from all,
 among the living dead.
 I seek to drown my consciousness
 in wine, alas! in vain:
 Oblivion passes quickly
 and my griefs begin again.
 Old age comes on and yet withholds
 the summons to depart.....
 So I'll take another bumper
 just to ease my aching heart.

Han Yü

HUMANITY

Oh spare the busy morning fly!
Spare the mosquitos of the night!
And if their wicked trade they ply
Let a partition stop their flight.

Their span is brief from birth to death;
Like you they bite their little day;
And then, with autumn's earliest breath,
Like you too they are swept away.

Han Yü

SUMMER DYING

Whence comes the autumn's whistling blast,
With flocks of wild geese hurrying past?.....
Alas, when wintry breezes burst,
The lonely traveller hears them first!

Liu Yü-hsi

A.D. 772—842

AT AN OLD PALACE

Deserted now the Imperial bowers
 Save by some few poor lonely flowers.....
 One white-haired dame,
 An Emperor's flame,
 Sits down and tells of bygone hours.

Yüan Chên

A.D. 779—831

A CAST-OFF FAVOURITE

The dewdrops gleam on bright spring flowers
 whose scent is borne along;
 Beneath the moon the palace rings
 with sounds of lute and song.
 It seems that the clepsydra⁸⁶
 has been filled up with the sea,
 To make the long long night appear
 an endless night to me!

Li I

died A.D. 827

THE CHASTE WIFE'S REPLY

Knowing, fair sir, my matrimonial thrall,
 Two pearls thou sentest me, costly withal.
 And I, seeing that Love thy heart possessed,
 I wrapped them coldly in my silken vest.

For mine is a household of high degree,
 My husband captain in the King's army;
 And one with wit like thine should say,
 "The troth of wives is for ever and ay."

With thy two pearls I send thee back
two tears:
 Tears — that we did not meet in earlier
years!

Chang Chi

8th and 9th cent. A.D.

TASTE

The landscape which the poet loves
 is that of early May,
 When budding greenness half concealed
 enwraps each willow spray.
 That beautiful embroidery
 the days of summer yield,
 Appeals to every bumpkin
 who may take his walks afield.

Yang Chü-yüan
8th and 9th cent. A.D.

A LOST LOVE ³⁷

Too late, alas!..... I came to find
 the lovely spring had fled.
 Yet must I not regret the days
 of youth that now are dead;
 For though the rosy buds of spring
 the cruel winds have laid,
 Behold the clustering fruit that hangs
 beneath the leafy shade!

Tu Mu

A.D. 803—852

THE OLD PLACE

A wilderness alone remains,
 all garden glories gone;
The river runs unheeded by,
 weeds grow unheeded on.
Dusk comes, the east wind blows, and birds
 pipe forth a mournful sound;
Petals, like nymphs from balconies,
 come tumbling to the ground.

Tu Mu

THE NIGHT COMES

'Tis evening, and in restless vein
At the old mount I slacken rein:
 The glorious day
 Fades fast away
And naught but twilight glooms remain!

Li Shang-yin

A.D. 813—858

SOUVENIRS

You ask when I'm coming: alas, not just
yet.....

How the rain filled the pools on that night
when we met!

Ah, when shall we ever snuff candles again,
And recall the glad hours of that evening
of rain?

Li Shang-yin

A SPRING FEAST

The paddy crops are waxing rich
 upon the Goose-Lake hill;
 The fowls have just now gone to roost,
 the grunting pigs are still;
 The mulberry casts a lengthening shade, —
 the festival is o'er,
 And tipsy revellers are helped
 each to his cottage door.

Chang Yen
9th cent. A.D.

ESCAPE

Confusion overwhelming me,
 as in a drunken dream,
 I note that spring has fled
 and wander off to hill and stream;
 With a friendly Buddhist priest I seek
 a respite from the strife
 And manifold anomalies
 which go to make up life.

Li Shê
9th cent. A.D.

ON HIGHWAYMEN³⁹

The rainy mist sweeps gently
 o'er the village by the stream,
When from the leafy forest glades
 the brigand daggers gleam.....
And yet there is no need to fear
 or step from out their way,
For more than half the world consists
 of bigger rogues than they!

Li Shê

A STORM

No rain, and lovely flowers bloom around;
Rain falls, and battered petals strew the
ground.

