
The She King, usually translated the Book of the Odes, or the Classic of Poetry, is not so well known to the outside world as it deserves to be. It is one of the Classics or Canons of Chinese learning, and, like its companion books, is supposed not only to contain deep lessons of morality for the instruction of future ages, but to have been compiled, if not written, for the express purpose of their inculpation. The events recorded or alluded to in it are said to have taken place between 1765 and 585 B.C. Confucius himself is acknowledged to have been the compiler. Sai Ma ch’ien states: “The old poems amounted to more than 8000. Confucius removed those which were only repetitions of others, and selected those which would be serviceable for the inculpation of propriety and righteousness.” In other words he brought out a revised and expurgated edition. Constant allusions to the Odes are found in the Confucian Analects, the Master on all occasions expressing the highest admiration for the work, and enjoining on his disciples the necessity of a thorough study of it. The Odes, he says, stimulate the mind, teach introspection, sociability, righteous indignation, filial piety

1 I confess a preference for Sir Thomas Wade’s system of transliteration, and would fain call the work the Shih Ching; but I am assured that this would convey no meaning to European students of Chinese.

2 Quæcunque ex antiquorum temporum monumentis ideæs ad revocandum pristinum rerum ordinem videbantur, in sex libros collecta edidit, ut inde reipublicæ administranda modum, morum disciplinam, et saniorum doctrinam discernit posteri.—Confucii Chi King, Læ Charmæ.

3 司馬遷. n.c. 163-85.

Doctor's scholarly and exhaustive treatment of text and commentary. The metrical version of the She King made by Dr. Legge and his nephews is to my mind not quite so successful as his prose work. It is very unequal. Whenever the translator has allowed himself to shake off the trammels of Chinese prosody, he has produced some very pleasing verses, those in the Scotch dialect being particularly charming, for instance: 1

"Says oor gudewife, 'The cock is cawin',
Quoth oor gudeman, 'The day is dawin',
'Get up, gudeman, an' tak a spy:
See gin the mornin' star be high,
Syne tak a saunter roon' aboot;
There's rowth o' dyukes and gleese to shoot.
Lat flee and bring them hame to me,
And sic a dish as ye sall pree.
In comin' times as ower the strings
Your noddin' heed in rapture hings,
Supreme ower care, nor fash wi' fear,
We'll baith grow auld in worth and years.

An' when we meet the friends ye like,
I'll gi'e to each some little fyke:
The lasses beads, trocks to their brithers,
An' auld warld fairlies to their mithers,
Some nick neck lovin' hands will fin'
To show the love that dwalls within.'"

Another beginning: 2

"The gudeman 's awa' for to fecht wi' the stranger,"
is also well worth reading and remembering.

But in most of the poems the translator has allowed himself to be hampered and cramped by trying to follow the Chinese prosody, at any rate to the extent of making his English version consist of the same number of stanzas as the Chinese, and by translating verse by verse. I contend that

by taking a whole poem, and turning it into English with an
utter disregard of the order of the lines, or even of the
stanzas, it is easier to give a correct version of the original
than by following Dr. Legge's perhaps more painstaking
method. This I hope to prove later on.

I know of no other complete metrical version of the She
King in English. Various gentlemen have tried their
hands at translating one or two odes, Sir John Davis among
others. A few translations have appeared in the China
Review, some very excellent ones by Mr. Lister of Hong-
kong, the author of a most interesting and valuable essay on
the Odes; and some others by V. W. X., a pseudonym that
is an open secret among European residents in China. This
gentleman, although a ripe Chinese scholar, has attempted
the impossible task of going closer to the original than even
Dr. Legge has done, and of translating word by word. Sir
John Davis says in reference to the She King, "In European
languages there is a certain connection which allows literal-
ness of rendering to be carried to a great extent, but a
verbal translation from the one concerning which we now
treat must of necessity degenerate into a horrible jargon,
which few persons will undergo the disgust of perusing."
V. W. X. has proved this most conclusively. Here is one of
his translations: ¹

"The flax spreads large
Creeping down the gorge,
As the leaves grow thick,
The macaws on wing,
Grouped in the bush,
There sweetly sing.

The flax spreads large
Creeping down the gorge
When full in leaf.
First reap, then soften,
Weave coarse or fine,
And glad weave often.

I'll beg my teacher
To let me home.
First wash my common,
And clean my best,
Which clean, which not,
Then to parents blest."

