

THE TRANSITORY CHARACTER OF EVERYTHING EARTHLY.

Since Heaven and earth first sprung to life
Complaints in every age are rife:
That nought endures upon the earth,
That all is passing and little worth.

I look on the Heaven's field of blue,
Where shines the moon with circle true;
To-night, it shines with full round face,
To-morrow, it 'gins to wane apace.

When spring time comes, the trees do bloom,
And odours fill the sunny room;
But Autumn comes with chilling breath,
And touches flowers and leaves with death.


'Tis so with man; his locks turn grey,
His cheek's red flush soon fades away;
In vain on withered lips you seek
The smile of morn at evening speak.

Dying and death around I see,
Tears flow from my eyes right copiously:
The world is a wind
that is seen of none,
A stream that is ceaselessly
flowing on.



THE TRANSITORINESS OF LIFE.

When I look round me in the world
Nature's eternity I see:
Eternal rise the mighty hills,
Eternal swells the restless sea:
Only the span of the life of man
Is branded with mortality.





THE TRANSITORINESS
OF LIFE.

Scent and colour unchanged remain,
As when first I saw the tree;
But he that planted this shaded plain:—
Can you tell me? where is he?
Swiftly passes our life of pain,
As the foam on the angry sea;
To-morrow the sun will shine again;
—But, it may be, not on me!

THE TRANSITORINESS
OF LIFE.

One thing I know—'tis far more frail
Than dry leaves on the wind.
Like the cloud-fleece melting to the gale
Man's life leaves nought behind.




MAN'S LIFE.

Years and months alas are fleeing,
Waters tumbling down the river;
Ever near and ever nearer
Comes our fate inexorable.

In the blooming of the spring,
Maidens deck their fairy forms
With bright gems from China's shores,
Romping gaily, hand in hand.

But the fair time passes quick:
Hoar-frost falls on raven locks
And the face, so plump and fresh,
Fades and wrinkles with the years.

Bustling moves the sturdy youth,
Thrusts his sword within his belt,
Takes his trusty bow, and goes,
Laughing gaily, to the chase.



Saddling now his happy steed,
Canters free o'er hill and dale!
But how long shall travel last?
Every pleasure hath its end.