The bees and butterflies flit, one and all,
To seek the spring beyond my neighbour's
wall.

Wang Chia
9th cent. A.D.

WHERE ARE THEY?

Alone I mount to the kiosque which stands
 on the river-bank, and sigh,
While the moonbeams dance on the tops
 of the waves
 where the waters touch the sky;
For the lovely scene is to last year's scene
 as like as like can be,
All but the friends, the much-loved friends,
 who gazed at the moon with me.

Chao Chia
9th cent. A.D.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT AN INN

Here in this inn no friend is nigh;
 We sit alone, my lamp and I,
 A thousand miles from love and smiles,
 To see another year pass by.

Ah me, that ever I was born!
 Is life worth living, thus forlorn?
 Youth, beauty, pass; and yet alas
 It will be spring tomorrow morn.

Tai Shu-lun
9th cent. A.D.

MUSING

At eve, along the river bank,
The mist-crowned wavelets lure me on
To think how all antiquity
Has floated down the stream and gone!

Hsieh Jung
9th cent. A.D.

UT MELIUS

In youth I went to study TAO⁴¹
 at its living fountain-head,
 And then lay tipsy half the day
 upon a gilded bed.
 "What oaf is this," the Master cried,
 "content with human lot?"
 And bade me to the world get back
 and call myself a Sot.
 But wherefore seek immortal life
 by means of wondrous pills?
 Noise is not in the market-place,
 nor quiet on the hills.
 The secret of perpetual youth
 is already known to me:
 Accept with philosophic calm
 whatever fate may be.

Ma Tsü-jan
9th cent. A.D.

MY NEIGHBOUR

When the Bear athwart was lying
And the night was just on dying,
And the moon was all but gone,
How my thoughts did ramble on!

Then a sound of music breaks
From a lute that some one wakes,
And I know that it is she,
The sweet maid next door to me.

And as the strains steal o'er me
Her moth-eyebrows⁴² rise before me,
And I feel a gentle thrill
That her fingers must be chill.

But doors and locks between us
So effectually screen us
That I hasten from the street
And in dreamland pray to meet.

Hsü An-chên

THE SEMPSTRESS

In silk and satin ne'er arrayed,
 My fate to be a lone old maid;
 No handsome bridegroom comes for me
 Dressed in the garb of poverty.
 I learned to sew with skill and grace,
 Though not to paint my brows and face,
 Yet I must ply my golden thread
 For other maids about to wed.

Ch'in T'ao-yü
8th or 9th cent. A.D.

THE TRAVELLER

The stream glides by, the flower fades,
 and neither feels a sting
 That thus they pass and bear away
 the glory of the spring.
 I dream myself once more at home,
 a thousand miles away;
 The night-jar wakes me with its cry
 ere yet 'tis early day.
 Long months have passed and no word comes
 to tell me of my own;
 With each New Year my scattered locks
 have white and whiter grown,
 Ah my dear home, if once within
 thy threshold I could be,
 The Five Lakes and their lovely scenes
 might all go hang for me.

Ts'ui T'u

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

GOLDEN SANDS

I would not have thee grudge those robes
 which gleam in rich array,
 But I would have thee grudge the hours
 of youth which glide away.
 Go pluck the blooming flower betimes,
 lest when thou com'st again
 Alas, upon the withered stem
 no blooming flowers remain!

*Tu Ch'in-niang*⁴³
8th or 9th cent. A.D.

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

Hark to the rapturous melody!

Her white arm o'er the lute she flings....

To break her lover's reverie

She strikes a discord on the strings.

Li Tuan

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

THE SPINSTER

Dim twilight throws a deeper shade
 across the window-screen;
 Alone within a gilded hall
 her tear-drops flow unseen.
 No sound the lonely court-yard stirs;
 the spring is all but through;
 Around the pear-blooms fade and fall.....
 and no one comes to woo.

Liu Fang-p'ing
8th or 9th cent. A.D.

THOUGHTS BY MOONLIGHT

Bright in the void the mirror moon⁴⁴
appears,
 To the hushed music of the heavenly
spheres,
 Full orb'd, while autumn wealth beneath
her lies,
 On her eternal journey through the skies.
 Oh may we ever walk within the light
 Nor lose the true path in the eclipse of night!
 Oh let us mount where rays of glory beam
 And purge our grossness in the Silver
Stream!⁴⁵

Chi P'o

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

VIEW FROM AN OLD TOWER

The story of a thousand years
 In one brief morning lies unrolled;
 Though other voices greet the ears,
 'Tis still the moonlit tower of old.

