

FURTHER POEMS BY PO CHU-I, AND AN EXTRACT
FROM HIS PROSE WORKS, TOGETHER WITH TWO
OTHER T'ANG POEMS

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“Pour bien connoître en quoi consiste la beauté de la Poésie Chinoise, il faudroit posséder leur langue ; et comme la chose n'est pas aisée, aussi ne peut-on guères en donner qu'une idée fort superficielle.”—*Du Hualde*, Tom. iii, p. 290.

INTRODUCTION

IN *170 Chinese Poems*¹ I have given an account of Po Chü-i's life and translations of over sixty of his poems.

Here are twenty-two further poems, of which all but one are now translated for the first time. The exception is No. 19, of which Pfizmaier gives a very inaccurate version in *Denkschr. d. K. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Wien*, xxxvi (1888), p. 239.

The poems are followed by a rather dull ghost-story. It is the remote ancestor of the tales translated by Professor Giles under the title “Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio”.

P'u Sung-ling, 蒲松齡, the author of the “Strange Stories”, was born 850 years later than Po Chü-i. Their style is not dissimilar, though the later writer is generally more allusive. I conclude my article with two characteristic T'ang poems, one by Li Po (李白), the other by Tu Fu (杜甫). These will enable the reader to estimate the immense originality of Po Chü-i, who almost alone of T'ang poets, avoided the pedantry of obscure literary allusion.

1. **Lazy Man's Song**

(Circa 810 A.D.)

I have got patronage, but am too lazy to use it ;
I have got land, but am too lazy to farm it.
My house leaks ; I am too lazy to mend it ;
My clothes are torn ; I am too lazy to darn them.
I have got wine, but am too lazy to drink ;
So it's just the same as if my cellar were empty.
I have got a harp, but am too lazy to play ;
So it's just the same as if it had no strings.

¹ Constable, 1918.

My wife tells me there is no more bread in the house ;
 I want to bake, but am too lazy to grind.
 My friends and relatives write me long letters ;
 I should like to read them, but they're such a bother to open.
 I have always been told that Chi Shu-yeh¹
 Passed his whole life in absolute idleness.
 But he played the harp and sometimes transmuted metals,
 So even *he* was not so lazy as I.

2

(Circa 812.)

Illness and idleness give me much leisure.
 What do I do with my leisure, when it comes ?
 I cannot bring myself to discard inkstone and brush ;
 Now and then I make a new poem.
 When the poem is made, it is slight and flavourless,
 A thing of derision to almost every one.
 Superior people will be pained at the flatness of the metre ;
 Common people will hate the plainness of the words.
 I sing it to myself, then stop and think about it . . .

* * * * *

The Prefects of Soochow and P'êng-ts'ê²
 Would perhaps have praised it, but they died long ago.
 Who else would care to hear it ?

No one to-day except Yüan Chên,
 And *he* is banished to the city of Chiang-ling,
 For three years an usher in the Penal Court.
 Parted from me by three thousand leagues
 He will never know even that the poem was made.

3. Parting from the Winter Stove

On the fifth day after the rise of Spring,
 Everywhere—the season's gracious attitudes !
 The white sun gradually lengthening its course,
 The blue-grey clouds hanging as though they would fall ;
 The last icicle breaking into splinters of jade ;
 The new stems marshalling red sprouts.
 The things I meet are all full of gladness ;
 It is not only *I* who love the Spring.

¹ Also known as Chi K'ang, a famous quietist.² Wei Ying-wu, 8th cent. A. D., and T'ao Ch'ien, 365-427 A. D.

To welcome the flowers I stand in the back garden ;
 To enjoy the sunlight I sit under the front eaves.
 Yet still in my heart there lingers one regret ;
 Soon I shall part with the flame of my red stove !

4. Winter Night.

(Written during his retirement in 812.)

My house is poor ; those that I love have left me ;
 My body is sick ; I cannot join the feast.
 There is not a living soul before my eyes,
 As I lie alone locked in my cottage room.
 My broken lamp burns with a feeble flame ;
 My tattered curtains are crooked and do not meet.
 "Tsek, tsek" on the door-step and window-sill
 Again I hear the new snow fall.
 As I grow older, gradually I sleep less ;
 I wake at midnight and sit up straight in bed.
 If I had not learned the "art of sitting and forgetting",¹
 How could I endure this utter loneliness ?
 Stiff and stark my body cleaves to the earth ;
 Unimpeded my soul yields to Change.²
 So has it been for four long years,
 Through one thousand and three hundred nights !

