

IMPERIAL SONGS OF JAPAN.

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR LLOYD.

SONGS BY HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN.

Isuzu.

[The stream of Isuzu, which flows by Ise, is often taken as the symbol of the imperial house. At Ise are the famous shrines at which is worshiped the goddess Amaterasu (the sun), who is the fabled ancestor of the imperial house. The stream, issuing from that shrine is perennial; like the imperial house, in winter and summer, in prosperity and adversity alike, it flows on unceasingly, whilst many other streams run dry in the droughts of summer.]

There is a stream, men call it Isuzu,
Whose gentle tide hath never ceased to flow,
Whose placid bosom ne'er hath been disturbed,
Whose course adown the ages knows no end.

Go to the wild sea beach, and, gathering there
A handful of smooth pebbles, build therewith
A mimic rockery. Though those few stones
Should grow into a mountain, scarred and steep,
And overgrown with moss, that sacred stream
Shall never cease its soft, perennial flow.

Prosperity.

[This poem is evidently a reply to one made by the empress, which will be found in its proper place. It contains an allusion to a well-known story about the emperor Nintoku (A. D. 313-399) who, standing one day on his balcony and observing that no smoke rose from the houses of the town below his palace, was told that the people were too poor and too heavily taxed to afford the luxury of fire. Thereupon the emperor instituted reforms and himself practised a strict economy which he did not relax until the smoke once more rising at evening over the houses of the people showed that prosperity had been restored.]

Yes, 'tis a happy age; the curling smoke
That rises from the farms and cottages
Seems to increase its volume year by year.

At Sea.

[This is seemingly a very insignificant poem, but, like many Japanese songlets, it has a deeper meaning which does not readily appear on the surface. The poem was written during one of the few sea-voyages that His Majesty has taken, and a fog, which prevented them from seeing the dangerous little islet of Azuki compelled the officers to anchor. But, politically, the rulers of Japan were often in a fog during the early days of the restored empire, when the obstructions of insignificant agitators more than once compelled the ship of state to go slow.]

Slight mists at morn presaged a fair bright day:
 Who would have thought Azuki's tiny isle
 Would thus with fogs delay our mighty ship?

Calling out the Reserves.¹

They're at the front,
 Our brave young men, and now the middle-aged
 Are shouldering their arms, and in the fields
 Old men are gathering the abundant rice,
 Low bending o'er the sheaves. All ages vie
 In cheerful self-devotion.

The Muttering of the Storm.²

My heart's at peace with all, and fain would I
 Live, as I love, in peace and brotherhood;
 And yet the storm-clouds lower, the rising wind
 Stirs up the waves, the elemental strife
 Rages around. I do not understand
 Why this should be. 'Tis plainly not my fault.

The Failure of the Negotiations.³

[Whilst the Japanese are in practice polytheists, it is the belief of many scholars that their native Shinto was originally a primitive monotheism. When we trace back the genealogy of the Japanese gods, we find quite at the beginning of all things a deity who is styled the "Lord, the Possessor of the Center of Heaven" (*ama-no-mi-naka-nushi-no-mikoto*). This god is uncreated and "hides his body," i. e., is invisible. No shrines are erected to his honor, but all the other deities are supposed to have emanated from him. His Majesty is officially a Shintoist, but was educated by Confucianist teach-

¹ In the war with China.² In the war with Russia.³ Spring of 1904.

ers, so that he would also be familiar with the idea of *T'cu*, "Heaven," as the witness and judge of all men.]

We've tried to be sincere in word and deed,
 And have exhausted every means to state
 A clear and truthful case, but all in vain.
 Now may the God that sees the hearts of men
 Approve of what we do.

*Thinking of the Soldiers at the Front.*⁴

Importunate mosquitoes, light of wing,
 With trivial song and sting disturb my rest,
 This sleepless night,—
 —On what dark, lonesome field,
 'Midst what great hardships lie my soldiers brave?

Thinking of the Field-Laborers.

Complain not thou art hot: but rather turn
 To yonder slushy fields, where laborers
 Wade 'neath the sun, and e'en the water boils.

Patriotism.

There is no second way whereby to show
 The love of Fatherland.