The heroes of those thousand years?
 Alas! like running water, gone;
 Yet still the fever-blast one hears,
 And still the plum-rain patters on.

'Twas here ambition marched sublime —
 An empty fame scarce marks the spot;
 Away!..... for I will never climb
 To see flowers bloom and man forgot.

Anon

8th and 9th cent. A.D.

HOMEWARD

No letters to the frontier come,
The winter softens into spring.....
I tremble as I draw near home,
And dare not ask what news you bring.

Li Pin
9th cent. A.D.

AN OATH

They swore the Huns should perish:
 they would die if needs they must....
 And now five thousand, sable-clad,
 have bit the Tartar dust.
 Along the river-bank their bones
 lie scattered where they may,
 But still their forms in dreams arise
 to fair ones far away.

Ch'ên Tao

9th and 10th cent. A.D.

TO AN ABSENT FAIR ONE

After parting, dreams possessed me
 and I wandered you know where,
And we sat in the verandah
 and you sang the sweet old air.
Then I woke, with no one near me
 save the moon still shining on,
And lighting up dead petals
 which like you have passed and gone.

Chang Pi
10th cent. A.D.

DISILLUSIONED

For ten long years I plodded through
 the vale of lust and strife,
 Then through my dreams there flashed a ray
 of the old sweet peaceful life.....
 No scarlet-tasselled hat of state
 can vie with soft repose;
 Grand mansions do not taste the joys
 that the poor man's cabin knows.
 I hate the threatening clash of arms
 when fierce retainers throng,
 I loathe the drunkard's revels and
 the sound of fife and song;
 But I love to seek a quiet nook, and
 some old volume bring
 Where I can see the wild flowers bloom
 and hear the birds in spring.

Ch'ên Po

10th cent. A.D.

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND EARTH⁴⁶

Upon this tall pagoda's peak

My hands can nigh the stars enclose;
I dare not raise my voice to speak,
For fear of startling God's repose.

Yang I

A.D. 974—1030

CONSOLATION

The balmy breath of spring must fail
 to reach that distant spot
 Where early wild-flowers do not bloom
 to cheer my exile's lot.
 See how the oranges still hang
 amid the clinging snow,
 And shoots and buds, benumbed by cold,
 around reluctant grow!
 At night your heart is with your home
 when you hear the wild goose cry,
 And your sadness ever deepens
 as the smiling months go by.
 Yet when you think of happy hours
 at Loyang in the past,
 Grieve not that spring is late, but joy
 that spring is yours at last.

Ou-yang Hsiu
A.D. 1007—1072

WAITING

'Tis the festival of Yellow Plums!
 the rain unceasing pours,
 And croaking bullfrogs hoarsely wake
 the echoes out of doors.
 I sit and wait for him in vain,
 while midnight hours go by,
 And push about the chessmen
 till the lamp-wick sinks to die.

Ssü-ma Kuang
A.D. 1019—1086

ANNUAL WORSHIP AT TOMBS

The peach and plum trees smile with flowers
 this famous day of spring,
 And country graveyards round about
 with lamentations ring.
 Thunder has startled insect life
 and roused the gnats and bees,
 A gentle rain has urged the crops
 and soothed the flowers and trees....
 Perhaps on this side lie the bones
 of a wretch whom no one knows;
 On that, the sacred ashes
 of a patriot repose.
 But who across the centuries
 can hope to mark each spot
 Where fool or hero, joined in death,
 beneath the brambles rot?

Huang Ting-chien

A.D. 1050—1110

A WHITE NIGHT

The incense-stick is burnt to ash,
the water-clock is stilled,
The midnight breeze blows sharply by
and all around is chilled.
Yet I am kept from slumber
by the beauty of the spring:
Sweet shapes of flowers across the blind
the quivering moonbeams fling!

Wang An-shih
A.D. 1021—1086

INSOUCIANCE

I wander north, I wander south,
 I rest me where I please.....
 See how the river-banks are nipped
 beneath the autumn breeze!
 Yet what care I if autumn blasts
 the river-banks lay bare?
 The loss of hue to river-banks
 is the river-banks' affair.

