

## VERSES FROM JAPAN.

TRANSLATED BY THE LATE ARTHUR LLOYD.

It has no voice, the butterfly; but if  
It had, perchance they'd put it in a cage,  
And make it sing like some poor dicky-bird.

Daurin.

"Cuckoo!" cried one. "Why sings he not to-day?  
Tell him I'll wring his neck unless he sing."  
"Cuckoo!" another cried. "He knows not how,  
So I must teach him."

But a third there was,  
A patient statesman! "If he do not sing  
To-day," said he, "I'll wait until he does."<sup>1</sup>

Shoha, *ob.* 1600.

Think of eternity, past and to come,  
And life is but as when a man escapes  
A fleeting shower beneath some sheltering roof.

Sōgi, 1421-1502.

The year grows old, the well-worn winter robes  
Come from their camphor chest, and, in their stead,  
In go the light spring dresses; but, alas!  
The spring joy goes in with them.—

Daurin.

The nightingale<sup>2</sup> doth sing at dinner time,  
And when it sings 'midst clash of plates and cups  
No one doth care to hear.

Buson, 1716-83.

<sup>1</sup> The three men are said to be Hideyoshi, Nobunaga and Iyeyasu.

<sup>2</sup> The Japanese nightingale (*uguisu*) sings by daylight.

Be not thou like the croaking frog that opes  
His wide-stretched mouth, and shows you everything  
That he has in him.

Anon.

There's always something wrong:  
When noisy boatmen are not quarreling,  
Then it's the frogs.

Yūya.

Soul-rapt, I listen to the entrancing song  
Of that fair nightingale, which carries me  
Almost to heaven's portals. Then a knock  
Which brings me back to earth—the baker's boy!  
Yaha, 1663-1740.

Sweet lark! 'tis very well for you each morn  
To sing at heaven's gate your matin song;  
But think of your poor young ones in the nest,  
Waiting for breakfast.

Sugiyama.

My girl, your worldly vanities are like  
A snow-storm falling.  
Sweep it as you will,  
Your doorstep's always white with tradesmen's bills.  
Izembō, *ob.* 1710.

I've dreamed this dream for well-nigh eighty years.  
Countless eternity, on either side  
Seems a short nothing to the long-drawn dream.  
Kaibara Ekiken,<sup>2</sup> 1630-1714.

POEMS BY SOMA GYOFU.<sup>4</sup>

*Japan.*

Thou youthful keeper of the flower-beds,  
Time was, when in thy small domains there stood  
Not many flowers, but these of costly hue;  
Which thou did'st tend with single-hearted love.

<sup>2</sup> A great Confucianist teacher.

<sup>4</sup> A young and comparatively unknown poet.

But now thy borders are enlarged, and lo!  
 Thy beds are filled with many an ill-matched flower;  
 And rare exotics from beyond the seas  
 Stand cheek by jowl with plants of native growth,  
 With cherry, plum, and tall chrysanthemum.  
 Distraction haunts thee in thy very dreams,  
 Thou know'st not which to choose, or this or that,  
 And nought is trim and neat as heretofore.  
 Ah! youthful keeper of the flower-beds!

*God.*

God? Can I paint that which I cannot see  
 Nor comprehend,—the vaguely Infinite,  
 Beyond all human ken, or word, or thought?  
 Yet from the known we figure the unknown,  
 And shadow forth the shadowless; and thus  
 God is the heart that loves,—the lover's heart,  
 That looks and yearns for sweet return of love;  
 The husband's heart, that makes companionship  
 With her whose hand he holds and calls his own;  
 The father's heart, that careth for his son,  
 Watching his growth with fond paternal pride.

And lovers, parting, oft-times interchange  
 Twin trinkets, tokens of a common love,  
 And each one, gazing on the thing he wears,  
 "My love," says he, "beyond the cold gray sea,  
 Wears the twin fellow of this ring I wear,  
 And, gazing, thinks of me as I of her:  
 By this I know our absent love holds good."  
 Such is the thing that men have christened Faith.

*The Beyond.*

Thou standest at the brink. Behind thy back  
 Stretch the fair flower-decked meadows, full of light,  
 And pleasant change of wooded hill and dale  
 With tangled scrub of thorn and bramble bush  
 Which men call life. Lo! now thy traveled foot  
 Stands by the margin of the silent pool  
 And, as thou stand'st, thou fearest, lest some hand  
 Come from behind, and push thee suddenly  
 Into its cold, dark, depths.

Thou needst not fear:  
 The hidden depths have their own fragrance too  
 And he that loves the grasses of the field,  
 With fragrant lilies decks the still pool's face,  
 With weeds the dark recesses of the deep.  
 March boldly on, nor fear the sudden plunge,  
 Nor ask where ends life's pleasant meadow-land.  
 E'en the dark pool hath its own fragrant flowers.

*Disenchantment.*

I dreamed, and in my dreams I heard the sound  
 Of soul-sweet music, harmonies divine,  
 And started from my couch, and oped my eyes  
 To earth's realities. A stringless lute  
 Lay by my side, voiceless, and that was all—  
 The lying base on which had reared itself  
 The futile fabric of melodious dreams.  
 Ah me! the disenchantment! How shall I  
 Lie down a second time, and rest my head  
 On pillows of dull rest, but not again  
 On pillows haunted by melodious sounds?

*The Helpless Life.*

Helpless I sit upon the rock and watch  
 The soaring stream flow by me. Idle drift  
 Of weeds and leaves caught by the eddying pool,  
 Is washed against the rock, and gathers there,  
 The harvest of the waters. As I watch,  
 The sun goes down, and I must leave my post.

*A Contemplated Suicide.*

She stood beside the still dark pool of death,  
 And saw her face, so young, so beautiful,  
 Mirrored upon the waters, slowly turned,  
 And sought once more the happy paths of life.