5. Visiting the Hsi-lin Temple

(Written during his exile.)

I dismount from my horse at the Hsi-lin Temple ;
 I throw the porter my slender riding-whip.
 In the morning I work at a Government office-desk ;
 In the evening I become a dweller in the Sacred Hills.
 In the second month to the north of Kuang-lu
 The ice breaks and the snow begins to melt.
 On the southern plantation the tea-plant thrusts its sprouts ;
 Through the northern sluice the veins of the spring ooze.

* * * * *

This year there is war in An-hui,
 In every place soldiers are rushing to arms.

¹ Yen Hui told Confucius that he had acquired the "art of sitting and forgetting". Asked what that meant, Yen Hui replied, "I have learnt to discard my body and obliterate my intelligence ; to abandon matter and be impervious to sense-perception. By this method I become one with the All-Pervading".—*Chuang Tzu*, cap. vi.

² "Change" is the principle of endless mutation which governs the Universe.

Men of learning have been summoned to the Council Board;
 Men of action are marching to the battle-line.
 Only I, who have no talents at all,
 Am left in the mountains to play with the pebbles of the stream.

6. Hearing the Early Oriole

(Written in exile.)

The sun rose when I was still lying in bed;
 An early oriole sang on the roof of my house.
 For a moment I thought of the Royal Park at dawn
 When the Birds of Spring greet their Lord from his trees.
 I remembered the days when I served before the Throne
 Pencil in hand, on duty at the Ch'eng-ming;
 At the height of spring, when I paused an instant from work,
 Morning and evening, was *this* the voice I heard?
 Now in my exile the oriole sings again
 In the dreary stillness of Hsün-yang town . . .
 The bird's note cannot really have changed;
 All the difference lies in the listener's heart.
 If he could but forget that he lives at the World's end,
 The bird would sing as it sang in the Palace of old.

7. Dreaming that I went with Li and Yü to visit Yüan Chên

(Written in exile.)

At night I dreamt I was back in Ch'ang-an:
 I saw again the faces of old friends.
 And in my dreams, under an April sky,
 They led me by the hand to wander in the spring winds.
 Together we came to the village of Peace and Quiet;
 We stopped our horses at the gate of Yüan Chên.
 Yüan Chên was sitting all alone;
 When he saw me coming, a smile played on his face.
 He pointed back at the flowers in the western court;
 Then opened wine in the northern summer-house.
 He seemed to be saying that neither of us had changed;
 He seemed to be regretting that joy will not stay;
 That our souls had met only for a little while,
 To part again with hardly time for greeting.
 I woke up and thought him still at my side;
 I put out my hand; there was nothing there at all.

8.

[Having completed the fifteenth volume of his works, the poet sends it to his friends Yüan Chên and Li Chien, with a jesting poem.]

(*Written in 817.*)

My long poem, the "Eternal Grief", is a beautiful and moving work:

My ten "Songs of Shensi" are models of tunefulness.

I cannot prevent Old Yüan from stealing my best rhymes;

But I earnestly beg Little Li to respect my ballads and songs.

While I am alive, riches and honour will never fall to my lot;

But well I know that after I am dead, the fame of my books will live.

This random talk and foolish boasting forgive me, for to-day

I have added volume fifteen to the row that stands to my name.

9. Invitation to Hsiao Chü-Shih¹

(*Written when Governor of Chung-Chou.*)

Within the Gorges there is no lack of men:

They are people one meets, not people one cares for.

At my front door guests also arrive:

They are people one sits with, not people one knows.

When I look up, there are only clouds and trees;

When I look down—only my wife and child.

I sleep, eat, get up or sit still:

Apart from that, nothing happens at all.

But beyond the city Hsiao the hermit dwells;

And with *him* at least I find myself at ease.

For *he* can drink a full flagon of wine

And is good at reciting long-line poems.