This the translator calls one of the more harmonious odes. He explains the roughness of it by saying that a literal translation has been attempted in all possible cases. "It should also," he observes, "be borne in mind, that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

Here V. W. X. and I are at variance. I believe, and would fain show, that the She King is not a sow's ear, but a mass of silk, rough and tangled if you will, but still containing many beautiful threads, whereof the skilful workman may make use. In other words the She King consists of a collection of ballads, odes, satires, elegies, and lampoons (most of which were once sung to music), such as are found in all nations in their imperfectly civilized stages. The exigencies of this paper induce me to make the following arbitrary divisions, which however often overlap each other:
1. Idylls, including songs and poems on love, conjugal affection, country occupations and festivals, the chase, and so on.
2. Songs and poems relating to war. 3. Laudatory odes in honour of the deeds and glories of some great man, or the beauties and virtue of some princess. 4. Satires and lampoons, and moral lessons. 5. Festal and sacrificial odes. 6. Fragments, and corrupt and imperfect pieces.

The versification, as is to be expected, is rough, and the text in countless instances is doubtful and corrupt, for not only has it been subjected to the efflux of over 2300 years at least, but the original editions, if I may use the term, were destroyed at the burning of the books in B.C. 213.1

1 It must not be forgotten that the oldest of these poems have had to pass through three scripts before they could appear in their present form. The oldest style of Chinese character, the Ku Wen (古文), was in use until about 800 B.C., when in the time of Hsiian Wang (宣王), of the Chou dynasty, the Ta Chuan (大篆) or Large Seal character was introduced. This was succeeded
Fragments, the connection of which is unknown, are sometimes found by themselves, and at other times two or more are mixed together in such a way that no sense can be discovered in the poem as a whole; and occasionally we find a piece which becomes perfectly comprehensible if one stanza is omitted. But are not these flaws exactly what one expects in a work of this kind? Has not every old poem, Greek, Latin or English, hundreds of conjectural readings? Would the versification of Homer have passed muster in the time of Sophocles, or the rough diction of Beowulf or Cædmon compare with the elegant mastery of the English language shown by Tennyson and Swinburne? We all know King Canute’s famous verse:

“Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely
Tha Cnut chinng renther by
Roweth cnihtes noer the land
And here we these muneches sing.”

Gilbert à Becket says of Canute, “If he had known anything of sense or syntax, if he had been happy at description, or possessed the slightest share of imagination, he would have been a fair poet.” Perhaps so, but let us imagine it possible that the verse above is in a foreign language, and is to be translated into modern English. Would it be unfair to alter it, and make it run thus?:

“Merrily sung the monks of Ely
When Canute the king was rowing thereby,
Row to the shore, knights, said the king,
And let us hear these good monks sing.”

So with archaic Chinese poetry. Translate it into English as rough as the original form, and I say that you give an

by the Hsiao Chuan (卜, 笙) or Small Seal character, which lasted from about 226 B.C. to about 350 A.D., when the Chiai Shu (楷書) took its place. Mons. Terrien de Lacouperie informs me that he has compared the oldest version of the Shu King or Classic of History, as published in the 三字石經, with the present standard editions, and finds the discrepancies to amount to nearly 25 per cent. of the whole text. A comparison of the earliest and latest versions of the She King would surely show as large a proportion of error. See Prof. T. de Lacouperie, On the History of the Archaic Writing and Texts.
unfair idea to foreigners of the beauties that lie hid in the original. The first requisite, therefore, for a verse translation of the poetry in question is modern language, and clear expressions in honest flowing metre. It is, further, the duty of the translator to avoid, as much as possible, the use of Chinese names, which are so repellent to the English reader. Let him also be granted a good deal of freedom in his renderings of trees and flowers, or at any rate let him confine his exactness to foot-notes. The jujube, the dolichos creeper, the polygonum and the broussonetia are not ornaments to verse, still less are the T'ung, the Yi, and the Tzu trees.

