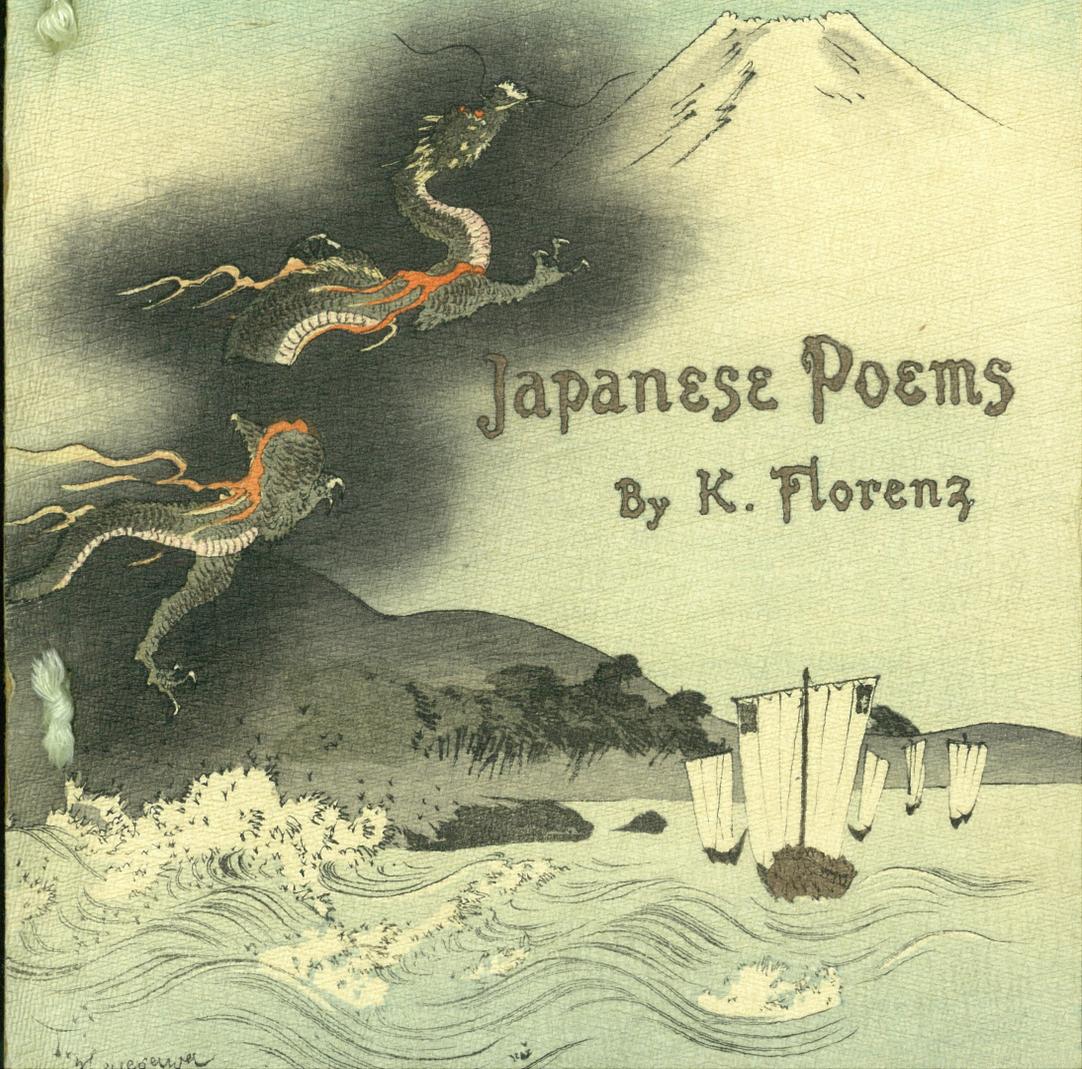


POETICAL GREETINGS FROM THE FAR EAST

Japanese Poems

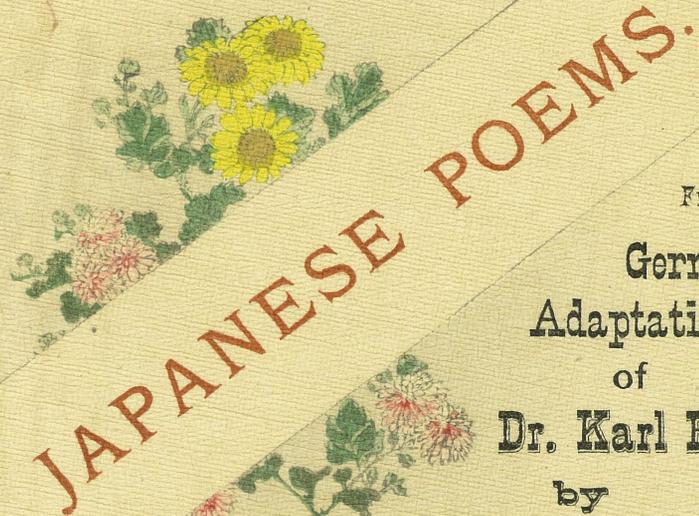
By K. Florenz





POETICAL GREETINGS

FROM THE FAR EAST.



JAPANESE POEMS.

From the

German

Adaptation

of

Dr. Karl Florenz

by

A. Lloyd M. A.

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To the
MEMORY
 of
 Georg von der Gabelentz



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詩 卷 長 留 天 地

甲午五月為
 鄂伯廉先生紀念
 獨逸 傅樂蓮 題



PREFACE.



Japanese poetry is extraordinarily rich in productions of the most varied kind, and one might therefore think that it is only necessary to put one's hand upon what is considered good by the Japanese themselves, and then to arrange the material with very little trouble into an anthology. But this is not so. The great majority of Japanese poems is of such a kind that very little remains if they are divested of their specifically Japanese expressions, especially as most of them have the brevity of aphorisms. The form outweighs the contents: unpoetical plays upon words and puns are wearisomely frequent. original turns of thought are indeed often found, but truly poetical contents are more rare. The richest spoils of true poetry may be found in the oldest collections, especially in the large one called *Manyōshū*, of which the present editor is preparing a critical edition and translation.

As for the lyrical poetry of the last ten centuries it must be said that nearly all productions worthy of notice are imitations of the older poetry in contents and expression.

The majority of the poems in the present collection belong to the first half of the eighth century, but there are a few which are quite modern. In selecting the poems, care has been taken to choose such as are