Some afternoon, when the clerks have all gone home,

At a season when the path by the river-bank is dry,

I beg you, take up your staff of bamboo-wood

And find your way to the parlour of the Government House.

¹ Nos. 10, 11, 12, and 13 were written when the poet was Governor of a remote part of Szechuan, in the extreme west of China.

10. **To Li Chien**

The province I govern is humble and remote;
 Yet our festivals follow the Courtly Calendar.
 At rise of day we sacrificed to the Wind God,
 When darkly, darkly dawn glimmered in the sky.
 Officers followed, horsemen led the way;
 They brought us out to the wastes beyond the town,
 Where river-mists fall heavier than rain,
 And the fires on the hill leap higher than the stars.

Suddenly I remembered the early levées at Court
 When you and I galloped to the Purple Yard.
 As we walked our horses up Dragon Tail Street
 We turned our heads and gazed at the Southern Hills.
 Since we parted, both of us have been growing old;
 And our minds have been vexed by many anxious cares.
 Yet even now I fancy my ears are full
 Of the sound of jade tinkling on your bridle-straps.

11. **The Spring River**

Heat and cold, dusk and dawn have crowded one upon the
 other;
 Suddenly I find it is two years since I came to Chung-chou.
 Through my closed doors I hear nothing but the morning and
 evening drum;
 From my upper windows all I see is the ships that come
 and go.
 In vain the orioles tempt me with their song to stray beneath
 the flowering trees;
 In vain the grasses lure me by their colour to sit beside
 the pond.
 There is one thing and one alone I never tire of watching—
 The spring river as it trickles over the stones and babbles
 past the rocks.

12. **After Collecting the Autumn Taxes**

From my high castle I look at the town below
 Where the natives of Pa cluster like a swarm of flies.
 How can I govern these people and lead them aright?
 I cannot even understand what they say.

But at least I am glad, now that the taxes are in,
 To learn that in my province there is no discontent.
 I fear its prosperity is not due to me
 And was only caused by the year's abundant crops,
 The papers that lie on my desk are simple and few;
 My house by the moat is leisurely and still,
 In the autumn rain the berries fall from the eaves;
 At the evening bell the birds return to the wood.
 A broken sunlight quavers over the southern porch
 Where I lie on my couch abandoned to idleness.

13. The Little Nun at Lung Hua Monastery

(Written circa 820.)

Delicate eyebrows, very black hair—
 This little novice of only fourteen.
 At night she is scared by the stillness of the neighbouring
 forests;
 On spring days she longs for a second meal.
 They tell me she dawdles and does not get through her tasks;
 That she gets up late and is behindhand with her prayers.
 But to me she seems like a child of the Fairy Queen
 In the Palace of Flowers, waiting for her wedding-day.

14. Good-bye to the People of Hangchow

(824 A.D.)

Elders and officers line the returning road;
 Wine and soup load the parting table.
 I have not ruled you with the wisdom of Shao Kung;¹
 What is the reason your tears should fall so fast?
 My taxes were heavy, though many of the people were poor:
 The farmers were hungry, for often their fields were dry.
 All I did was to dam the water of the lake²
 And help a little in a year when things were bad.

¹ A legendary ruler who dispensed justice sitting under a wild pear-tree.

² Po Chü-i built the dam on the Western Lake which is still known as "Po's dam".

ERRATUM, p. 102

In poem 13, the "Little Nun", there is a reference to Kuo Tai-kung's wife, whose child-name was "Immortal's daughter", and who spent her childhood at a nunnery. The last two lines should be modified accordingly. "Fairy Queen" is of course not a literal rendering.

15. **Written when Governor of Soochow**

(825 A.D.)

A Government building—not my own home.
 A Government garden—not my own trees.
 But at Lo-yang I have a small house
 And on Wei river I have built a thatched hut.
 I am free from the ties of marrying and giving in marriage ;
 If I choose to retire, I have somewhere to end my days.
 And though I have lingered long beyond my time,
 To retire now would be better than not at all.