Ch'êng Hao
A.D. 1032—1085

SPRING FANCIES

When clouds are thin, and the wind is light,
 about the noontide hour,
I cross the stream, through willow paths
 with all around in flower.
The world knows not my inmost thoughts
 which make me seem a fool;
I'm taken for a truant boy
 escaped from tedious school.

Ch'êng Hao

SPRING NIGHTS

One half-hour of a night in spring
 is worth a thousand tael,
 When the clear sweet scent of flowers is felt
 and the moon her lustre pales;
 When mellowed sounds of song and flute
 are borne along the breeze,
 And through the stilly scene the swing
 sounds swishing from the trees.

Su Shih

A.D. 1036—1101

WHIGS AND TORIES ⁴⁷

Thickly o'er the jasper terrace
 flower shadows play;
In vain I call my garden boy
 to sweep them all away.
They vanish when the sun sets
 in the west, but very soon
They spring to giddy life again
 beneath the rising moon!

Su Shih

SWINGING⁴⁸

Two green silk ropes, with painted stand,
 from heights aerial swing,
 And there outside the house a maid
 disports herself in spring.
 Along the ground her blood-red skirts
 all swiftly swishing fly,
 As though to bear her off to be
 an angel in the sky.
 Strewed thick with fluttering almond-blooms
 the painted stand is seen;
 The embroidered ropes flit to and fro
 amid the willow green.
 Then when she stops and out she springs
 to stand with downcast eyes,
 You think she *is* some angel
 just now banished from the skies.

Hung Chiéh-fan
 11th and 12th cent. A.D.

SUMMER

When ducklings ^{小鸭} seek the puddles, mostly ^{可憐}
 dry,
 In the hot plum-time, with its changeful sky,
 'Tis then in shady ^{涼亭} arbour we carouse, ^{痛飲宴會}
 And strip the golden loquat from the ^{枇杷}
 boughs.

Tai Fu-ku

12th and 13th cent. A.D.

AT A PARK GATE

'Tis closed! — lest trampling footsteps mar
the glory of the green.
Time after time we knock and knock;
no janitor is seen.
Yet bolts and bars can't quite shut in
the spring-time's beauteous pall:
A pink-flowered almond-spray peeps out
athwart the envious wall!

Yeh Shih

A.D. 1150—1223

A MOUNTAIN BROOK

One draught for my poetic soul I take,
 Unconscious river, ^{此河之流} ere thou ^{you} glid'st away
 To serve the orgies of the Western Lake,
 And be no more the pure stream of today.

Lin Hung
12th cent. A.D.

THE THIRD MOON

In May flowers fade, and others come
 to bloom among the leaves,
 While all day long the nesting swallow
 flits around the eaves.
 The night-jar cries half through the night
 until the blood flows fast,
 Ah vainly hoping to recall the
 spring that now is past!

Wang Fêng-yüan
12th cent. A.D.

WORSHIP, AND AFTER ⁴⁹

The northern and the southern hills
 are one large burying-ground,
 And all is life and bustle there
 when the sacred day comes round.
 Burnt paper *cash*, like butterflies,
 fly fluttering far and wide,
 While mourners' robes with tears of blood
 a crimson hue are dyed.
 The sun sets, and the red fox crouches
 down beside the tomb;
 Night comes, and youths and maidens laugh
 where lamps light up the gloom.
 Let him, whose fortune brings him wine,
 get tipsy while he may;
 For no man, when the long night comes,
 can take one drop away!

Kao Chü-nien
12th cent. A.D.

AT HIS CLUB

Long past midnight the wife hears
 the goatsucker's cry,
 And rises to see that the
 silkworms are fed;
 Alas! there's the moon shining
 low in the sky,
 But her husband has not yet
 come back to his bed.

Hsieh Fang-tê
A.D. 1226—1289

AT HIS BOOKS

Shadows of pairing sparrows cross his
book,
Of poplar catkins, dropping overhead.....
The weary student from his window-nook
Looks up to find that spring is long
since dead.

Yeh Li

13th cent. A.D.

AT A MOUNTAIN MONASTERY

I mounted when the cock had just begun,
And reached the convent ere the bells
were done.

