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古 今 詩 選

CHINESE POETRY

IN ENGLISH VERSE

ВY

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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.

I

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

For the days and months be past.

Yet push not revels to excess

That our fair fame be marred;

Lest pleasures verge to wickedness

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; Here soars a phœnix, there swims a leviathan.

Behold the philosopher, full of nervous thought,

with a fame that never grows dim,

Dwelling complacently alone, — say,
what can the vulgar herd know of him?

Sung Yü, 4th cent. B.C.

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

ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER

I look up, the curtains are there as of yore;
I look down, and there is the mat on the floor;

These things I behold, but the man is no more.

To the infinite azure his spirit has flown, And I am left friendless, uncared-for, alone, Of solace bereft, save to weep and to moan.

The deer on the hillside caressingly bleat, And offer the grass for their young ones to eat,

While birds of the air to their nestlings bring meat.

But I a poor orphan must ever remain,

My heart, still so young, overburdened

with pain

For him I shall never set eyes on again.

'Tis a well-worn old saying, which all men allow,

That grief stamps the deepest of lines on

That grief stamps the deepest of lines on the brow:

Alas for my hair, it is silvery now!

Alas for my father, cut off in his pride!
Alas that no more I may stand by his side!
Oh where were the gods when that great
hero died?

Liu Hêng. Died B.C. 157.4

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 Ch'ê

THE AUTUMN FAN.

O fair white silk, fresh from the weaver's loom,

Clear as the frost, bright as the winter

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

CARPE DIEM

Man reaches scarce a hundred, yet his tears
Would fill a lifetime of a thousand years.
When days are short and night's long hours
move slow,

Why not with lamp in search of pleasure go?

This day alone gives sure enjoyment — this!
Why then await tomorrow's doubtful bliss?
Fools grudge to spend their wealth while
life abides,

And then posterity their thrift derides. We cannot hope, like Wang Tzŭ-ch^ciao ⁸,

to rise

And find a paradise beyond the skies.

Anon, 1st cent. B.C.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE®

Forth from the eastern gate my steeds I drive,

And lo! a cemetery meets my view;
Aspens around in wild luxuriance thrive,
The road is fringed with fir and pine
and yew.

Beneath my feet lie the forgotten dead,
Wrapped in a twilight of eternal gloom;
Down by the Yellow Springs 10 their earthy
bed.

And everlasting silence is their doom.

How fast the lights and shadows come and go!

Like morning dew our fleeting life has passed;

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

AN ABSENT HUSBAND

O floating clouds that swim in heaven above

Bear on your wings these words to him

I love....

Alas, you float along nor heed my pain,
And leave me here to love and long in
vain!

I see other dear ones to their homes return,

And for his coming shall not I too yearn? Since my lord left — ah me, unhappy day! —

My mirror's dust has not been brushed away;

My heart, like running water, knows no peace,
But bleeds and bleeds forever without cease. 12

Hsü Kan, 2nd and 3rd cent. A. D.

THE BROTHERS

A fine dish of beans had been placed in the pot

With a view to a good mess of pottage, all hot.

The beanstalks, aflame, a fierce heat were begetting,

The beans in the pot were all fuming and fretting.

Yet the beans and the stalks were not born to be foes;

Oh why should these hurry to finish off those?

Ts ao Chih, A.D. 192-23213

LOVERS PARTED

In the Kingdom of Yen

a young gallant resides,

In the Kingdom of Chao

a fair damsel abides;

No long leagues of wearisome

road intervene,

But a chain of steep mountains

is set in between.

Ye clouds, on your broad bosoms

bear me afar,

Ah, jade lies deep hid in the bowels of earth;

made fast to my car!

The winds for my horses

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's 14 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!

Tean Chien

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.

Tao Chien

ALONE

What do these halls of jasper mean, and shining floor,

Where tapestries of satin screen window and door?

A lady on a lonely seat, embroidering

Fair flowers which seem to smell as sweet as buds in spring.

Swallows flit past, a zephyr shakes the plum-blooms down;

She draws the blind, a goblet takes her thoughts to drown.

And now she sits in tears, or hums, nursing her grief 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

ANTICIPATION 15

If home, with the wild geese of autumn,
we're going,
Our hearts will be off ere the spring flowers
are blowing.

Anon, 6th cent. A.D.