When first a little-known language is studied, the natural impulse of the student is to place himself blindfolded in the hands of scholars, whose native language is the one which the student seeks to acquire, for he feels that they, surely, are the men who know their own language best. This view may satisfy him for a while, but a time comes when he learns that there is a better path to take. Men who know nothing but their own language are the unsafest of all guides to a thorough acquaintance with that language. Critical acumen and the power of comparison and discrimination are essential to correct knowledge. These qualities seem wanting in all Orientals, and in none more than in the Chinese, with whom a sort of literary imagination, which invents non-existent difficulties, and a hankering desire for these very difficulties, appear to have taken their place. Mr. H. A. Giles has pointed this out so well in his Essay on Chinese Poetry. He says: "Chinese prose and poetry alike, to be of any literary value, must bristle from beginning to end with allusions to the events and personages of their own almost immeasurable past. More than this. It is barely allowable to call anything by its right name, some figure of speech or half-expressed quotation—and the more obscure the better—must be called in to do duty in the place of the universally tabooed spade." Are

—Les Interprètes Chinois ne sont pas trop heureux à déchiffrer ces poésies.
... Le style en est trop obscur, et cette obscurité vient sans doute du laconisme, des métaphores, et de la quantité d'anciens proverbes, dont l'ouvrage est semé. Mais c'est cette obscurité la même, qui lui concilie l'estime et la vénération des savans."—Du Halde.
we to be surprised then when we find that the simplicity of old Chinese literature takes native scholars aback, scholars who invent allusions never dreamt of by the writers, and who must find meanings evolved from their own inner consciousness before they can make the books worthy of their high consideration?

European students of the other great languages of Asia have already found out these Oriental proclivities. Who would now accept the Chaldaic view of the Song of Solomon as an allegorical history of the Jewish people from the Exodus to the Messiah,¹ or the mediaeval Jewish view that the book represented the union between the active intellect and the receptive or material intellect? Professor Max Müller has warned us that the Pandits' own view of Indian history and literature (in which no doubt he includes Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit) is more apt to mislead their pupils than to guide them. My friend Mons. Terrien de Lacouperie, Professor of Indo-Chinese Philology in the University of London, has been the pioneer of this path where Chinese literature is concerned. He has shown us, in his translation of the Yi King, that the only proper method of finding the real meaning of the older canonical books is to take the Chinese characters as they stand and turn them into English, without making use of gloss or comment to force the unhappy things into bearing a distorted and fantastic meaning which they were never meant to bear. His paper on "The Oldest Book of the Chinese" has struck us all as a revelation, and though Dr. Legge, Canon McClatchie, and some of our older sinologues, may feel a momentary unwillingness to give up the accepted, i.e. the Chinese, views in which they have been educated, yet I do not doubt that Mons. Terrien de Lacouperie's explanations and interpretations of the Yi King must eventually be received by all as the only correct ones. A similar procedure should be brought to bear on the She King. He who would make a translation which would give Englishmen a true idea of the beauties contained in the

¹ Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, article Canticles, by T. E. Brown.
work, must of course study the commentaries, but must never give himself up blindly to their guidance, and allow them to take charge of him.

During the last few years I have occupied some of my leisure time in attempting to make a simple metrical English version of the She King, working on the narrow lines prescribed above, and Mons. Terrien de Lacouperie has done me the great honour to invite me to come forward this afternoon and give some account of my humble labours and their result. My translation at present only goes as far as the 2nd book of part ii. I would not have ventured to stand up before you until I had completed my task, but I have to return to China shortly, and this therefore is my only opportunity, and is one that I felt that I ought not to neglect.

The ballads of country life in old China may be paralleled by dozens of pieces in Percy's Reliques, and when one reads the accounts of rustic merry-making, one's mind naturally turns to such poems as

"Come lasses and lads,
Get leave of your dads,
And away to the Maypole hie."

The Chinese verses on lads and lasses and man and maiden are just as full of innocent freedom as the best of our own, but the most harmless bit of fun or courtship is at once pounced on by the commentator as showing the lewd manners of the State from which the poem is supposed to have come. If you will allow me, I will read my version of two odes, one being the account of the Spring and the other of the Autumn Flower Festival:

"The Spring Flower Festival."

Gloomy winter's gone and past,
Streams that lately lay asleep,
In their ice chains fettered fast,
Now are running clear and deep.

Large and level plains of grass
On the further side outspread,
Haunts of many a lad and lass
Plucking flowerets white and red.

'Have you been across?' says she,
'Yes,' he cries, 'indeed I've been.'
'Come again and come with me,
Let us two enjoy the scene.'

Every man and every maiden
Sport together hour by hour,
With a load of blossoms laden
Each to each presents a flower."