A gentle zephyr whispered o'er the lawn;
Behind the wood the moon gave way to
dawn.

And in this pure sweet solitude I lay,
Stretching my limbs out to await the day,
No sound along the willow pathway dim
Save the soft echo of the bonzes' hymn.

Liu Chi

A.D. 1311—1375

OMNES EODEM

A centenarian 'mongst men
Is rare; and if one comes, what then?
The mightiest heroes of the past
Upon the hillside sleep at last.

Liu Chi

APOLOGIA

In vain hands bent on sacrifice
 or clasped in prayer we see;
 The ways of God are not exactly
 what those ways should be.
 The swindler and the ruffian
 lead pleasant lives enough,
 While judgments overtake the good
 and many a sharp rebuff.
 The swaggering bully stalks along
 as blithely as you please,
 While those who never miss their prayers
 are martyrs to disease.
 And if great God Almighty fails
 to keep the balance true,
 What can we hope that paltry
 mortal magistrates will do?

Hsieh Chin

A.D. 1369—1415

TO HIS COFFIN

An eternal home awaits me,
 shall I hesitate to go?
Or struggle for a few more hours
 of fleeting life below?
A home, wherein the clash of arms
 I can never hear again!
And shall I strive to linger
 in this thorny world of pain?
The breeze will soon blow cool o'er me,
 and the bright moon shine o'erhead,
When blended with the gems of earth
 I lie in my last bed.
My pen and ink shall go with me
 inside my funeral hearse,
So that if I've leisure "over there"
 I may soothe my soul with verse.

Fang Shu-shao
15th cent. A.D.

TO GENERAL MAO

Southward, in all the panoply
 of cruel war arrayed,
 See, Our heroic general points
 and waves his glittering blade!
 Across the hills and streams
 the lizard-drums⁵¹ terrific roll,
 While glint of myriad banners
 flashes high from pole to pole.....
 Go, scion of the Unicorn,
 and prove thy heavenly birth,
 And crush to all eternity
 these insects of the earth;
 And when thou com'st, a conqueror,
 from those wild barbarian lands,
 We will unhitch thy war-cloak
 with Our own Imperial hands!

*Chu Hou-tsung*⁵²

A.D. 1507—1566

TO AN ABSENT LOVER

Your notes on paper rare to see,
Two flying joy-birds bear;
Be like the birds and fly to me,
Not like the paper rare!

*Chao Li-hua*⁵³
16th cent. A.D.

INWARD LIGHT

With wine and flowers we chase the hours,
In one eternal spring;
No moon, no light, to cheer the night,
Thyself that ray must bring.

P'u Sung-ling
Born A.D. 1622

AN AGNOSTIC

You ask me why I greet the priest
But not his God;
The God sits mute, the man at least
Returns my nod.

Anon
18th cent. A.D.

A SCOFFER

I've ever thought it passing odd
How all men reverence some God,
And wear their lives out for his sake
And bow their heads until they ache.
'Tis clear to me the Gods are made
Of the same stuff as wind or shade.....
Ah, if they came to every caller,
I'd be the very loudest bawler!

Yüan Mei

A.D. 1715—1797

THE DIVINEST OF ALL THINGS

Man is indeed of heavenly birth,
Though seeming earthy of the earth;
The sky is but a denser pall
Of the thin air that covers all.
Just as this air, so is that sky;
Why call this low, and call that high?

The dewdrop sparkles in the cup —
Note how the eager flowers spring up;
Confine and crib them in a room,
They fade and find an early doom.
So 'tis that at our very feet
The earth and the empyrean meet.

The babe at birth points heavenward too,
Enveloped by the eternal blue;
As fishes in the water bide,
So heaven surrounds on every side;
Yet men sin on, because they say
Great God in heaven is far away.

Chao I

A.D. 1727—1814

ADVICE TO GIRLS⁶⁶

Trust not spring clouds, trust not to flowers:
 The butterfly is caught;
 Oh snatch no passing joy in hours
 Of pleasure wrongly sought!

A mien severe and eyes that freeze
 Become the future bride;
 No whispering underneath the trees
 Ere yet the knot be tied.

'Tis heaven on earth when woman wed
 Leans on her husband's arm;
 Beauty, like flowers, is quickly shed:
 Oh envy not its charm!

Chang Wên-t'ao
18th cent. A.D.