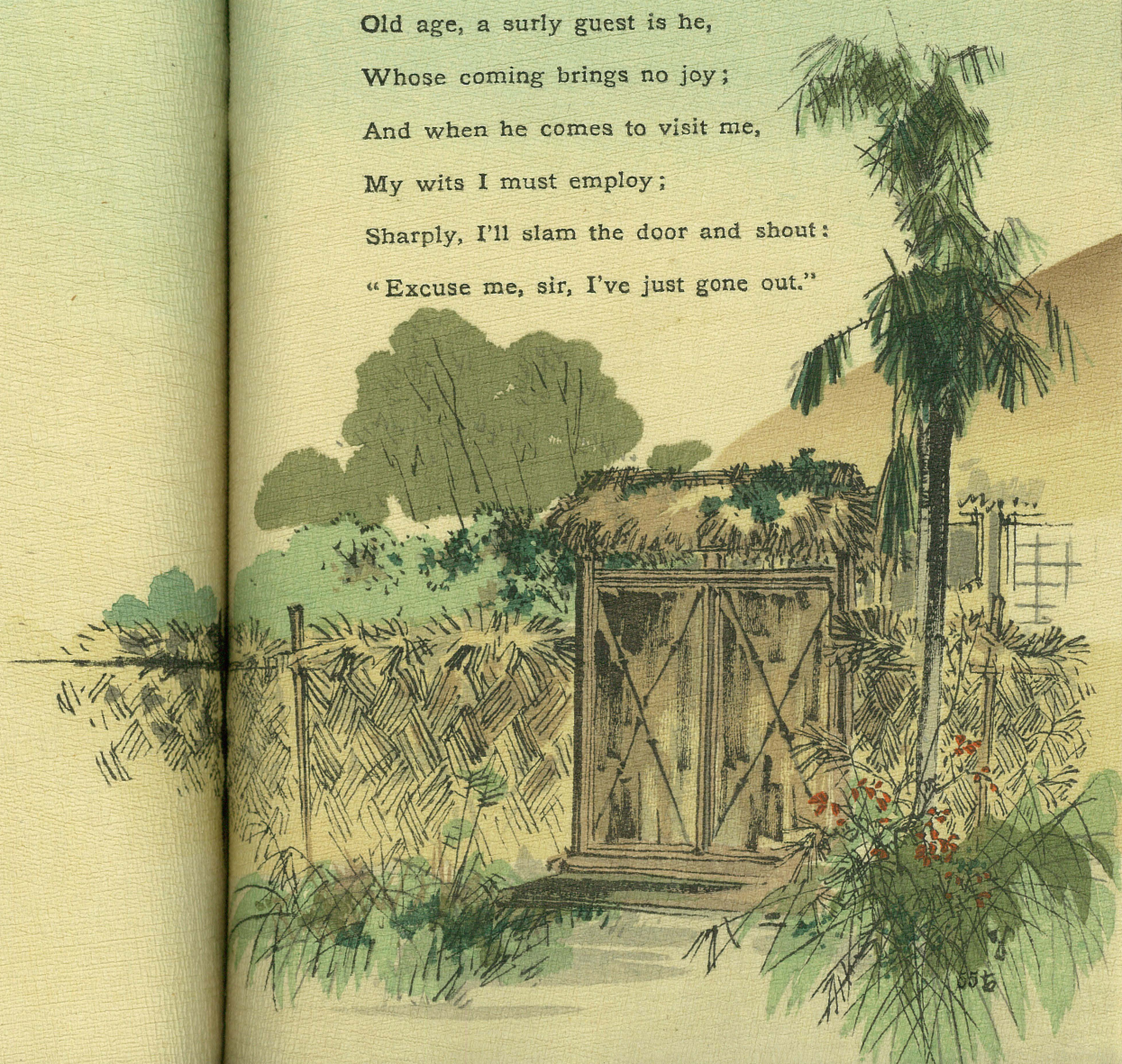
Bang and bar thy door, oh maiden!
Youth will gently push it open,
Noiselessly will gain thy chamber,
There to sleep upon thy bosom.

But those nights of love and pleasure
Quickly pass, too few in number;
Slow in gait, with painful motions,
Stick in hand, old Age comes creeping.

Now you laugh at age and mock him;
But this fate alike awaits you:
All resistance unavailing,
You must leave this world behind you.

THE UNWELCOME GUEST.

Old age, a surly guest is he,
Whose coming brings no joy;
And when he comes to visit me,
My wits I must employ;
Sharply, I'll slam the door and shout:
"Excuse me, sir, I've just gone out."



ELIXIR FOR THE EMPEROR.

Would that yon mountain ridge
Pierced in fact to Heaven's portals;
Would that a solid bridge
Hung betwixt sky and earth for mortals.
From the god of the moon, I'd crave a boon
Of ambrosial nectar, and give
This precious thing to my lord, the king,
That in youth he might ever live.



TO THE AGED PRINCE.

I.

As the sun at noon day high,
As the moon in midnight sky,
Is my lord to me.
But, alas! from day to day,
Weakening with slow decay
My dear lord I see.

II.

As sun and moon art thou to me,
As sun and moon I honour thee.
Wert thou as they!
They in their spheres unmoved abide,
But thou with every changing tide
Fadest away.