"The Autumn Flower Festival. 1

'Tis fair and lovely weather,
We will to town together,
So let your hemp and spinning-wheel to-day untouched remain;
For we are going straightway
To near the eastern gateway,
Where the white elms and the oak trees cast their shadow o'er the plain.

See man and maid advancing
To meet each other, dancing,
With motions quick and graceful they nimbly turn and wheel.
Says he, 'You are as fair, love,
As the blossom which you bear, love,
Give me a flower in token that you care for what I feel.'"

Can one imagine anything more harmless or less suggestive of evil than the above? But what are the views of the commentators and their English disciples? The Little Preface says that the former ballad was directed against the prevailing disorder. The weapons of strife never rested, husbands and wives were torn from one another, lewd manners were prevalent, and there was no one to deliver the people from

1 Part i. Book xii. Ode 2.
them. Dr. Legge's heading is "A festivity of Ch'êng, and the advantage taken of it for licentious assignation." The verdicts on the latter piece are still severer. The Little Preface remarks: "This poem expresses disgust at the disorder which prevailed. Through the evil influence of Duke Yü, who was addicted to sensual pleasure, men and women abandoned their proper employments, hurried to meet one another on the roads, and danced and sang in the market-places." Dr. Legge, with almost equal sternness, heads the poem, "Wanton associations of the young people of Ch'ên."

When in any of these odes, which may be included under the head of love poems, the heroine is not ashamed of her affection, she meets with scant mercy. Here, for example:

"A maiden fair and bright
Comes to greet me, when the night
Has departed, and the eastern sky is red.
But lest some envious eye
Should presume to play the spy,
Soft and lightly o'er my pathway will she tread.

Delights fade all too soon,
Comes the evening, and the moon
Rises full and round, my darling dares not stay.
But swiftly will she pass
O'er my pathway in the grass,
Lest her footprints should our meeting-place betray."

The Little Preface remarks on this, that men and women of the State of Ch'i sought each other in lewd fashion, and Dr. Legge heads the piece as usual, "The licentious intercourse of the people of Ch'i." Lord Macaulay once wrote a poem, from which I quote one stanza:

1 管亂也，兵革不息，男父相棄，浮風大行，
莫能救焉。
2 疾亂也，國公淫荒，風化之所行，男父棄
其舊業，亟會於道路，歌舞於市井爾。
"O fly, Madonna, fly,
Lest day and envy spy
What only love and night may safely know.
Fly, and tread softly, dear,
Lest those who hate us hear
The sound of thy light footsteps as they go."

What would his lordship's feelings have been if he could have seen this in any collection of English poetry headed "The licentious intercourse of the English people"?

When the lady is coy, the commentators ignore her coldness and the passion of her lover, and go out of their way to speak of the virtuous manners prevailing at the time and place, and of the admirable qualities of the ruler, whose influence has brought about this improvement. Take this verse for example:

"Where the poplars throw but a scanty shade
On the banks of the Han, lives a lovely maid.
I see her often, but find that vain
Are all my efforts her heart to gain.
Ah no, 'tis as easy a task to strive
To cross the Han in a single dive,
Or float on a plank down the Yangtžu's tide,
As win this lady to be my bride."

This shows, says the Preface, how the virtue of King Wên affected the States of the south.

Love between husband and wife, bride and bridegroom, and even between betrothed couples, is a little more fairly treated. Conjugal affection is one of the five cardinal relations among mankind. No fault, therefore, is to be found with it; but even in these cases Chinese scholars cannot get free of the idea that any poem on this subject is more to celebrate the good qualities of the ruler of the State than the attachment of the two parties. These pieces give the joys and sorrows of married life in considerable detail. In some

2 文王之道被於南國.
the wives complain of their husbands' neglect and coldness, or of his attentions to some more favoured love or wife, for polygamy prevailed at the time when these ballads were written. We have also the longing of the wife for the safe return of her absent husband,¹ and her joy when he gets back, in strains that recall the Scotch poem, "There is nae luck aboot the hoose, when oor gudeman's awa."

Several of the odes are epithalamiums, among others Ode 1 of Book ii. Part i. This has been translated into verse by Sir John Davis as follows:

"The nest yon winged artist builds
The robber bird shall tear away,
So yields her hopes the affianced maid,
Some wealthy lord's reluctant prey.