genuine representatives of the poetical spirit of the country whilst at the same time suiting in some degree our European tastes and habits of thought. The translation is on the whole as accurate as the fundamental differences between the spirit of the Japanese and German languages would allow; the notes contain only such information as is absolutely necessary. The illustrations have been specially designed for this book by several Japanese artists whose names are mentioned in the appendix. Mr. Hasegawa is deserving of our warmest thanks for their careful execution.

Tokyo, January 1896.

KARL FLORENZ.

English Translator's Note.

The English Translator can only express the hope that he has succeeded in some measure in faithfully reproducing Dr. Florenz' work for English readers.

ARTHUR LLOYD.

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LAMENT OF THE POET OKURA OVER THE PREMATURE
DEATH OF HIS SON FURUBL.

AN ELEGY.

Ah! what care I for the seven-fold treasure⁽⁸⁾
That fills the heart of poor men with joy?
My only desire, my heart's true pleasure!
'Tis thee that I long for, my boy, my boy.

No more, when the morning-star fades from the sky,
Doth he playfully leave my humble bed:
No more, when the evening-star flashes on high,
Doth he speak, with his hand in his father's laid:

"Dear parents, lie down to your sweet repose;
And I betwixt you all night will sleep,
Whilst your arms around me on each side close,
As the triple moss⁽⁹⁾ stems each other do keep."

'Twas thus he would chatter, and I, in my joy,
With dreams of the future my mind did fill:
How manhood awaited my darling boy
With omens of good, but no omens of ill.

As the seaman trusts to his argosy frail,
So I trusted to Fate as I sailed life's stream:
But, alas! on a sudden, with waves and gale,
A tempest disturbed my happy dream.

Then nothing availed in the hour of distress
From my bursting heart that the prayer forth-welled:
That I gathered around me the folds of my dress,
And in suppliant hands the mirror upheld.

To all the celestial gods I cried,
(And my words were low as became my worth);
To all the terrestrial gods I applied,
With my body prostrate on the cold black earth.