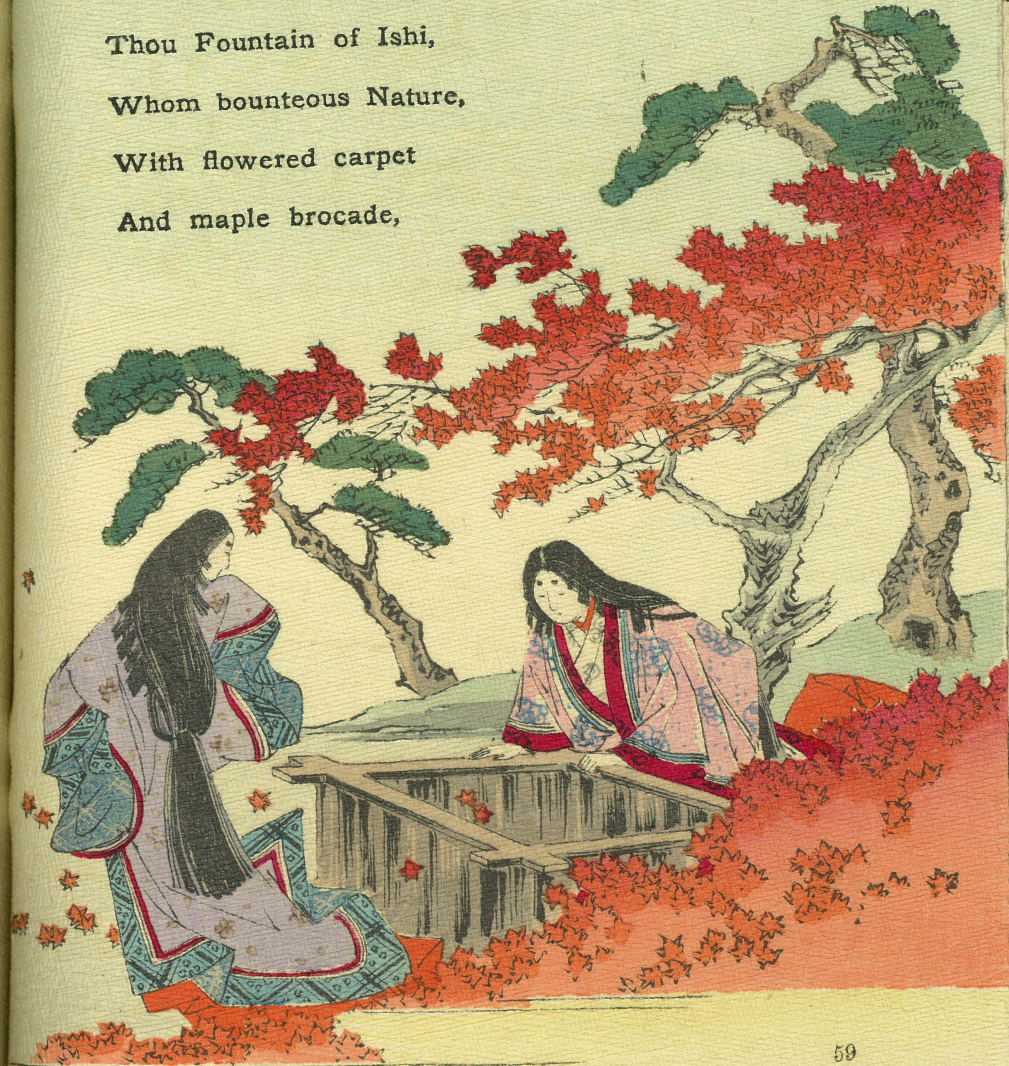
AT THE FOUNTAIN OF ISHI.

O lordly land !
Thou richly blest
Land of Ise !
Fanned by the winds of
the gods,
Ruled by the child
Of the burning Sun,
The mighty lord of
peace !
High and noble
Are thy hills ;—
Clear and pure
Are thy streams ;—
Far outspreads
The sea in thy bay ;—
Famed for beauty
Cluster thy isles ;—
Charmed with thy face

So fair and sweet,
The Prince here holds
His brilliant court,
On the meadows of Ishi.
As the morning Sun,
Lovely to view
Are the maids of the court ;
As the evening Sun,
Rejoicing the eyes ;
Kindly and gay,
As the hills in spring ;
Gaudily dressed,
As the autumn rocks.
Ah ! may they all
Live, and be bright,
For ever and aye,
As Heaven and Earth,
As sun and Moon.

L'ENVOI.

Thus do I hail thee, So gaily hath decked.
Thou Fountain of Ishi,
Whom bounteous Nature,
With flowered carpet
And maple brocade,



TRUE WISHES FOR THE
EMPEROR.

In the castle at Futangi,
Where lordly rules
Our godlike lord,
Softly rise
The swelling hills;
Gently murmur,
As they rush to the plains,
The water brooks.