The anxious bird prepares a nest,
In which the spoiler soon shall dwell.
Forth goes the weeping bride constrained,
A hundred cars the triumph swell.

Mourn for the tiny architect;
A stronger bird hath ta'en its nest.
Mourn for the hapless stolen bride,
How vain the pomp to soothe her breast."

Dr. Legge's metrical version is more literal and simpler, in fact almost too literal and simple:

"In the magpie's nest
Dwells the dove at rest.
This young bride goes to her future home,
To meet her a hundred chariots come.

¹ The ladies among the ancient Chinese, as among the Aryan nations, would leave their hair dishevelled during their husband's absence:

"I scarcely care to deck my hair,
But let my locks disorder'd stray,
For whom should I be neat or fair
When my loved lord is far away?"—Part i. Book v. Ode 8.

"Ten months Runjjet lay in Lahore.
Wah, a hero's heart is brass.
Ten months never did Chunda Kour
Braid her hair at the tiring glass."—Edwin Arnold.
THE CHINESE BOOK OF THE ODES.

Of the magpie's nest
Is the dove possess.
This bride goes to her new home to live,
And welcome a hundred chariots give.

The nest magpie wove
Now filled by the dove.
This bride now takes to her home her way,
And there numerous cars her state display."

Now surely the motive of this little piece is the same as that of King Cophetua and the Beggar-maid, the Lord of Burleigh, and a dozen similar poems. The Prince is the magpie, the strong handsome skilful bird, the peasant girl the dove, who does not fight the magpie and rob him of his nest, as the Chinese commentators say, and Sir John Davis implics, but who by her softness and gentleness persuades him to allow her to occupy the comfortable nest for which magpies are famous, as every birdsnesting schoolboy knows. A paraphrase seems necessary to bring out the force of the original, and I have therefore ventured to write this version, which I admit is not a close translation:

"The dove, that gentle timid bird,
Small wit hath she a nest to build;
Unlike the pie, whose home well lined
Within, and framed with labour skilled,
Might seem a palace, yet the dove
Will to herself appropriate
The magpie's nest, and snug therein
Dwell in contentment with her mate.

My sweet, thou art the gentle dove.
Had fate's decree then nought more fair
For thee, than in these barren fields
A peasant's hut and toils to share.
My lands are wide, my halls are high,
And steeds and cars attend my call,
My dove within my magpie nest,
Thou shalt be mistress of them all."
Lastly, we have verses by the inferior wives in honour of
the chief lady of the palace, although I am bound to confess
that many of them have not a very genuine ring about them.
There is, however, one very pretty farewell, supposed to be
written by one widowed wife, when another lady, who was
also a wife of the deceased, took her departure. This is it: ¹

"She who for many years has been my friend,
A gentle one and kind and most sincere,
Departs for her own country, and an end
Has come to all I once considered dear.
Decorous was her person, though one love
We shared, no jealous doubt nor angry hate
Could e'er disturb her; nay, she rather strove
My zeal and care for him to stimulate.
Far did I journey southwards, ere good-byes
Were uttered, then she left me, and in vain
I gazed at her departing, for my eyes
Were blinded with the tears that fell like rain.
I watched the swallows in their flickering flight,
They too go southwards, when the summer's o'er;
They will return when spring is warm and bright,
But my beloved friend comes back no more."

Nor are poems wanting descriptive of country life and its
labours and enjoyments. The best and most complete of
these is the 1st Ode of the 15th Book of Part i., but it is too
long to quote in full. The date assigned to this ballad is
B.C. 1100 or thereabouts. It is a narration of a state of
things some 700 years before that. It shows that the ancient
Chinese had a great respect for the pursuit of agriculture,²
a respect which theoretically, at any rate, their descendants
still retain.

We also find short odes or songs illustrating various
pursuits. There is the song of the plantain-gatherers,

¹ Part i. Book iii. Ode 3.
² It is worth noticing that even in the oldest poems there are scarcely any
references to sheep. The ancestors of the Chinese, unlike their Aryan contem-
poraries or predecessors, were not a people among whom the chief shepherd
was practically a king. See Les Origines Indo-Européennes, Pictet.
several hunting-songs of the ‘John Peel’ type, and longer pieces describing the chase and celebrating the skill and prowess of the hunters. Fish and fishing are constantly alluded to, but this pursuit does not form the main subject of any ode. There is an account of a trapper, who was so stalwart a man that he might well be the body guard and comrade of a prince. We have likewise a little piece containing a dialogue between two carpenters, at least so I translate it:  

_A says:

"I have got to make a handle, but there is not any good
In beginning, for I have not got an axe to hew the wood.
Like a fellow who would marry, but his chance of wedlock's
shady,
For he does not know a person to present him to the lady."