Yet long though I prayed, and hard though I strove,
To wrest from the gods an answer of joy,
No answer of hope was vouchsafed from above,
No earthly god would rescue my boy.

But, from day to day, his wasting frame
Showed how fruitless my prayers, my cries how vain:
His voice was a whisper: life's feeble flame
Sunk, flickered, and flashed, and sunk again.

And then I stood up with stamps and cries.
And vainly beat my bereaved breast,
Entreating heaven with tears and sighs
For the soul that had entered its early rest.

"Too young, too young! he knows not the road
That leads to the kingdoms beyond death's sleep.
O herald of Hades! O soul-guiding god,
Accept this my offering, my child's soul keep.



PATERNAL PRIDE.

What, to me, are diamond treasures?
Silver, gold, or copper pure?
Far nobler joys, far higher pleasures,
My boys and girls for me procure.



MOTHER'S LOVE.

The sea-god, in his deep-sea halls,
Below old ocean's countless smile,
Beholds with joy his growing pile
Of jewels sparkling on the walls.

But child, my love for thee excels
All price; nor can I tell the pain,
When in my dreams thou com'st again,
Teasing my heart with fancy's spells.

I see thy brow and youthful cheek,
As in the hour thou wentst so gay,
A bride, to Koshi's⁽¹⁰⁾ moorland bleak.

Ne'er shall I meet thee; for my day
Is past; my aged frame is weak,
Thy mother soon must pass away.

BOATMAN'S SONG.

Steering the boat,
Where the wild duck swarm
In the harbour of Ina!
Carefully, carefully,
Lest harm should befall her,
Lest harm should befall her!

For she carries my wife,
So tender and fair,
And she carries myself:

Let no harm befall her,
Let no harm befall her!



HUSBAND AND WIFE.

She. Husbands of other women ride
On prancing steeds the live-long day;
My lord goes weekly by my side,
O'er hill and dale, his toilsome way.

I grieve to see this toil and pain:
In my soft eye there stands a tear:
To suffer loss myself were fain,
If I my husband's lot could cheer.

The mirror that my mother gave,
As keepsake, when I said adieu,
The veil, likewise, she bade me have—
Take it—'t will buy a horse for you.

He. On prancing steed how can I ride
And see my poor wife walk below?
Nay, dear; we'll just walk side by side,
As comrades, chatting as we go.

THE COMFORT OF FLOWERS.

My lord has sent me to the furthest plains
Of bleak and barren Koshi, where the gale
Blows cold in winter, and the blinding storm
Fills with its snow-drifts every sheltered nook.

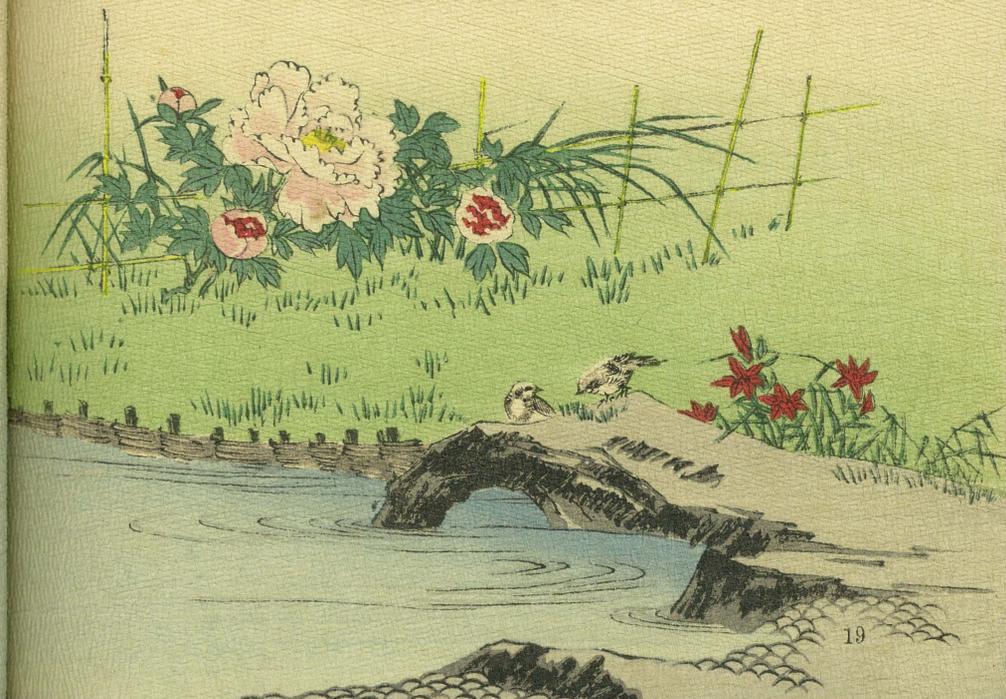
Five years have passed, since last my eyes beheld
My wife's dear face, since last I laid aside
My hip-encircling girdle, or in sleep
Pillowed my head upon her rounded arm.