So long as in spring,
The nightingale-sounding,
Woven-brocade-like,
Flowers and blossoms
Spring 'twixt the rocks
At the foot of the mount;

So long as in Autumn,
When the cry of the stag
For the hind is heard;
The ruddy leaves,
By showers of rain
Mortally, wounded
Flutter to earth;—

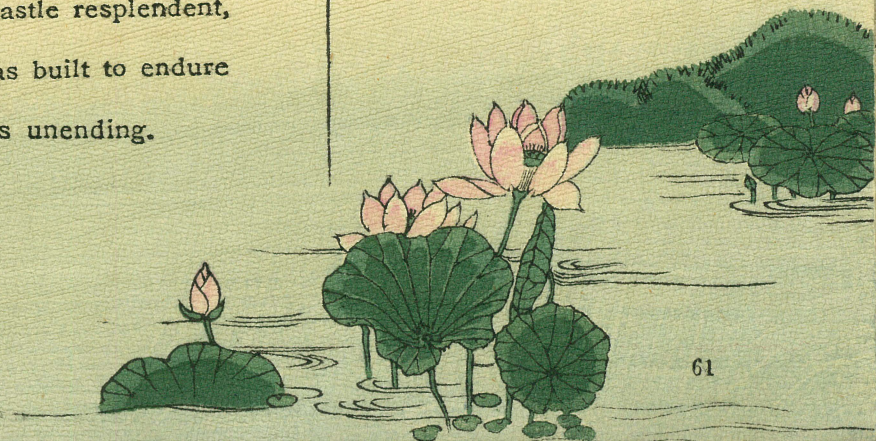
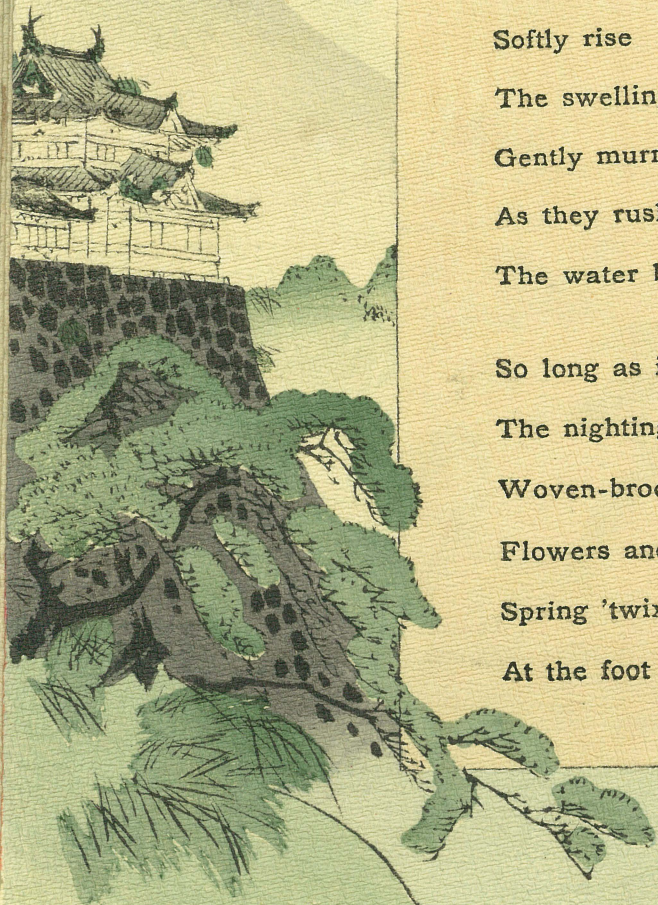
So long, and for thousands
Of coming years,
May last his life!
So long may he govern
His fellow men,
And rule with power
In his castle resplendent,
That was built to endure
For ages unending.

THE DECEPTIVE
LOTUS-LEAF.