_B replies:

"Go to work and shape the handle, don't make any lame excuse,
The pattern you've to copy is laid ready for your use,
Like a baffled suitor, say you, nay you're rather like a lord,
With his bride beside him and a feast set out upon the board."

All the Chinese critics say that this poem is in praise of a certain duke. Dr. Legge heads his metrical translation, "While there is a proper and necessary way for everything, men need not go far to find what it is." His verses are:

"In hewing an axe shaft, how must you act?
Another axe take, or you'll never succeed.
In taking a wife, be sure 'tis a fact
That with no go-between you never can speed.
In hewing an axe shaft, hewing a shaft,
For a copy you have the axe in your hand.
In choosing a wife, you follow the craft,
And forthwith on the mats the feast vessels stand."

I would refer you to the Marquis D'Hervey St. Denys's

work, *Poesies de l'époque des Th'ang*, for a complete description of Chinese warlike poetry. I find among the odes in the *She King*, which relate to warfare, a few breathing out martial aspirations, but a greater number complaining of the hardships of the campaign, and expressing a homesick longing to get back again. Assuredly the feeling expressed in the Chinese proverb of to-day,

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好 鐵 不 打 丁
好 人 不 做 兵
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"You don't beat good iron into a nail, or make a good man into a soldier," was known to the ancestors of the modern Chinese. Even in the most bellicose odes, the only thing celebrated is the pomp and gorgeous array of the army, and the success of some prince or general. There is not one word expressive of

"The stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel."

There is not even a description of a single combat between two men. Still less can we find any generous mention of the bravery of an enemy, for chivalry is utterly and entirely wanting. One cannot help feeling that these warlike odes have been made to order. On the other hand, the poems which describe the hardships of war are only too real and heartfelt. Their genuineness makes them pleasing. Here is one of the best in my opinion:

"Oh many a weary night we spent,
And many a dreary day,
On those eastern hills, with no roof o'erhead,
Save the carts under which we lay.

When the rains began, then the word was passed
That our service at length was o'er,
We might doff our armour and wear the clothes
That our wives had prepared once more.

Yet a haunting fear would disturb my heart,
This thought would flash to the brain,
I have been long gone, shall I find all changed,
When I visit my home again?

Perchance the creepers and trailing weeds
Have choked up my unused doors,
And the woodlouse creeps, and the spider weaves
His web o'er my empty floors.

The deer graze careless about the fields
Where I pastured my sheep and kine,
And around the desolate garden plots
The lamps of the glowworm shine.

We marched along through the drizzling rain,
We noted the signs of spring,
On the mulberry leaves the silkworms fed,
And we heard the oriole sing.

Its yellow plumage was shining bright
As it glanced in a moment by,
And we heard the cranes, as they caught their prey
On the ant hillocks, scream and cry.

Ere I knew it, there was my home in sight,
Since I such a sight had seen
Three years had passed, yet the rooms were swept,
And my dwelling was warm and clean.

And gourds were hanging, for me to eat,
On the boughs of the chestnut tree,
No moment while I was far away,
My wife had forgotten me.

You may talk of the glories when youth and maid
Are wed, and their troth is plighted,
But not of the joy when two loving hearts,
Once parted, are re-united."

3. Our next division contains the laudatory odes or poems
celebrating the achievements of some king, prince, or chieftain, or the virtues and beauties of some princess. The
Chinese commentators, if left to themselves, would include the greater part of the She King under this heading, but even after an elimination of scores of pieces as having nothing to do with royalty or aristocracy, a considerable residue remains. Some of the pieces are curious, but the bulk of them are of no great interest to the general reader. Here is a little poem complete in one verse, which may remind you of something that you have heard before: 1

"That pear-tree, woodman, spare,
    Break not a single bough;
Shao's chief once rested there,
    Leave it uninjured now."

The legend of Hou Chi, especially as translated by Dr. Leggo's nephew, is very well worthy of perusal, 2 but is too long to quote.