16. **Getting up early on a Spring Morning***(Part of a poem written when Governor of Soochow in 825.)*

The early light of the rising sun shines on the beams of my
 house ;
 The first banging of opened doors echoes like the roll of a drum.
 The dog lies curled on the stone step, for the earth is wet
 with dew ;
 The birds come near to the window and chatter, telling that
 the day is fine.
 With the lingering fumes of yesterday's wine my head is still
 heavy ;
 With new doffing of winter clothes my body has grown light.

17. **Losing a Slave-girl**

Around my garden the little wall is low ;
 In the bailiff's lodge the lists are seldom checked.
 I am ashamed to think we were not always kind ;
 I regret your labours, that will never be repaid.
 The caged bird owes no allegiance ;
 The wind-tossed flower does not cling to the tree.

* * * * *

Where to-night she lies none can give us news,
 Nor any knows, save the bright, watching moon.

18. **To a Talkative Guest**

The town-visitor's easy talk flows in an endless stream ;
 The country host's quiet thoughts ramble timidly on.
 "I beg you, sir, do not tell me about things at Ch'ang-an ;
 For you entered just when my harp was tuned and lying
 balanced on my knees."

19. **The Pine-tree in the Courtyard**

Below the hall

The pine-trees grow in front of the steps,
Irregularly scattered—not in ordered lines.

Some are tall and some are low :

The tallest of them is six roods high ;
The lowest is not more than ten feet.

They are like wild things

And no one knows who planted them.

They touch the walls of my blue-tiled house ;
Their roots are sunk in the terrace of white sand.
Morning and evening they are visited by the wind and moon ;
Rain or fine—they are free from dust and mud.
In the gales of autumn they whisper a vague tune ;
From the suns of summer they yield an icy shade.
At the height of spring the fine evening rain
Fills their leaves with a load of hanging pearls.
At the year's end the time of great snow
Stamps their branches with a fret of glittering jade.
Of the Four Seasons—each has its own mood ;
Among all the trees none is like another.
Last year, when they heard I had bought this house,
Neighbours mocked and the World called me mad—
That a whole family of twice ten souls
Should move house for the sake of a few pines !
Now that I have come to them, what have they given me ?
They have only loosened the buckles of my care.
Yet even so, they are “profitable friends”¹
And fill my need of “converse with wise men”.
Yet when I consider how, still a man of the world,
In belt and cap I scurry through dirt and dust,
From time to time my heart twinges with shame
That I am not fit to be master of my pines !

20. **A Mad Poem addressed to my Nephews and Nieces**

(Circa 840.)

The World cheats those who cannot read ;
I, happily, have mastered script and pen.

¹ See Analects of Confucius, 4 and 5, where three kinds of “profitable friends” and three kinds of “profitable pleasures” are described ; the third of the latter being 多賢友 “plenty of intelligent companions”.

The World cheats those who hold no office;
 I am blessed with high official rank.

The old are often ill:

I at this day have not an ache or pain.

They are often burdened with ties;

But I have finished with marriage and giving in marriage.

No changes happen to disturb the quiet of my mind;

No business comes to impair the vigour of my limbs.

Hence it is that now for ten years

Body and soul have rested in hermit peace.

And all the more, in the last lingering years

What I shall need are very few things.

A single rug to warm me through the winter;

One meal to last me the whole day.

It does not matter that my house is rather small;

One cannot sleep in more than one room!

It does not matter that I have not many horses;

One cannot ride in two coaches at once!

As fortunate as me among the people of the world

Possibly one would find seven out of ten.

As contented as me among a hundred men

Look as you may, you will not find one.

In the affairs of others even fools are wise;

In their own business even sages err.

To no one else would I dare to speak my heart,

So my wild words are addressed to my nephews and nieces.

21. *Illness*

(Written circa 842, when he was paralysed.)

Dear friends, there is no cause

For so much sympathy.

I shall certainly contrive from time to time

To take my walks abroad.

All that matters is an active mind:

What is the use of feet?

By land one can ride in a carrying-chair;

By water, be rowed in a boat.

22. Resignation

Keep off your thoughts from things that are past and done ;
 For thinking of the past wakes regret and pain.
 Keep off your thoughts from thinking what will happen ;
 To think of the future fills one with dismay.
 Better by day to sit like a sack in your chair ;
 Better by night to lie like a stone in your bed.
 When food comes, then open your mouth ;
 When sleep comes, then close your eyes.