OPPORTUNITY

The cup's in the hand,
 seize the hour ere 'tis fled;
How seldom in life
 is the moon overhead!

Anon

A LAMENT

O ruthless Fate!
O cruel boon!
To meet so late
And part so soon.

Anon

NOTES

1. The *Odes* are some 300 of the old national ballads of China, collected and edited by Confucius, B.C. 551—479. They now form part of the Confucian Canon, and must be studied by all candidates for an official career. It is upon these *Odes* that the poetry of China has been based. The rhymes found therein are still the only recognised rhymes, although many of them are no longer rhymes to the ear. It is as though our writers of verse should rhyme "sweet" with "root," on the ground that Chaucer did so. Blank verse is unknown.

As to metre, the Chinese have used measures of different lengths, varying from one foot only to eleven feet and even more to the line. Each foot being a monosyllabic word there is no difficulty in seeing that the scansion is correct. The *Odes* are mostly written in lines of four feet; modern poetry always in lines of five or seven feet.

For poetical purposes all the characters in the language are ranged under *two* tones, as *flats* and *sharps*. These occupy certain fixed places, just as dactyls and spondees occupy fixed places in the construction of Latin verse. Thus in a stanza of the ordinary five-character length the following tonal arrangement must appear: —

Sharp sharp flat flat sharp
Flat flat sharp sharp flat
Flat flat flat sharp sharp
Sharp sharp sharp flat flat

2. This "woven stuff" is supposed to have been stamped pieces of linen, used as a circulating medium before the introduction of the bank-note.

3. The dove is very fond of mulberries, but is said to become intoxicated by them.

4. Son of the founder of the Han dynasty, to the throne of which he succeeded in B.C. 180.

5. Liu Ch⁶ succeeded his father as sixth Emperor of the great Han dynasty.

6. This poem records the loss of a favourite concubine.

7. This lady was for a long time the chief favourite of the tenth Emperor of the Han dynasty. When at length superseded, she forwarded to his Majesty a white silk fan upon which she had written these farewell lines.

8. A prince of the 6th cent. B.C., who studied the black art to such purpose that he rode up to heaven on the back of a crane. See "Home Longings," p. 57.

9. Drugs of immortality, coupled with alchemistic researches, occupied for many centuries the attention of Taoist philosophers.

10. The Chinese Hades.

11. A descendant of Confucius in the 20th generation.

12. These last four lines have been imitated by several poets, notably by Chang Chiu-ling who wrote as follows:

*Since my lord left — ah me, unhappy hour! —
The half-spun web hangs idly in my bower;
My heart is like the full moon, full of pains,
Save that 'tis always full and never wanes.*

13. Younger brother of the first Emperor of the Wei dynasty, to whom he became an object of suspicion. These lines were delivered impromptu in response to an order from his Majesty to compose a poem while taking seven steps.

14. A fabled ruler, said to dwell upon the K'un-lun range.

15. On one occasion the poet Hsieh Tao-hêng wrote the following lines: —

*A week in the spring to the exile appears
Like an absence from home of a couple of years.*

Thereupon a "southerner" who was present sneered and cried out "That is shallow stuff!" immediately producing the couplet in the text.

16. This term includes the rulers under the Golden Age, Confucius, Mencius, and any other divinely-inspired teacher of the cardinal virtues.

17. The Yellow-Crane Kiosque still stands on the banks of the Yang-tze, the River *par excellence*, near its junction with the Han river at Wu-ch'ang Fu in Hupeh. See note 8. Li Po at one time thought of writing a poem on this theme, but he gave up the idea so soon as he had read the lines by Ts'ui Hao.

18. An impromptu, at the age of ten.

19. See notes 8 and 17.

20. A.D. 320—385. On one occasion, when roaming in disguise at the spot mentioned in the text, he fell in with the poet Yüan Hung, and became thereafter his attached friend and patron.

21. Chinese fable says that the moon is inhabited by a huge toad which occasionally swallows it; hence eclipses.

Also that there are groves of cassias in the moon, and a hare visible to the naked eye, engaged in preparing the drug of immortality. The allusion to the "suns" refers to a story of the legendary archer, Hou I, who when a number of false suns appeared in the sky, to the great detriment of the crops, shot at and destroyed them with his arrows.