One solace only soothes my lonely grief;
For yonder, on the moor, I gathered me
Lilies and pinks, and planted them with care
Beside my house-door. So whene'er I walk



Forth from my home, and see them, in their pride,
Raising their dainty heads, I think of her,
That is the pink of all most perfect things,
The purest lily, my dear lily-wife.

Ah! had I not these sweetest dreams of love,
That nightly coming, ease my heart of pain,
Not for one day, not for one single hour,
Could I endure these melancholy wastes.



THE PEARLS OF SUSU.

The fisher maids of Susu, through the foam,
Dive to the lowest caverns of the sea,
From whence they bring their pearly treasures home.
Ah! would there were five hundred pearls for me.

For my true wife sits lonely and forsaken,
With tears upon the cheeks that were so red:
She thinks of that sad hour when I was taken,
And, sobbing, throws herself upon the bed.

No, more, when morning comes, with pale grey beam,
Doth she her raven locks arrange and dress;
But, sitting tearful, counts, as in a dream
The days, months, years of widowed loneliness.

Ah! had I but one single string of pearls,
I fain would send them to my mournful spouse:
That she might twine them in her raven curls,
And wreath with orange-blooms her milk white brows.



THE ONLY ONE.

Yamato's land hath many a band
Of heroes brave and free;
But I set no store by heroes galore,
For I long for only thee.

Oh! wert thou here, my dearest dear,
My love thou soon shouldst see;
Like the Fuji vine, round thee I'd twine,
To live and grow by thee.

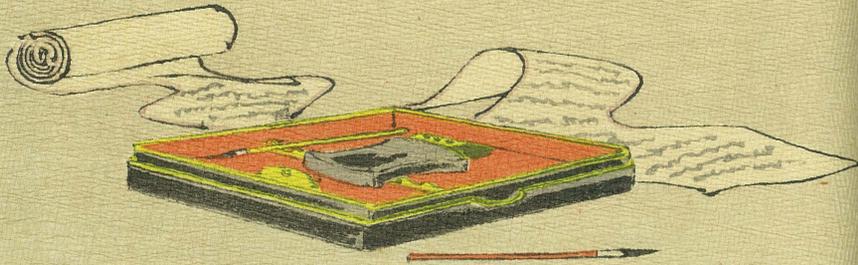
Yamato's land hath many a band
Of heroes brave and free;
But I set no store by heroes galore,
For my love is all for thee.

NO NEWS.

The year once more has come and gone,
Again we live in the days of spring ;
But no message has come from my darling one,
So the winds this day with my murmurs ring.

As my mother's silkworms hidden dwell,
In the darkened web they themselves spin fine ;
Thus I sit, and my grief to none can tell,
Though my eyes with oft-starting tear-drops shine.

When the shades of evening about me fall,
Like the pine on the mountain I stand and pine ;
And the long white sleeves of my robe are all
Wet with those fast-flowing tears of mine.



EXPECTATION.

He cometh not : I wait in vain,
And list to the sad notes of the crane.
Wild and black is the night ; the door
Creaks and groans the gale before.

Whilst thus I stand, the flakes do fall
Like silent tears from a mourner's eye,
Wetting my dress ; and the snow-drifts high
Cover the hills with a velvet pall.

Too late ! too late ! he cannot come now :
Yet hope has not fled from my darkened brow,
As the sailor hopes in the raging storm,
So hope I still to behold thy form.

For if, waking, I ne'er should
see thee again,

Nor hear thy laugh, nor
kiss thy cheek ;

Yet I know that in dreams
I shall hear thee speak,

And thy voice, sweetly lying,
shall cheat my pain.