4. We pass on to satires and lampoons and moral lessons. Satire in small and youthful communities is usually very personal in its application. In the personal satires and lampoons of the She King, although names are not often openly given, they can be easily fitted to the verse without much doubt as to the correctness of the application. For example, the heir-apparent of a certain duke was engaged to marry a lady; but the father, inflamed by the reports of her beauty, had a tower built on the banks of a river which the lady had to pass on her way to the bridegroom's home, enticed her into it, and kept her for himself. Afterwards he had his heir-apparent and another son murdered. These rather doggerel lines refer to the first of the two crimes: 3

"A fisherman for fish a trap may set,
    And catch a goose entangled in the net.
This hunchback, too, contrived a snare to lay,
    Another's bride he stole and bore away."

1 Part i. Book ii. Ode 5.
Beside the stream a lofty tower he built,
Where he might safely perpetrate his guilt.
No pleasant mate the lady found, alas!
She gained instead this vicious bloated mass."

These lines allude to the second: ¹

"The two youths journeyed down the stream;
I noted, as they left the shore,
Their shadows on the water gleam;
Ah, shall we ever see them more?

Floated their boats away from here.
I watch for them in vain, and say,
As they return not, much I fear
Some danger met them on the way."

Can we not imagine these verses repeated from mouth to mouth among the people? I conjecture that the latter piece may be a fragment from a longer ballad.

Satire directed against classes and types of men, rather than against individuals, is more interesting than the personal attacks mentioned above. Sometimes a moral lesson is to be learnt from a natural object; from a quail, for instance, which will fight in defence of its chickens, or from a rat, which fills the place in the world which nature intended for it: ²

"Nature has made the rat the worst of vermin,
Teeth, limbs, and skin she gave unto the brute.
Let it use these as nature’s laws determine,
No blame unto the rat we dare impute.

But nobler gifts she gave to man to cherish:
Dignity, self-control and love of right;
And better were it that a man should perish,
Than scorn these godlike gifts or hold them light."

A moral lesson is also drawn from the rainbow. ³ The Chinese of that era held that the rainbow and other heavenly

bodies must not be pointed at, but be passed with averted eyes. Young ladies are warned that if they elope, they too will become objects to be passed with averted eyes. The lash of satire falls on stinginess, as shown by a rich bridegroom who would not afford leather shoes in winter, and made his bride make and mend his clothes for him. The elegant officers who went in court dress to collect leaves and herbs for soup are also held up to ridicule. Nor do dissipation, frivolity, pretence, and neglect of decent observances escape. Then the advice of Horace, 'Carpe diem,' forms the subject of more than one ode. Here is a specimen:

"Great store you have of trailing robes and long,
Which lies and moulders useless and unworn.
Your cars are handsome and your steeds are strong,
But yet along the streets you ne'er are borne.

Courtyards it has, the mansion where you dwell,
And halls, where no one comes the dust to sweep,
With many a drum and sweetly ringing bell,
Which ever mute and voiceless lies asleep.

Why stint and spare, for surely it were best
With wine and dainties to prolong the day,
To cheer the hours, and give to mirth a zest,
So take your lute and sing a merry lay.

Think, all-destroying death comes creeping near,
When our most cherished goods, our houred stores,
Shall be the stranger's, who shall take our gear,
Shall spend our riches, and shall tread our floors."

We may also, perhaps, include under the head of odes conveying a moral lesson, those in praise of humility and contentment, and even those applauding a love of solitude and asceticism.

3 Part i. Book x. Ode 2. This ode has a burden prefacing each of the stanzas; but as I can find no congruity in it, I have suppressed it.
5. With regard to festal and sacrificial odes, I must throw myself on your mercy, and request your indulgence. These odes are mainly contained in parts 2, 3 and 4, which I have as yet examined too cursorily to be able to give a positive opinion on them; but by what I have read of them, I am led to believe that most of them might well be relegated to the category either of war pieces or of laudatory odes. The lines in Campbell’s poem, “The Battle of the Baltic,”

“Now joy old England raise,
For the tidings of thy might,
By the festal city’s blaze,
While the wine-cup shines in light,”

would assuredly have induced a commentator of the Chinese school to include the whole piece under the head of festal odes.

6. I pass on to the last division, namely, fragments and corrupt pieces. These are mainly found in the first part. Take the 3rd stanza of the 10th Ode of Book i. At the close of a pretty little set of verses, spoken by a wife delighted at her husband’s return, are these lines. I quote Dr. Legge’s prose version:

“The bream is showing his tail all red.
The royal house is like a blazing fire;
Though it be like a blazing fire,
Your parents are very near.”

