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THE PRIZE WINNERS OF THE HOKKU CONTEST

Their Poetry and an Analysis of It by the Eminent Chinese Poet

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MOST CHARMING MR. EDITOR:
I AM overwhelmed! I am humbled! I am snowed under! I said in my heart "There is no poet!"—"There may be five poets!"—"By the favor of Shang Ti, there may be ten poets." And lo! there are more than five hundred poets! And they are all good poets! Only alas! They are many of them all too good! They are inspired with sacred flame. Their genius bears them aloft upon the snowy peaks of poesy; they will not be bound in the ring-fence of the rules of a competition. Sometimes they scan beautifully, but not in the particular rhythm required. Sometimes they do not mention the magic towers of Downtown; sometimes they forget the Sunset; sometimes they omit the poor little lover man with his troubled heart. Sometimes they write beautiful poetry about something altogether different. Oh! it is wondrous, this nation in flower! It is like the poppy-fields in my beloved Yuunan; it is like the iris gardens that are about Daibutsu at Kamakura!

Look! Here is perfect poesy, the soul of the Hokku. You must all hear it; there is nothing better; it is like a smile kissing a tear upon the cheek of Our Lady Quian-se-on!

The rose petals fall—
The red petals of my heart—
Oh the breath of love!
Oh how bitter
Is the White Poppy Death;
There are no more dreams of love.
The pale moth
Trembles with the white moonlight;
Thus my heart trembles with love.

How happy am I to evoke such music! It is so faint, so delicate, so subtle, yet so strong. I quite swoon. I am back in the flower glades of the Salween! But alas! It has nothing to do with our appointed Hokku!

One gentleman frankly refused to compete. This is how he expresses it:

What do you say, sir?
Grind old Hokku in August?
Me for the trenches!

It has been a very long and a very delightful task to judge of these hokkus. But the hokku must melt in the mouth like a lichee, and it must be terse and tense and comprehensive like the commentary of Kwang Tze! So if there were even a grain of dust to mar a dactyl, was the masterwork set aside. You must be so careful, my friends, with the dactyl! Even in the best of all the hokkus, there are double consonants after a short vowel, and that makes it long. Here is a hokku by M. Foster, 300 West 49th Street, New York City:

"Pinnacles, question
Crimson waters of sunset!
Does she deceive me?"

It is an idea very hokku-worthy. The poet takes nature into his confidence. But the "sq" in line 1 slightly lengthens the vowel; and so does the "is" in line 2. Yet all the ideas are in this and no others—oh! how difficult it is to keep to the text, and to concentrate, and to write in bliss all these ideas! Then is J. R. Foster, 30 Irving Place, New York City—are these perhaps twin brothers ardent in art, or beautiful sisters?—with this:

"Monoliths—true love!
Sunset-fury of passion!
What is she thinking?"

This is very perfect writing of the physical and the moral. But still "liths" is too long. We cannot make complaint about "f p" in the second line, because "of" is almost elliptical in speaking.

Also there is Nerissa Bathurst, 50 West 94th St., New York (second prize), with this:

"Towers of passion
Glowing red in the sunset!
Heart of my darling!"

Only the "of p" can be objected to by the most purist. The idea is delightful, too; the towers are her aspiring thoughts to God, colored by love. The jealousy idea is given (oh how subtly!) by the question-mark. This is real economy!

My Editor, you have a kindly heart, even for the poor exile of Yuunan! You will not

put on him the cruel task of deciding between these admirable poems. It is to distinguish between perfections—and is it not written "The perfect and the perfect are one perfect and not two—nay, are none!"

We have decided to award first prize to M. J. Herzberg, of 914 S. 10th Street, Newark, N. J., who writes:

"Heavenly fingers,
Flushed with delicate blushes.
Tear not my bosom!"

Alas! the "my" is very long, because it must be emphasized; and so is the "not" before the "m."

But in judging hokkus, or indeed any flower of the pen, one must pay due attention to the thought it contains as well as to the form in which it is expressed. And in this example, it is very hokku-worthy that the poet should think of the towers as the fingers of his love, and of the sunset as his heart.

Honorable mention must be given to Mrs. Mary Bishop Todd, Richard Florence, E. A. Bache, Nina E. L. Lanich, Carolyn Wells, Robert Redfield, Harriet Hawley, and Nelson A. Kellogg.

In view of the extreme interest excited by this fascinating competition, we have decided to offer another theme. Please note that the very strictest attention must be paid to metre; all ideas given in the theme must be brought in, and no others not so given may be introduced; the ideas must be indissolubly connected, and finally all this must be done in the allowed seventeen syllables. Competitors may send in as many attempts as they like. They must reach the Editor of Vanity Fair by October 20th. The prizes will be the same as before, ten dollars for the best hokku and five dollars for the second best.

The theme is as follows: A girl in a garden is hesitating between love and duty. She sees a bee alight upon a rose. She decides, influenced by this omen, and expresses her thoughts in a hokku. What does she say?

MOON-STONES

Twelve Lyrics in a Classical Japanese Verse Form

By Ferdinand Reyher

I
THE moon has stolen
My rest and given me dreams:
Moon, take from me dreams!
My heart pains, and the roses
Now hurt me more than the thorns.

II
O YOU have put spells
Upon me! Your white magic
Holds me forever!
Night after night I watch you
And wonder what spells you weave.

III
DEEP are the waters
Of the sky to-night: the moon,
Like a galleon,
Sails to the ports of roses
And desirable rubies.

IV
LIKE a lonely soul
Thinking of eternity
In that deep silence
Which flows from lonely spirits
In solitary places.

V
BATTLE, valiant knight!
Wield your flashing scimitar,
Battle, valiant knight!
O delicate, perfect blade,
Cut all things, and make them bleed!

VI
WHILE the daisy stars
Blossomed on the far blue fields
We forget the moon;
Now the moon bursts in blossom!
And now we forget the stars.

VII
NO flower of the day
Is so beautiful as you,
Flower of the night!
You sway on your slender stem,
O wild flower of the sun!

VIII
A LITTLE maid hides
Behind a Japanese screen
And peeps out shyly.
She holds the orange blossoms
And thinks of her strong lover.

IX
FULL-FACED pallid moon,
Glowing through the wind-strip:
Finger-like branches,
Filling the woods with runnings
And sly, mocking whisperings.

X
YOU walk in incense
And burnings of sandal wood,
And deep popped dreams;
The lotus calls you mother;
The poppy sprang from your seed.

XI
YOU tread so lightly
Carrying the new lilacs,
You tread so lightly.
You walk on all the meadows
And hurt not one buttercup.

XII
WHITE mother of dreams!
You sit alone in heaven
Dreaming of children.
You feel hands clutching at your breast,
Beneath your heart, something stirs!