Record of a Strange Experience

About 36 miles south-east of Hsia-kuei-hsien in Hua-chou there is a village called Yen-nien. South-west of the village stands what was once a private chapel ; but now no priest lives there. In the autumn of the 18th year of Yüan Ho (813 A.D.), in the seventh month, my cousin Hao came from Hua-chou to visit me, by the road which passes the chapel. When he reached the chapel-door he saw a number of women and girls of various ages sitting and talking in the chancel, so loudly that their conversation was audible at the door.

Being hot and thirsty with riding he determined to go inside and rest for a little, and ask for something to drink. Finding that his attendant, Hsiao Shih-ch'ing, was not in sight, he dismounted and tied his horse's bridle to the door-post. When he looked up, the women had all disappeared ! He thought they had retired into the inner room, but when he looked there he found no one. Then he thought perhaps they were behind the altar-wall ; but when he looked there, again he found no one. He then examined the walls all the way round the building and found that there was no breach or gap anywhere. He went back to the place where he had first seen them conversing : the dust on the floor had not been disturbed, there was not a foot-print anywhere.

Then he knew that the people he had seen were not human beings. He was too much frightened to wait for his servant. Mounting his horse he galloped straight to my house and told me what had happened. I too was astonished and questioned him about what he had heard the apparitions say. He was able to

remember a good deal, more than I have space to repeat. Most of it was about an old man called Wang Yin. As far as could be made out from what they said, they seemed to be drawing up a list of Wang's misdeeds.

The place is about a mile and three-quarters from my house, so one day we went there together. We discovered that there had actually lived in the village an old man called Wang Yin, who made up his mind to live in a building which lay a few hundred paces east of the chapel. He repaired the garden walls and house, built a threshing-floor, planted trees, and the day after his operations were completed, immediately moved in. He had not been in the house an hour when he fell dead. By next day his wife was dead, and in a very short time two of his sons with their wives and one grandson were also dead. There only remained one son, called Ming-chin, who was so unnerved that he did not know what to do. However, thinking that the site was in some way unlucky, he pulled down the house, felled the trees, removed in the night, and eventually came to no harm.

Such an episode as this convinces me that there may after all be some truth in the story of how the ghosts of the assembled Sages were overheard in the temple plotting the death of Ts'ao Ts'ao,¹ and in the story of the lady who was sent to burn Mi Chu's house.²

In the autumn of the next year my cousin and I, in the course of an excursion, again visited the place. There was nothing left of Wang's house except the garden walls. The well had collapsed and the fire-place was in ruins. No one from the village dared to settle there.

Ihu! To what agency must we attribute these occurrences? To Destiny—or to Chance? Was the site inauspicious for human habitation or had the Wang family committed some secret crime for which the spirits had determined it must pay the penalty?

To these questions I can find no answer, but have inscribed the story on the wall of the shrine, that it may await the discrimination of the curious.

¹ 155-220 A. D., founder of the Wei dynasty.

² Mi Chu (3rd cent. A. D.) was going home one day when a mysterious lady stopped him on the road and told him she was a spirit sent by Heaven to burn his house. Following her advice, he hurried on ahead and had just time to save his furniture before his house burst into flames.

A Poem by Li Po

愁	荷	南	泳	泳
殺	花	湖	小	小
蕩	嬌	采	明	曲
母	欲	白	秋	
人	語	蘋	月	

This is translated by Judith Gautier, *Livre de Jade* (2nd ed.), p. 29, as follows:—

Fleur Défendue

Sous la claire lune d'automne, l'eau agitée secoué ma barque.
Solitaire, je vogue sur le lac du Sud, et je cueille des lotus
blancs. Oh! qu'elle est belle, la blanche fleur du lotus!—
Qu'elle est délicate et délicieuse! Un ardent désir me dévore
de lui avouer la passion qu'elle m'inspire—
Hélas une tristesse mortelle submerge mon cœur—l'embarcation
s'en va à la dérive, sur les eaux narquoises, qui s'en font un
jouet.

