THE POET LAUREATE OF JAPAN.

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY THE LATE ARTHUR LLOYD.

[Baron Takasaki is the head of what is known as the Uta dokoro, or Poetical Bureau, of the Imperial Household Department, and it is his duty as such to keep a record of all poems composed by members of the imperial family, and especially to arrange for the Uta kwai or poetry meetings of which old-fashioned, aristocratic Japan is still fond. The greatest of these meetings is held shortly after the New Year, and prizes are awarded for which any Japanese subject may compete.

Baron Takasaki, though not fluently conversant with English, has had many friends among English-speaking literary men, including the late Secretary Hay, who sent him a poem which must have been written a few days before his lamented death. Before the poem reached its destination, the writer was no more. I herewith reproduce the lines as they will, I am sure, be of interest to American readers. They were written in acknowledgment of some verses which Baron Takasaki had addressed to him.

"I, a gray poet of the Sunset Land,
Greet you who sing by Nippon's shining strand.

"Out of the shadows of a day that's done,
I hail you, Poet of the Rising Sun!"

Plum-Blossoms in the Snow.
(1904.)

Our hardy plums this year have dared to bloom
Amidst the snow. Our hardy regiments
Bloom valiantly amidst Manchurian snows.

Pleasure-Seekers.
(1904.)

This spring the pleasurers will sail in boats
Adown the river Oi, by Arashi,¹
To see the peaceful cherries; but their talk
Will all be of the tempest of the war.

¹ Near Kyoto, a place famous for its beautiful scenery.
Self-Culture.
My garden’s full of weeds. I root up one,
To find another in its place, and thus
The summer’s ended ere my work’s half done.

Pure Love of Flowers.
I am not anxious for a long-drawn life:
Therefore, I plant the tall chrysanthemum,
Not as a symbol of longevity,
But as the fairest flower upon God’s earth.

Patience May Be Exhausted.
(Referring to the long-protracted Russo-Japanese negotiations.)
1903-4.
E’en the long-suffering Buddha turns at last
In anger, when a man with insolence
Strikes his face more than thrice.2

The Peasant Heroes of the War.
Now will the patient ox3 think of the time
When he too was a warrior, and, with horns
Blazing, wrought havoc in the foemen’s tents.

A Friendly Greeting.
To Tennyson, the noble Laureate’s son,
And Governor of the Austral Commonwealth.

Mountains and seas, with bars material, keep
Our little lives asunder, as themselves
Are kept apart and distant; but beyond
The mountains and deep seas, the world of soul
Unites our hearts with pleasure.

It is good
To have a friend that speaks a different tongue,
And lives with people of another sphere,

2 This is a proverbial expression. Hotoke no koa mo sando.
3 This refers to a Chinese story. The wars with China and Russia have had a tremendous moral effect on the common people. In the old days it was only the samurai that bore arms; now, even the lower classes feel that they have been raised to that dignity.
With different thoughts from those that I have known,
And yet a friend,

When shall I meet again
My peerless friend, and grasp his great good hand,
And speak once more with him as friend to friend?
I know not when, but still I long and wait.

To a Lark.

Lark, that thy matin lay dost bring
To Heaven's gate with soaring wing,
Then, falling like a dropped stone,
Seek'st thy poor nest with grass o'ergrown,
To rise again—dost thou well know,
Thy course our human life doth show?
For man, successful, soars on high,
Then falls through some calamity,
To rise again. Vicissitude
Where man finds beatitude.
Rising or falling, may we sing,
Like thee, brave lark, on happy wing.

On the Occasion of Their Majesties' Silver Wedding.

[Their Majesties celebrated their Silver Wedding in the year 1893. The Empress, by birth a lady of the House of Ichijo, belongs to the ancient family of the Fujiwara. The Fuji is the wistaria.]

Some five and twenty years ago,
They took the climbing Fuji vine,
And wedded it unto the Pine,
And bade the two together grow.

And we have watched, as years have flown,
The Fuji twine her tender arms
Around the Pine's robuster charms,
Until the two became as one.

So now we pray that, thus entwined,
The two may stand for happy years,
One in their strength, and free from fears
Of storm or tempest, rain or wind.
The Poet's Son.

[The Poet's son, going to the war, as a lieutenant in the navy, receives from the Court the present of a brace of wild geese.]

You've had a royal gift. Now, in return,
Shoot that proud bird that haunts the Eagle's Nest,
And bring him as an offering to your Lord.

[The poet receives news of his son's death before Port Arthur.]

Well hast thou kept the teachings of thy sire
That ever bade thee, in the parlous hour,
Yield up thy life for thy dear country's sake.

Now rest in peace: the son thou leav'st behind,
Thine only son, I take and nurture up,
A living monument of all thy worth.

[This poem being shown to Her Majesty, she writes as follows:]

We mourn for him, the son who lost his life
For his dear country on the battle-field;
Yet 'tis the Father's Heart that grieves us most.

Take thou his son,—he's full of life and hope,—
And use him as thy trusty bamboo-staff,
For serviceable aid in all thy work.

[To which the poet replies, in a small volume of verse entitled Oya gokoro, "The Father's Heart":]

I wept not for my son, yet now my sleeves
Are wet with tears, right gracious tears, that fell
Like rain-drops from the o'ershad'wing Forest-Queen.5

Yes, I will take my dead son's only son,
And rear him gently.6 He shall be, to me,
A staff; to thee, a strong, protecting, shield.

[The poet goes to the railway station to receive the mortal remains of his son.]

To-day I go to meet his poor remains,
An empty shell—mere ashes—; for his soul
Lingers behind the body, till our flag
Has marked Port Arthur's fortress for her own.

4 The Eagle's Nest is the name of one of the forts at Port Arthur.
5 "Forest Queen," i. e., Her Majesty.
6 "Gently," in the sense of "as a gentleman."
Diplomacy.

The weak bamboo, no strength it has to stand
And wrestle 'gainst the onslaughts of the wind;
But pliant bows its head before the gale.
Its very pliancy doth show its strength.

Yet, Beware.

Draw but the sword from its white wooden sheath,
And straight, cold thrills course gladly through the frame
Of him that draws and flashes it aloft—
O autumn-frosted\(^7\) blade of Old Japan.

\(^7\) The phrase "autumn frost" (Aki no shimo) is often applied to the Japanese sword which is as delicate and yet as sharp as a thin piece of autumn ice.