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

IN ABSENCE

- At eve, I stand upon the bank and gaze; Restless, I know not where my bark may rest;
- I see the forest through the autumn haze; I see the hills of radiance all divest;
- I see the herdsman homing o'er the lea;
 I see the huntsman's laden horse

return

Alas, no loved one comes to beckon me!—

I sit and croon the thoughts that in me
burn.

Wang Chi, 6th and 7th cent. A.D.

ICHABOD

Near these islands a palace was built by a prince,

But its music and song have departed long since;

The hill-mists of morning sweep down on the halls,

At night the red curtains lie furled on the walls.

The clouds o'er the water their shadows still cast,

Things change like the stars: how few autumns have passed

And yet where is that prince? Where is he?

— No reply,

Save the plash of the stream rolling ceaselessly by.

Wang Po, A. D. 648-676

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!

> Ch'ên Tzŭ-ang, A. D. 656—698.

AGAINST IDOLS

On Self the Prophet 16 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 Tzŭ-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

A VISION

The dust of the morn had been laid by a shower,

And the trees by the bridge were all covered with flower,

When a white palfrey passed with a saddle of gold,

And a damsel as fair as the fairest of old.

But she veiled so discreetly her charms from my eyes

That the boy who was with her quite felt for my sighs;

And although not a light-o'-love reckoned,

I deem,

It was hard that this vision should pass like a dream.

Sung Chih-wên, died A. D. 710

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

WAITING

The sun has sunk behind the western hill,
And darkness glides across the vale below;
Between the firs the moon shines cold and
chill,

No breezes whisper to the streamlet's flow. Belated woodsmen homeward hurry past, Birds seek their evening refuge in the tree:

O my beloved, wilt thou come at last?

With lute, among the flowers, I wait for thee.

Mêng Hao-jan, A. D. 689—740

IN DREAMLAND

The sun has set behind the western slope,

The eastern moon lies mirrored in the

pool;

With streaming hair my balcony I ope,

And stretch my limbs out to enjoy the

cool.

Loaded with lotus-scent the breeze sweeps by,

Clear dripping drops from tall bamboos

I hear,

I gaze upon my idle lute and sigh:

Alas no sympathetic soul is near!

And so I doze, the while before mine eyes

Dear friends of other days in dream-clad

forms arise.

Mêng Hao-jan

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

Across the woodland wild I see
the sky lean on the trees,
While close to hand the mirrored moon
floats on the shining seas.

Mêng Hao-jan

OUT OF OFFICE

For my betters — my office resigned — I make way,

And seek with the wine-cup to shorten the day.

You ask for the friends who once thronged in my hall:

Alas! with my place they have gone, one and all.

Li Shih-chih, died A. D. 747

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

GOODBYE TO MÊNG HAO-JAN

Dismounted, o'er wine we had said our last say;

Then I whisper, "Dear friend, tell me whither away."

"Alas!" he replied, "I am sick of life's ills

"And I long for repose on the slumbering hills.

"But oh seek not to pierce where my footsteps may stray:

"The white clouds will soothe me for ever and ay."

Wang Wei

HOME LONGINGS

Here a mortal once sailed up to heaven on a crane,

And the Yellow-Crane Kiosque will for ever remain; 17

But the bird flew away and will come back no more,

Though the white clouds are there as the white clouds of yore.

Away to the east lie fair forests of trees, From the flowers on the west comes a scentladen breeze,

Yet my eyes daily turn to their far-away home,

Beyond the broad River, its waves, and its foam.

Ts'ui Hao 8th cent. A. D.

TO A FIREFLY 18

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.

AT PARTING

The river rolls crystal as clear as the sky, To blend far away with the blue waves of ocean;

Man alone, when the hour of departure is nigh,

With the wine cup can soothe his emotion.

The birds of the valley sing loud in the sun,

Where the gibbons their vigils will shortly

be keeping;

I thought that with tears I had long ago done,

But now I shall never cease weeping.

Li Po

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 mountains 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

FOR HER HUSBAND

Wings its eager flight;
Then, chattering on the branches, all are pairing for the night.
Plying her busy loom, a high-born dame is sitting near,
And through the silken window-screen their voices strike her ear.
She stops, and thinks of the absent spouse she may never see again;
And late in the lonely hours of night her tears flow down like rain.

"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.

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 pagoda 19, 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.

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!

GENERAL HSIEH AN 20

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.

A SNAP-SHOT

A tortoise I see on a lotus-flower resting:

A bird 'mid the reeds and the rushes is

nesting;

A light skiff propelled by some boatman's fair daughter,

Whose song dies away o'er the fast-flowing water.