The same poem is translated by Anna von Bernhardt (Mitth. d. Sem. f. Or. Sprachen, 1916, p. 123)—

Auf dem grünen Wasser leuchtet die Herbstsonne; [reading
日, not 月] auf dem südlichen See pflückt er die weissen Blüten.
Die Lotosblumen wollen ihm hold zusprechen, aber Kummer tötete
den Schiffenden.

Notes

Title: The Lü-shui 泳水 was a tributary of the Hsiang 湘 River in Hunan. The "Ballad of Lü-shui" was the name of an ancient harp-tune. Li Po has taken this as the title of his poem. The Nan-hu must have been a small lake in the vicinity. The lady (the *er* of the German version is certainly a mistake) on an autumn night when the moon is shining on the Lü River, goes to the Southern Lake to pluck white p'in-flower or "frog-bite". These were common marsh-flowers plucked by women in the autumn as love-charms. Suddenly she sees some lotus-flowers. Judith Gautier identifies the 白蘋 with the 荷花, but the contrast between them is in reality the whole point of the poem.

"The lotus-flowers are so beautiful that they almost speak." There must here be an allusion to the well-known story of the Emperor Ming Huang (685-762 A.D.). One day when he was

walking in his garden he saw some white lotus-flowers just coming into bloom. Pointing to his favourite concubine, Yang Kuei-fei, he exclaimed, "Here I have a flower that is better than those lotuses, for she is a living flower that can speak 解語花."

The lady in the boat is grieved at the sight of the lotuses because they are not like ordinary speechless flowers, but actually challenge comparison with the "living and speaking beauty" of a woman. But there is a further point. P'in-flowers are used as a charm to retain the affections of absent lovers. From the fact that the lady was gathering such flowers we may infer that she was parted from her lover and was afraid he might not be faithful. The sight of the lotuses reminds her that there are other women more beautiful than she is, just as the lotus is more beautiful than the common frog-bite.

I would therefore translate as follows:—

"Ballad of Lü Water.

On Lü Water shines the autumn moon;
On the South Lake she plucks white p'in-flowers.
But the lotus-flowers are so beautiful that they seem to speak;
And the lady of the floating boat is stricken with grief."

I do not think that anyone familiar with T'ang 絕句 will consider this interpretation too elaborate.

A Poem by Tu Fu¹

Kao Hsien-chih 高仙芝 was the son of a Korean who had served with distinction in the Chinese army. Hsien-chih himself became a general at the age of 20, and later, Assistant Military Protector of Turkestan 安西副都護. In 747 A.D. (*vide* Chavannes, *Les Turcs Occidentaux*, p. 152) he distinguished himself by leading a Chinese army over the Hindu Khush and obtaining the submission of the king of Little Pu-lü 勃律 (modern district of Gilgit). He encountered no military opposition, and the feat was one of diplomacy rather than of arms. In 749 he returned to the capital, Ch'ang-an, bringing with him a Tartar charger of the kind known as 青驄馬. In 750 he was back again in Turkestan, and in 751 was heavily defeated by the Arabs on the banks of the River Talas. "Le désastre éprouvé par Kao Sien-tche sur les bords de la rivière Talas marque la fin de la puissance des Chinois dans les pays d'occident" (Chavannes,

¹ This poem has not been translated before.

loc. cit., p. 298). The poem I am about to translate was written by Tu Fu (712–770 A.D.), one of the most celebrated of Chinese poets. It deals nominally with Kao Hsien-chih's Tartar horse, but the inner meaning of it (as all the commentators agree) is something of this kind: "Why has this able and distinguished general so long been allowed to live in retirement? Why is he not encouraged to repeat his former victorious exploits?" This could not have been written in the interval between Hsien-chih's two campaigns, for he was only at the capital for a few months. It must therefore have been written after his defeat in 751. This took place in the autumn, so that he could not have been in Ch'ang-an till the spring of 752.

Of the defeat Tu Fu apparently knew nothing. Such incidents were naturally concealed as far as possible. Our own knowledge of the Talas battle is chiefly derived from Ssü-ma Kuang's History and from Arabic sources. The Old T'ang History does not mention it at all; the new history names it, but does not say which side was victorious! The Government were doubtless in possession of fuller information and had good reasons for keeping Kao on the retired list.