Free from all sin and all
defect,
The Lotus lifts its head
erect:

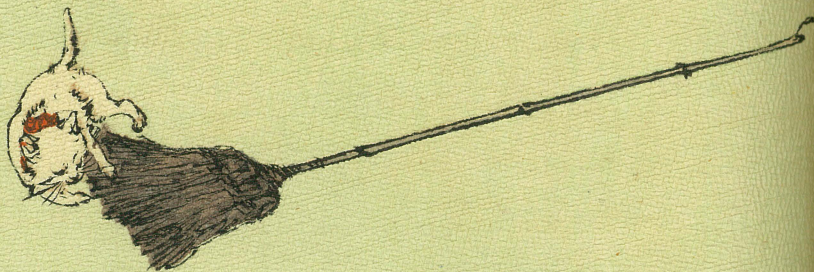
So men do say.
And yet the dew on its smooth
wide leaves
Sparkles like diamonds, and
deceives.

How's this I pray?



SWAN-SONG OF A
DYING POET.

Well-tasting dishes
I always ate:
In well-lined dresses
I warmly sate.
Seven years and seventy—
These are my days:
The Buddha unending
I therefore praise.



POPULAR DRINKING SONG.

Drink till you're full
The headstrong wine;
But then stand straight,
And toe the line!
Forwards march!
Straight and steady.
Boys! be ready,
Hurrah! Hurray! ⁽¹²⁾

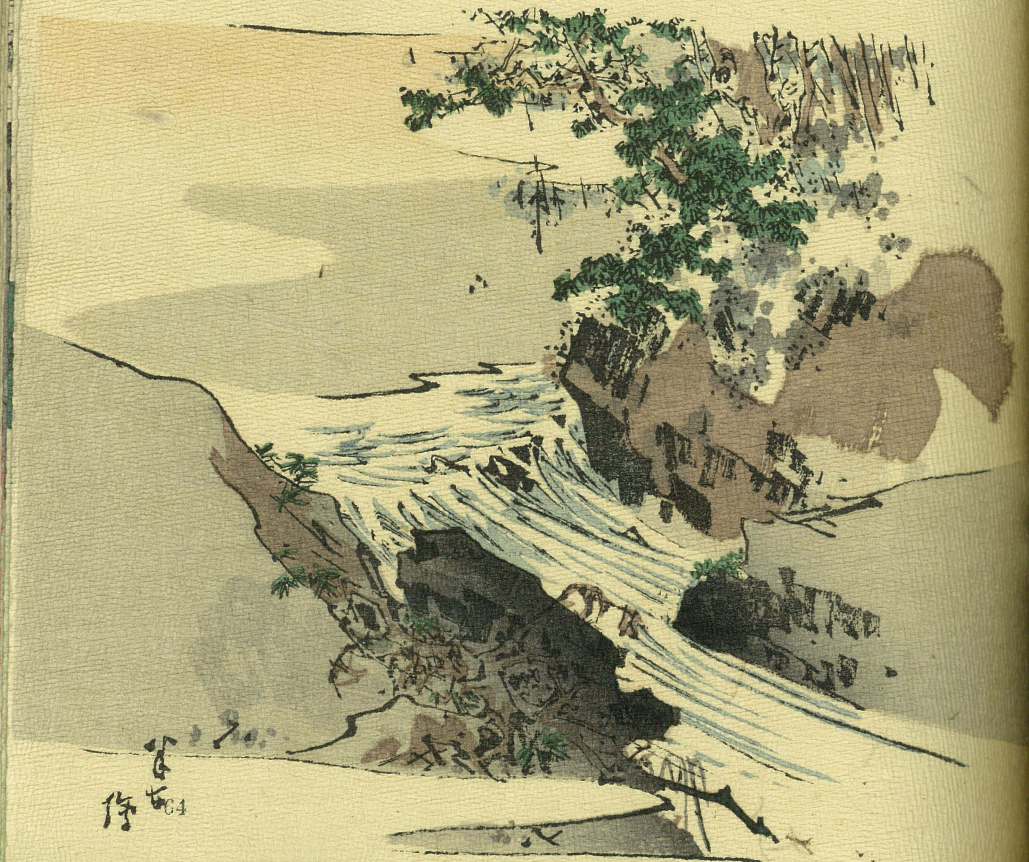


TO AN OLD BESOM.

Of all the brooms thou art the best,
And by hard work hast earned thy rest;
No bristle mars thy head so bright,
So be a bald-pate eremite.