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.

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.

A FAVOURITE 22

Oh the joy of youth spent in a gold-fretted
搜索 hall,
In the Crape-flower Pavilion, the fairest of
all, My tresses for headdress with gay garlands
為不要 girt,
Carnations arranged o'er my jacket and skirt
Then to wander away in the soft-scented air
And return by the side of his Majesty's
chair
But the dance and the song will be o'er
by and by,
And we shall dislimn like the rack in the
I. Da

IN EXILE 28

I drink deep draughts of Lan-ling wine
fragrant with borage made,
The liquid amber mantling up
in cups of costly jade.
My host insists on making me
as drunk as any sot,
Until I'm quite oblivious
of the exile's wretched lot.

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.

LAST WORDS 24

An arbour of flowers

and a kettle of wine:

Alas! in the bowers

no companion is mine.

Then the moon sheds her rays

on my goblet and me,

And my shadow betrays

we're a party of three!

Though the moon cannot swallow

her share of the grog,

And my shadow must follow

wherever I jog, —

Yet their friendship I'll borrow

and gaily carouse,

And laugh away sorrow

while spring-time allows.

See the moon, — how she glances response to my song;

See my shadow, — it dances so lightly along!

While sober I feel,

you are both my good friends;

When drunken I reel,

our companionship ends,

But we'll soon have a greeting without a goodbye,

At our next merry meeting away in the sky.

IN ABSENCE

White gleam the gulls across the darkling tide,

On the green hills the red flowers seem to burn;

Alas! I see another spring has died.....
When will it come — the day of my return?

Tu Fu A. D. 712—770.

WINE

The setting sun shines low upon my door

Ere dusk enwraps the river fringed with

spring;

Sweet perfumes rise from gardens by the shore,

And smoke, where crews their boats to anchor bring.

Now twittering birds are roosting in the bower,

And flying insects fill the air around...

O wine, who gave to thee thy subtle power? —

A thousand cares in one small goblet drowned!

TO HIS BROTHER

The evening drum has emptied every street, One autumn goose screams on its frontier flight,

The crystal dew is glittering at my feet, The moon sheds, as of old, her silvery light.

The brothers, — ah, where are they?

Scattered each;

No home whence one might learn the other's harms.

Letters have oft miscarried: shall they reach Now when the land rings with the clash of arms?

HOME JOYS

My home is girdled by a limpid stream,

And there in summer days life's

movements pause,

Save where some swallow flits from beam

to beam,

And the wild sea-gull near and nearer

draws.

The goodwife rules a paper board for chess;
The children beat a fish-hook out of wire;
My ailments call for physic more or less,
What else should this poor frame of
mine require?

SSŬ-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.

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.

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

SUPERSEDED 27 K

Alas for the lonely plant that grows
beside the river bed,
While the mango-bird screams loud and long
from the tall tree overhead!
Full with the freshets of the spring,
the torrent rushes on;
The ferry-boat swings idly, for
the ferryman is gone.

SOLO CHI SEGUE CIÒ CHE PIACE É SAGGIO

A petal falls! — the spring begins to fail, And my heart saddens with the growing gale.

Come then, ere autumn spoils bestrew the ground,

Do not forget to pass the wine-cup round. Kingfishers build where man once laughed elate,

And now stone dragons guard his graveyard gate!

Who follows pleasure, he alone is wise;
Why waste our life in deeds of high emprise?

Tu Fu

DUM RES ET AETAS

From the court every eve to the pawnshop I pass,

To come back from the river the drunkest of men;

As often as not I'm in debt for my glass; — Well, few of us live to be threescore

The butterfly flutters from flower to flower,
The dragon-fly sips and springs lightly
away,

Each creature is merry its brief little hour, So let us enjoy our short life while we may.

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

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

prepare,

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

DHYÂNA 28

The clear dawn creeps into the convent old,
The rising sun tips its tall trees with gold,
As, darkly, by a winding path I reach
Dhyâna's hall, hidden midst fir and beech.
Around these hills sweet birds their pleasure
take,

Man's heart as free from shadows as this lake;

Here worldly sounds are hushed, as by a spell,

Save for the booming of the altar bell.

Ch'ang Ch'ien 8th cent. A.D.

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?

Ssŭ-k^cung Shu
8th cent. A.D.

