

JAPANESE EPIGRAMS.

TRANSLATED BY THE LATE ARTHUR LLOYD.

[In this collection I have put together poems composed by Confucianist philosophers and others. Many of these now appear for the first time; but I have also very largely drawn on two collections made by European scholars, viz., Professor Chamberlain's article on "Basho and the Japanese Epigram" in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, and the late M. Ehmann's *Sprichwörter der japanischen Sprache*, published by the German Asiatic Society in Tokyo. I have called them "epigrams," because the majority of them are what the Japanese call *hokku*, tiny songlets, each complete in seventeen syllables.]

Songlets of Basho.

The grub's a humble thing, but when the wings
Grow, then the butterfly forgets
That it was e'er a poor, mean, crawling grub.

An ancient bard, a thousand years ago,
Happened to sing the praises of the frogs,
And now, poor things, they think that all the world
Still raves about them.

Hot or cold,
Sunshine or rain, the crow is always black,
And always happy.

T'is good for man to go forth every morn
To work, and good to come home tired at night.
Yet, oh! September's work, after the heat
Of August days goes much against the grain.

A thoughtless child, playing beside a well,
Such is the man that, foolish, tries to live
Without religion.

The tiny dewdrop lies upon the leaf :
 When it grows heavy, then the leaf will bend
 And let it roll off to the earth beneath.

The child of three
 Possesses his own soul ; that self-same soul
 Is his at sixty.

Be thou reserved, fair maid. The flower that flaunts
 Its beauty by the wayside, often falls
 Prey to the beasts that graze along the road.

The frail anemone
 Lasts but a single day. And what art thou ?

When children strive
 Father and mother oft must join the fray.

Sneeze once, and some one's praising you : sneeze twice,
 And 'tis a sign of hate : a threefold sneeze
 Shows you the object of some person's love.
 But if you sneeze four times, you've caught a cold.

There is a gate, whereby good luck and ill
 May enter in. But of that gate yourself
 Hold the one key.

Seven gods of luck protect the merchant's house,
 And well they may : for, at his gate there lurk
 Seven foes to strike him when he goes abroad.

Your shoe-string's broken, but beware you stoop
 To mend it, till you've crossed that melon patch,
 Lest those who see you misinterpret you.

Ask no man counsel if thou do not mean
 To follow it ; for wholesome physic's use
 Lies in the drinking not the buying it.

A thief may sometimes take a holiday :
 A watchdog, never.

Waste nothing, thrifty soul; there lurks a god,
Ready to bless you, in your bag of scraps.

The world's a poorish place, but all the same
You have to work, to stay in it for long.

Where's Paradise? Why, at the gate
Of every man that's honest, just, and pure.

Hell after death? No, no,
Hell comes when, at the closing year you find
You can't pay all your debts.

Virtue in man,
Is like the bamboo stem, knotty and straight.

The baby borne upon the back
Sees where the brook is shallow; there's a power
In childlike innocence.

The rose and thorn, the same stem beareth both,
One root is their's.