22. One fine evening, the Emperor Ming Huang who was enjoying himself with his favourite lady in the palace grounds, called for Li Po to commemorate the scene in verse. After some delay the poet arrived, supported between two eunuchs. "Please your Majesty," he said, "I have been drinking with the Prince and he has made me drunk, but I will do my best." Thereupon two of the ladies of the harem held up in front of him a pink silk screen, and in a very short time he had thrown off no less than ten eight-line stanzas, of which the one in the text is a specimen.

23. The poet, having incurred the displeasure of the famous favourite, Yang Kuei-fei, was forced to go into exile.

24. After penning these lines on board a pleasure-boat at night, the poet is said to have been drowned by falling over the side in a drunken effort to embrace the reflection of the moon.

25. A famous poet of the 2nd cent. B.C. He ran away with a beautiful widow and was driven to keep a tavern, until the father-in-law relented. Tu Fu hints that he would like himself to meet a similar partner.

26. Meaning that he is now doubtful whether he should not at once embrace a hermit's life.

27. A specimen of political allegory. The "lonely plant" refers to a virtuous statesman for whom the time is out of joint. The "mango-bird" is a worthless politician in power. The "ferry-boat" is the Ship of State.

28. A state of mental abstraction, by recourse to which the Buddhist gradually shakes off all desire for sublunary existence. In every monastery there is a building specially set apart for this purpose, and there the priests may be seen sitting for hours together with their eyes closed.

29. This poem refers to the great general Han Hsin of the 2nd cent. B.C., who in his poverty-stricken days was saved from starving by a kindly washerwoman. Later on he remembered and provided for his benefactress. The "grief-bird" is the goatsucker or nightjar. The "nobleman" was an epithet used by the washerwoman to Han Hsin, as though by a presentiment of his future greatness.

30. In experience of the ups and downs of life.

31. Confucius.

32. The Chinese prefer hillsides for their burying-grounds.

33. One of the gold hairpins delicately inlaid with kingfisher feathers, much worn by Chinese ladies.

34. Having nothing better to do. The dragon-fly strikes a note of loneliness.

35. She hears from a distance the sound of revels in which she once joined as chief favourite.

36. Water-clocks were known to the Chinese at a very early period, and are still to be seen in China.

37. When the poet was ordered to a distant post, he said to his fiancée, "Within ten years I shall be Governor. If I do not return within that time, marry whomsoever you please." He came back at the end of fourteen years to find her married and the mother of three children.

38. Referring to two stars which are separated by the Milky Way, except on the 7th night of the 7th moon in

each year, when magpies form a bridge for the Damsel to pass over to her lover.

39. This famous poet having been caught by brigands was ordered to give a specimen of his art. The impromptu in the text earned his immediate release.

40. A poetess.

41. *Tao* means "The Way" and refers originally to the teaching of the philosopher Lao Tzū who flourished some seven centuries B.C. It here signifies the arts of prolonging life, of transmutation of metals, etc., which came to be associated with Lao Tzū's doctrines.

42. Resembling the delicately curved eye-markings of the silkworm moth.

43. A poetess.

44. Referring to the polished discs of metal anciently used as mirrors by the Chinese.

45. The Milky Way.

46. The story runs that as a child the poet was unable to speak, until one day, being carried up to the top of a pagoda, he burst out with the lines in the text.

47. Allegorical. The "flower shadows" stand for evil politicians who held their own against the brooms of virtuous statesmen, but disappeared at the death of their patron, the Emperor Shên Tsung, in 1086, to reappear upon the death of his successor.

48. Chinese girls stand upon the seat of the swing.

49. Referring to the annual spring worship at the tombs of ancestors. See also p. 166.

50. A poetess-Anonyma.

51. Covered with lizard-skin.

52. Eleventh Emperor of the Ming dynasty. General Mao crushed a serious revolt in Annam, 1539—1541, but later on fell into disfavour and was cashiered.

53. A poetess-Anonyma. Chinese note-paper is covered with pictures of various designs, such as the birds in the text.

54. These lines were uttered by the poet, when lying tipsy in the high road, to the Prefect who happened to be passing and who was rating him for unseemly behaviour. "You are the Prefect," he cried, "that is your business; I am drunk, that is my business."

55. Written after perusing the work on the duties of women by Pan Chao, the famous female historian of the 1st cent. A.D.

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