SPRING SORROWS

The willow sprays are yellow fringed,
the grass is gaily green;
Peach-blooms in wild confusion
with the perfumed plum are seen;
The eastern breeze sweeps past me,
yet my sorrows never go,
And the lengthening days of spring to me
mean lengthening days of woe.

Chia Chih

Chia Chih A.D. 718—772

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

Wei Ying-wu
8th cent. A.D.

lightly floating down the tide.

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

A PROMISE

Sweet flowers were blooming all around when your last farewell you said, And now the opening buds proclaim

another year has fled.

'Tis difficult to prophesy

beyond the present day,

And the remedy for trouble

is to sleep it all away.

I suffer much in body,

and I long for the old spot,

But cannot bring myself in pensioned idleness to rot.

You say that you will visit me, that you are coming soon:

'Twixt now and then how often shall I see the full-orbed moon?

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

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.

A REASON FAIR

'Tis night: the grape-juice mantles high in cups of gold galore; We set to drink, — but now the bugle

sounds to horse once more.

Oh marvel not if drunken

we lie strewed about the plain;

How few of all who seek the fight

shall e'er come back again!

Wang Han 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.

THE WASHERWOMAN'S GRAVE 29

The hero ne'er forgot the meal she gave, —
My tale is of a thousand years ago, —
And every woodsman knows the time-worn
grave,

Though naught remains of dynasties save the river's ceaseless flow.

With votive flower the traveller is seen,

The while the grief-bird trills his mournful lays;

Around, the grass of spring grows wildly green

Where footprints of the "nobleman" were left in bygone days.

Liu Ch'ang-ch'ing 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 Chang-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 Chcang-ling

A GROTTO

Deep in a darksome grove their Grotto lies, And deep the thoughts that now within me rise.

Fronting the door the South Hill looming near,

The forest mirrored in the river clear,

The bamboo bends beneath last winter's

snow,

The court-yard darkens ere the day sinks low.

I seem to pass beyond this world of clay, And sit and listen to the spring-bird's lay.

> Tsu Yung 8th cent. A.D.

A RETROSPECT

Oh this day last year what a party were we Pink cheeks and pink peach-blossoms smiled upon me;

But alas the pink cheeks are now far far away,

Though the peach-blossoms smile as they smiled on that day.

Ts^cui Hu 8th or 9th cent. A.D.

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 Tê-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's 31 laws;
Our span of life is all too short
To waste its hours in empty sport.

Han Yü

IN CAMP

Across the steppes the bitter north winds roam,

At dawn the Tartar moon shines cold and bright;

My soul relapses into dreams of home, Till the loud rappel summons to the fight.

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

NEAERA'S TANGLES

With flowers on the ground like embroidery spread,

At twenty, the soft glow of wine in my head,
My white courser's bit-tassels motionless
gleam

While the gold-threaded willow scent sweeps o'er the stream.

Yet until *she* has smiled all these flowers yield no ray;

When her tresses fall down, the whole landscape is gay;

My hand on her sleeve as I gaze in her eyes,

A kingfisher hairpin 88 will soon be my prize.

Li Ho
9th cent. A.D.

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

THE ODALISQUE

A gaily dressed damsel steps forth from her bower,
Bewailing the fate that forbids her to roam;
In the courtyard she counts up the buds on each flower, 34
While a dragon-fly flutters and sits on her comb.

Liu Yü-hsi

DESERTED

Soaked is her kerchief through with tears, yet slumber will not come;
In the deep dead of night she hears
the song and beat of drum. 35

Alas, although his love has gone,
her beauty lingers yet;
Sadly she sits till early dawn,
but never can forget.

Po Chü-i A.D. 772—846

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 clepsydra 36

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

AT A GRAVE

An old man lays to rest a much-loved son.....

By day and night his tears of blood will

by day and night his tears of blood will run,

Albeit when threescore years and ten have fled,

'Tis not a long farewell that he has said.

Ku K-uang 8th and 9th cent. A.D.

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 LAST NIGHT

Old love would seem as though not love today;
Spell-bound by thee, my laughter dies away.
The very wax sheds sympathetic tears
And gutters sadly down till dawn appears.

Tu Mu

LOVERS PARTED

Across the screen the autumn moon
stares coldly from the sky;
With silken fan I sit and flick
the fireflies sailing by.
The night grows colder every hour, —
it chills me to the heart
To watch the Spinning Maiden
from the Herdboy far apart. 38

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 HIGHWAYMEN 39

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.