 Whether one stand,

A soldier under arms, before the foe,
 Or stay at home, a peaceful citizen,
 The way of loyalty is still the same.

Compassion for Enemies.

The foe that strikes thee, for thy country's sake,
 Strike him with all thy might.

 But while thou strik'st,

Forget not still to love him.

*My Garden.*⁵

Lo! In my garden all things strive and grow.
 E'en foreign trees and plants, with care bestowed
 Upon their tender shoots, grow strong and green
 Like those indigenous to soil and clime.

⁴ Summer of 1904.

⁵ I. e., the Japanese Empire.

Confidence in the Destiny of the Country.

The ancient pine-trees on the mossy rocks
 Stand firm against all storms: their roots are strong,
 And deeply bedded in the heart of earth.
 So doth Heaven bless our land with rooted strength
 To stand unshaken 'midst the shocks of time,
 'Midst jarring elements and outward foes.

*Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo.*⁶

Water so soft that it will take the shape
 Of goblet, bowl, or cup, to suit the taste
 Of every hand that pours it: yet, withal,
 Mighty to percolate the close-grained rock,
 That makes the frame-work of the eternal hills.

The Son Grows Up.

[It is hard for Europe and America to understand that "little" Japan has grown up. It is also, perhaps, hard for the emperor to understand that his people, over whom he has ruled for forty years, have grown up under his hand.]

Such is the father's heart, that, though his son
 Grow to man's years, and learn to stand alone:
 Yet in his eyes he still remains a boy.

Industry.

No time have I to turn me to my desk,
 And, hand in lap, to take my ease and read.
 Yet is my table-top kept free from dust.

The Straight, Steep Path.

How smooth it seems,
 The way that man, as man, should daily tread:
 But th'actual walking on't,—aye! there's the rub.

Perseverance.

See how the tiny raindrops from the eaves
 Hollow the stones beneath with constant drip.
 Then why should we abandon well-formed plans,
 Simply, forsooth, because we find them hard?

⁶This and the following were published January 1, 1908, and it seems difficult not to see in them some kindly allusions to recent difficulties experienced by Japan.

Caution in the Hour of Success.

When all things go as thou wouldst have them go,
 And Fortune smiles upon thee, then, beware,
 Lest happy days make thee forget thyself.

Prosperity the Object of Envy.

The farmer's house, new-thatched, with clean, white straw
 Heaped thick, defies the cold: but envious frosts
 Have covered all the eaves with glistening rime.⁷

POEMS BY HER MAJESTY THE EMPRESS OF JAPAN.

On Visiting the Tomb of the Emperor Jimmu in the Summer of 1891.

[The emperor Jimmu, the first of the so-called human emperors (to distinguish them from the divine emperors who are said to have preceded them), is said to have reached Japanese soil (whether from Heaven, as some say, or from the continent of Asia) at Mount Takachiho in the island of Kyūshū, somewhere about B. C. 620. He and his followers extended their conquests as far as Yamato in the center of the main island, where he died. The dynasty is said to have continued ever since in unbroken succession. The *tamagushi* is a stick of *sakaki*, with strips of paper attached to it, which is used in Shinto worship. It is said to have the merit of putting the worshiper, by means of visions, into direct communication with the deity worshipped.]

The sacred *Tamagushi* in my hand,
 I bow before the dread sepulchral mound
 Of Jimmu, by the hill of Unebi
 In Yamato; and as I bow my head,
 Lo! the long glory of our line revealed.

Before an old Wooden Effigy of the Emperor Godaigo at Yoshimizu on the River of Yoshino.

[The emperor Godaigo (A. D. 1318-1339) is a favorite subject of Her Majesty's verse, and I have seen more than one poem of hers about him. When he came to the throne he found the imperial power in abeyance, and the country in the hands of regents, who, nominally subjects, were actually rulers. The country was also in danger of a civil war between two rival factions, each claiming the right to the direction of affairs. Godaigo made a noble attempt to save the country from the horrors of a civil war, by trying to re-assert the dignity of the crown. But in this he failed, and in the end was deposed and died ignominiously after many misfortunes. It was not

⁷ It was not until Japan was successful, and as it were had rethatched her house, that she excited the envy of other nations.

until the present reign that the actuality of imperial rule was restored, and Godaigo's unsuccessful attempt has always appealed to the sympathies of the present emperor and empress. The secondary meaning of the poem will be found in the use of the sleeve in wiping tears from the eyes. "The troubles of Godaigo's reign are long over, yet I had to shed a tear of pity," etc.]