DEEP WATERS RUN STILL.

Uproar and noise
Mark not the mind's immeasurable depth.
Seest thou yon spot, where idle waves are shouting?
The brook is shallowest there.



POWERLESSNESS.

Why shouldst thou wonder, that the stubborn world
Should not be orderèd as thou wouldst have it,
When thy weak will hath not sufficient strength
To tame thy body?

TEMPTATION.

There is a tempter whom the heart of man
Seldom resists. It is the heart itself.
Therefore, weak heart, beware thou trust it not.

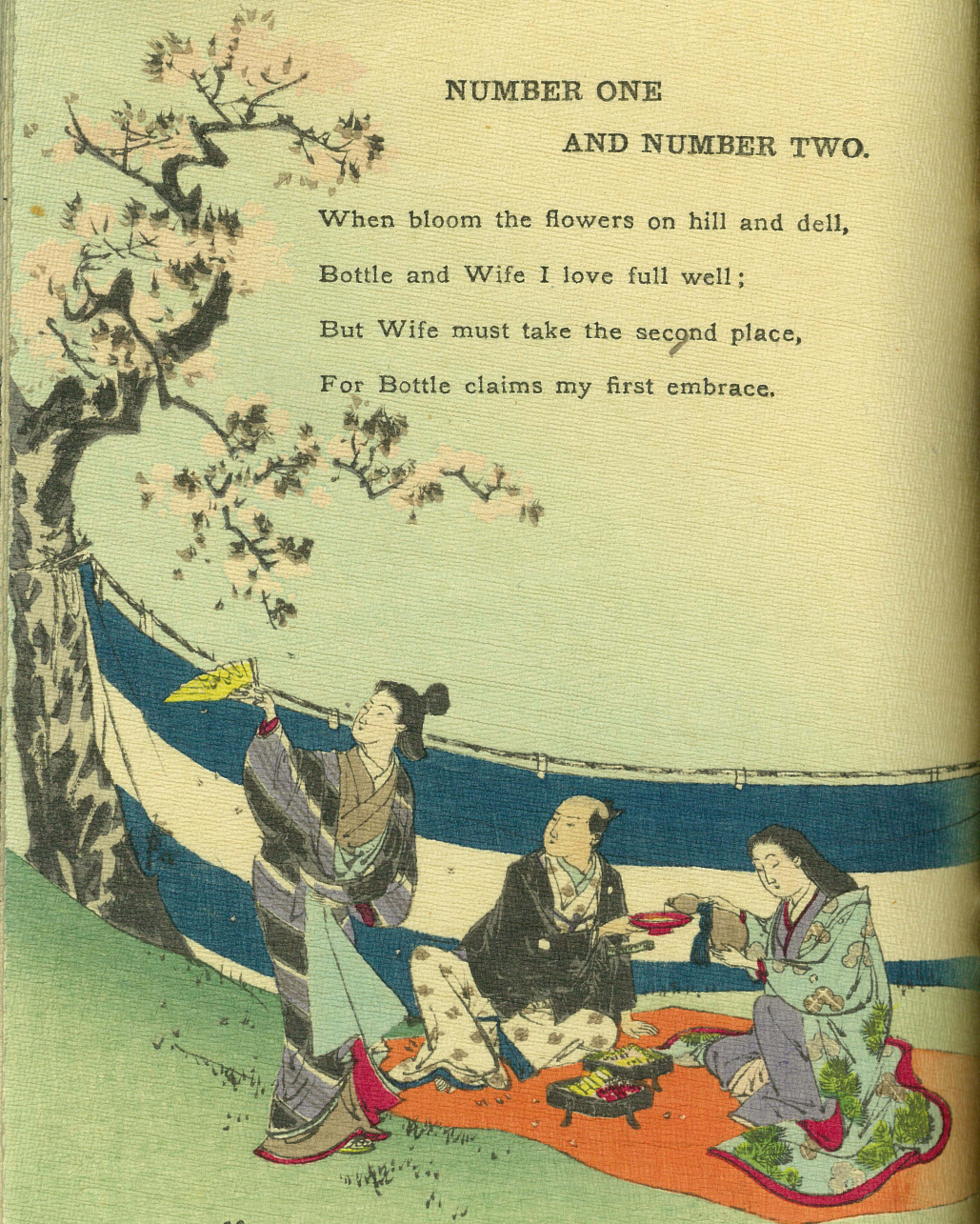
THE RECKONING.