SUMMER BEGINS

What time the bamboo casts a deeper shade, When birds fill up the afternoon with song, When catkins vanish, and when pear-blooms fade,—

Then man is weary and the day is long.

Chu Shu-chên 40
9th cent. A.D.

LOVE'S SPRINGTIME

Twin blossoms blooming on

a single flower!....

Then comes the jealous storm

with shattering sound.

Oh could we always feel the

Spring-God's power,

No petals scattered on the moss-grown

ground!

Chu Shu-chên

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.

SPRETÆ INJURIA FORMÆ

See! fair girls are flocking through corridors bright,

With music and mirth borne along on the breeze.....

Come, tell me if she who is favoured tonight

Has eyebrows much longer than these?

Huang-fu Jen
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 Tao 41 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 Tsŭ-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-eyebrows 42 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^cin T^cao-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.

Tscui Tcu 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 48 8th or 9th cent. A.D.

WANDERJAHRE

Roused from the fumes of wine, I hear the drum,

Midst thoughts of home, roll from the distant tower,

While through the trees faint streaks of daylight come,

And the spring passes in a pattering shower.

The tired bird homeward wings its way
at last;
Flowers fade and die beneath wild winds
oppressed.

What have my wanderings earned these ten years past?....

My wayworn horse is sick of east and west.

Li Ch'ang-fu 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.

IN RETIREMENT

He envies none, the pure and proud
ex-Minister of State;
On the Western Lake he shuts himself
within his bamboo gate.
He needs no fan to cool his brow, for
the south wind never lulls,
While idly his official hat lies
staring at the gulls.

Li Chia-yu 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^cing 8th or 9th cent. A.D.

THOUGHTS BY MOONLIGHT

Bright in the void the mirror moon 44 appears,

To the hushed music of the heavenly spheres,

Full orbed, 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.

CONTEMPLATION

When my court-yard by the placid moon is lit,

When around me leaves come dropping from the trees,

On the terrace steps, contemplative, I sit,

The swing-ropes swaying idly in the breeze.

Han Wu 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 T'ao 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 EARTH 46

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

A STRUGGLE

Fair flowers from above in my goblet are shining,

And add by reflection an infinite zest;
Through two generations I've lived,
unrepining,

While four mighty rulers have sunk to their rest.

My body in health has done nothing to spite me,

And sweet are the moments which pass o'er my head;

But now, with this wine and these flowers to delight me,

How shall I keep sober and get home to bed?

Shao Yung A.D. 1011—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.

Ssŭ-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,

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'èng Hao

SPRING NIGHTS

One half-hour of a night in spring
is worth a thousand taels,
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

SWINGING 48

- 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 Chüeh-fan
11th and 12th cent. A.D.

SUMMER

When ducklings seek the puddles, mostly
dry,
In the hot plum-time, with its changeful sky,
'Tis then in shady arbour we carouse,

And strip the golden loquat from the 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, ere thou 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 Fèng-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

Hsieh Chin A.D. 1360—1415

mortal magistrates will do?

TO HER LOVER

The tide in the river beginning to rise,

Near the sad hour of parting, brings tears

to our eyes;

Alas that these furlongs of willow-strings gay

Cannot hold fast the boat that will soon be away!

Chao Ts'ai-chi⁵⁰
15th cent. A.D.

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-drums 51 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

AN IMPROMPTU 54

Though the torrent be swift, it can ne'er carry off the moonbeam that lights up its bed;
Though the mountain be high, yet it cannot arrest the fast-flying cloud overhead.

Lu Chu-ch'i 18th cent. A.D.

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 GIRLS 55

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^cao
18th cent. A.D.

INTEGER VITÆ

Riches and rank — a morning dream in spring;
Fame — but an unsubstantial cloud above;

Thy very body is not thine for ay;

Hate is the end of love.

Fix not a golden collar on thy neck;
Be not with chain of jade in service bound;
Pure heart and few desires: earth's dust
shake off —

And happiness is found.

Anon
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

CHANCE

You may set with all care,

but the flow'ret will fade,

While the chance-planted willow-twig

grows into shade.

Anon

A LAMENT

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

Anon

NOTES

I. 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 Ch^cê 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.
- 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 Kcun-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^cang 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^cui 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 fahle 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 heen drinking with "the Prince and he has made me drunk, hut 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 henefactress. 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 king-fisher 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 Tzŭ 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 Tzŭ'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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