I.

The showers have ceased long since, and yet my sleeves
Are wet with tender dew-drops, as I pass
Through the thick shrubberies, and gaze upon
The face of our much-suffering ancestor.

II.

Our feet approach the Sacred Sepulcher
Of great Godaigo. See! the drooping flowers
Are moistened with the dew of Nature's tears.

Storm-bound.

[These two poems both refer to the same occasion as the third of the emperor's songs.]

I.

Storm-bound, I rest beside the broken bridge,
And listen to the sound of roaring waves,
And think, how fares my Lord upon his ship,
Storm-bound in some poor haven, where the waves
Toss him, like rebels, roughly to and fro.

II.

Upon the beach I hear the mad waves break,
Start from my idle dreams, and sadly think
Of my dear Lord upon the Imperial ship.

During the Absence of His Majesty on a Visit of Inspection to the North.

E'en in the cool, broad shade the palace throws,
With splashing sound of water, and the breeze
That sweeps the open halls from end to end,
We hardly bear the heat.

How shall my Lord,
In mountain huts, that scarce ward off the sun
With their poor shingle roofs, endure the grief
Of the long days and sleepless summer nights?

*To the Memory of the Late Prince Iwakura,⁸ Written shortly After
His Death.*

Thou white Chrysanthemum, that late didst serve,
Brightest of flowers, for His Majesty,
Now that the chilling hoar frost's master hand
Hath nipped thee, utterest fragrance more and more
From thy crushed petals.

Winter.

The Winter with its rigors, touches not
Our bodies, clad in raiment warm and rich;
But when we think upon the shivering poor
That freeze in their thin rags, the cruel tooth
Of pitiless winter bites our inmost heart.

Reading.

The jewel in a lady's coronet
Gleams in her hair, and flashes as she moves,
And yet 'tis nought,—a sparkle, not a light.
The book, whose page enlightens the dark mind,
Is the true treasure.

Circumspection.

Take heed unto thyself! the mighty God,
That is the Soul of Nature, sees the good
And bad that man in his most secret heart
Thinks by himself, and brings it to the light.

Peace of Mind.

Why should I fear the harsh reproof of men,
When my own conscience speaks no word of blame?

To the Students at the Pccresses School.

The water placed in goblet, bowl, or cup,
Changes its shape to its receptacle,
And so our plastic souls take various shapes
And characters of good or ill, to fit
The good or evil in the friends we choose.

⁸ The late Prince Iwakura was one of the most distinguished servants of the crown at the time of the restoration.

Therefore be careful in your choice of friends,
 And let your special love be given to those
 Whose strength of character may prove the lash
 That drives you onward to fair wisdom's goal.

*Sugawara Michizane.*⁹

He heard the taunt, that such a studious lad,
 Who never from his book his eye could lift,
 But sat and studied through the livelong day;
 Must be perforce unskilful in the arts
 Of war; and straightway from his desk uprose,
 Seized his long bow, fitted his shaft, and drew.
 The arrow in the middle gold proclaimed
 That brain, hand, eye, alike were trained to serve.

The Battle of Pheng-yang.

(Sept. 1894.)

High o'er the Taidong-gang stood the moated castle of Pheng-yang,
 Guarded with frowning forts, and the flow'r of China's batallions,
 Marshall'd for battle behind strong parapets, walls, and entrench-
 ments.

Space unprotected was none; but our men, with spirit undaunted,
 Forded the stream in the face of a rain of bullets, and straightway
 Charged at the foe, and scaling the walls, rushed into the fortress.
 Irresistible was their charge; the dispirited foemen
 Fell like the falling leaves, or vanished like smoke. On the ramparts
 Up went the Rising Sun, and the jubilant clamor of "*Banzai*."

⁹ A famous student-warrior (A. D. 845-903).