Age draweth nigh: our hairs are grey,
Of years that fruitless passed away,
When age demandeth a strict account,
How the blush of shame in our cheeks will mount!

NUMBER ONE

AND NUMBER TWO.

When bloom the flowers on hill and dell,
Bottle and Wife I love full well;
But Wife must take the second place,
For Bottle claims my first embrace.



FALSE REMEDIES.

Out on you, Frogs! I sold my lands,
Because I could not stand your clatter,
But now that my field is in other hands,
Your croak has become a more awful matter.

CONFUCIUS MISUNDERSTOOD.

Confucius saith: For three years long, a son
Should mourn his fathers death, nor in those years
Begin new undertakings. Did he mean
That yonder fool, for three long years, should let
The rain come dripping through the unmended roof?



URASHIMA.

When the dull spring-days wove themselves in mist
Veiling their face—one day, with lonesome steps,
I walked along the Suminoe beach,
And watched the fishing-boats, that, here and there,
Moved on the waters. Then there came to life
An ancient legend, buried in my mind.

In Midzunoye's village once there dwelt
A fisher-man, Urashima by name:
His son was famed through all the
country side,
A skilful hand at catching lordly

Tai ⁽¹³⁾



And nimble *Katsuo* ⁽¹³⁾; but now seven days
Had gone, since last the boy, returning home,
Had seen his parents. He had rowed to sea
Over the dim horizon out of sight of land,
When suddenly—before him, from the waves,
Arose a maiden fair—the sea-king's daughter.
The ocean-maid, the youthful fisher lad,
Stood thus and gazed, and, in their hearts, the glow
Of love was felt—Exchange of kisses crowned
Their plighted troth. Thus happily they went
To the immortal isles. With arms entwined
The lovers entered by the lofty porch



That guards the sea-god's palace,—there to dwell
For ever, free from care, and free from change,—
Alike the change of age and change of death.
A few days passèd thus: and then the youth,
Unthinking, spoke in folly to his bride:
“Now let me to my home return awhile
To see my father and my mother dear.
To-morrow will I hasten back to thee.”



Thus he: but, as they parted, spoke his wife:—
“Think'st thou to this fair land to come again,
And live with me in love as hitherto,
Then take this casket with thee'—but beware
Thou ope it not”

—With that she gave
A lacquered box, carved and inlaid with gold,
And with repeated warnings bade him heed
To keep it tightly shut.

With eager haste
That marked not half her words, Urashima,
Burning to tell his strange good fortune, ran
Along the well known road:—but lo! a change!
The old familiar home he seeks in vain,
The old familiar village is no more,
And all his searching fruitless.

Then grim fear
Seized on his heart—“Can this be really so?”



That in the few years I've been living there
All here should thus have changed—, the house, the trees,
The very hedge?"—Then came the thought to him
Of that strange box his wife, with many words
Of warning, gave him, when he parted from her—
And thinking, "If I open it, I'll find
Some magic charm to guide me to my home,"
He raised the lid a space, when, slipping forth,
A thin white cloud passed from it through the air
Floating across the distant sea, to where
The immortal isles repose in verdant sheen.

But when the lad beheld the floating cloud
Moving away, he leaped and sprung at it
With clutchings ineffectual; then, with cries,
He threw himself upon the sand, and wept
Tears of remorse,—for now he knew
his loss.

Yet even as he wept, he felt the strength
Ooze from his bones and muscles, and the glow
Of youthful vigour fading from his frame.
The hand he stretched to heaven, was lean and dry;
His eye had lost its keenness; and the hair,
Which in his anguish from his brow he tore,
Was thin and white—; at last his aged frame
In lonesome weakness fell asleep in death.

Thus mused I, as I walked upon the shore;
And shed a tear for poor

Urashima.