But his opportunity soon came. When the revolt of An Lushan broke out in 755, Kao Hsien-chih was summoned to defend the dynasty. In the same year the failure of the Imperial armies necessitated "penal measures", and Kao was executed.

何青走長萬五交腕猛雄飄功與此聲安高
 由絲過安里花河促氣姿飄成人馬價西都
 却絡掣壯方散幾蹄猶未遠惠一臨歛都護
 出頭電兒看作蹴高思受自養心陣然護驄
 橫爲傾不汗雲層如戰伏流隨成久來胡馬
 門君城敢流滿泳踏場櫪沙所大無向青行
 道老知驕血身裂鏤利恩至致功敵東驄

A Song of Kao Hsien-chih's Blue Colt

The Military Protector of An-hsi's Tartar "blue colt"—
 Suddenly the noise of its reputation came flying from west to east.
 It was said the enemy could not stand when this horse approached
 their ranks;

By resolution as firm as its master's it had won the great fight.
 When the battle was over it was carefully tended and allowed to
 go where it would ;
 Swiftly it came from a far country over deserts of shifting sand.
 But its dauntless frame would not receive the kindness of stabled
 ease ;
 Its bold spirit was brooding still on the contests of the battlefield.
 Its ankles are slender, its hoofs are high ; hard as though shod
 with iron ;
 Hoofs that have riven the packed ice on the frozen river of
 Turfan.
 Its five-flower mane scatters in the wind and covers its flanks like
 a cloud ;
 Only after the passage of a thousand leagues does its skin exude
 blood.
 The stoutest lads of Ch'ang-an dare not mount its back ;
 That its gallop is swifter than the lightning's flash all the City
 knows.
 With blue tassels tied to its neck you are letting it grow old ;
 Shall it never again find cause to issue by the road of the
 Western Gate ?

Notes

(1) Ch'ing ts'ung 青驄, "blue piebald-horse," is apparently an abbreviated form of 青海驄, "piebald horse of Lake Kokonor." Parker, in *A Thousand Years of the Tartars* (ch. 4, The Tukahun Sien-pi of Kokonor) quotes the following passage: "There is a small island in Kokonor, and every year when the lake is frozen a number of fine mares are driven on to the island: the foals are collected the following winter. A number of splendid Persian mares were obtained by the Tukahun for this purpose, and their young obtained great repute for swiftness as 'Kokonor colts'." The phraseology used by Tu Fu in his account of this Tartar charger is borrowed, after the manner of T'ang poets, from various early sources: (a) The 天馬歌, "Song of the Heavenly Horse," Han dynasty. (b) Ts'ao Ts'ao's 曹操 (155-220 A.D.) poem 龜雖壽, "The tortoise, though long-lived . . ." (c) Yen Yen-chih's 顏延之 (384-456 A.D.) 赭白馬賦 "Poetical Description of a bay and white horse".

(2) 未受伏櫪恩 "has not yet received (i.e. does not desire to receive) the favour of lying down in the stable". Cf. Ts'ao

Ts'ao's poem, referred to above, "An old charger may lie down in the stable, but it would like to be galloping a thousand li. A brave warrior, though he be growing old, still preserves a stout heart."

(3) "River of Turfan." Literally Chiao-ho 交河, "The Joined Rivers," near Turfan and at that time headquarters of the military government of Turkestan, near the modern village of Yarkhoto. Sir Aurel Stein, in *Desert Cities of Cathay* gives two photos of the ruins of old Chiao-ho.

(4) 五花, "five-flower," explained as being a decorative method of cutting the horse's mane. It often means no more than "many-coloured".

(5) "The descendants of the Heavenly Horse sweat blood instead of water."

(6) The meaning is, "Just as Kao's horse cannot be ridden by the boys of Ch'ang-an, so his master is too strong and autocratic a character to use in a governmental capacity. The civilian authorities are frightened of him."

(7) 傾城知. The commentators tell us that 傾 is in the sense of 舉. The usual meaning of 傾城 is, of course, "beautiful woman."

(8) "You are letting it . . .": the 君 primarily refers to the horse's master, but it also refers to the Emperor's 君 treatment of his general.

(9) 橫門 "Hēng-mēn" was the chief western gate of Ch'ang-an, and travellers going in the direction of Turkestan would leave the city by it.