The commentators try in vain to torture a meaning out of the characters, by suggesting that the bream has torn its tail in its efforts to get up stream, and that the wife exhorts her husband to work as hard as the bream, although his rulers may be as cruel and all-devouring as fire, adding that he must not disgrace his parents, who are standing near watching him. Chu ‘Hsi, followed by Strauss, says that the ‘parents’ are the same rulers, who are watching his exertions. Granting, for the sake of argument, that the lines do bear this horribly strained and distorted meaning, are they not utterly out of place in this conjuncture? Must we not cut them out remorselessly, nor allow them to spoil a pretty little
poem? Again, take the following ode, which this time I quote from Dr. Legge's metrical version:

"Not for the stormy wind,
Nor rushing chariot's roar;
But when I view the road to Chow,
I'm pained to my heart's core.

Not for the whirlwind's sweep,
Nor car's unsteady roll,
But when I view the road to Chow,
Deep sadness dulls my soul.

For him who fish can cook,
His boilers I would clear,
So him, whose heart beats westward true,
With these good words I cheer."

Dr. Legge's translation is a thoroughly literal construe of, each of the Chinese characters, but still I must confess myself as unable to understand the English version as I am the Chinese.

Another ode Dr. Legge translates as follows:

"Those officers of state
Have their carriers of lances and halberds,
But these creatures
With their three hundred red covers for the knees.

The pelican is on the dam,
And will not wet his wings.
These creatures
Are not equal to their dress.

The pelican is on the dam,
And will not wet his beak.
These creatures
Do not respond to the favour they enjoy.

Extensive and luxuriant is the vegetation,
And up the south hill in the morning rise the vapours.
Tender is she and lovely,
But the young lady is suffering from hunger.”

In his metrical version Dr. Legge has managed to write a comprehensible poem, but only by an immense amount of interpolation, and by a paraphrase so free, that it can scarcely be supported by the original. In this and in similar cases, is not the translator safer in saying boldly, “There is no meaning in this, I will pass on to the next”? Such fragments as this: ¹

“Through the fields the livelong day
Mulberry planters idly stray.
There is nothing here to do,
Let me go away with you.”

are comprehensible enough, but call for little remark. Is the translator bound to explain the allusions, or to fill up the missing portions? May he not be content to treat them as fragments only?

Many of the odes relating to men and their actions begin with a mention of some object of natural history. For instance: ²

“The mulberry tree on the mountain grows,
No beautiful youth like Tzŭ Tu I see.
And down in the marshes the lotus blows,
But this young madcap makes love to me.”

Surely the allusions to the trees and the lotus plants were only put in to make a burden to the song after the fashion so common in ancient Scandinavian poetry; but the commentators say that the mountains and marshes were all furnished with what was proper to them. It was not so with the speaker and her friends. The very next ode begins thus:

“The withered leaves, the withered leaves,
The winds are blowing them away;
Give us the key-note of the song,
You’ll find us join you in the lay.”

The commentators here change from the negative to the positive with startling rapidity, and say that this is metaphorical of the troubles which were afflicting the State. Not that I believe that the song has anything to do with State affairs, although this is Dr. Legge’s interpretation.

I admit that in many cases mention is made of the bird on the bough, the flowers in bloom, the pines on the hill side, the elm trees in the meadow, or the fruit tree loaded with fruit, because either the person who is supposed to speak wishes to describe a scene before him, or the author desires to indicate a particular season, but many instances remain in which the only explanation is that in old Chinese poetry, as in old European poetry and its imitations, a burden is a favourite device of the poet.

My only aim has been to try and point out that the pieces of which the She King is composed are not rough archaic curiosities of no interest except to the specialist. Nor again are they like Chinese poetry of the present day, wonderful examples of verbal antithesis, but of no more real poetic value to any one except the unfortunate competitive examinees who have to compose verses on the same model, than the Latin and Greek verses at our schools and universities. With all their irregularities, I claim that they are poems not unworthy the attention of all true lovers of poetry. The prosody of the odes, the chronology and history contained in the book, together with the examples found therein of primitive manners, culture, and religion, I leave for the

1 The secret of the prosody has yet to be discovered. I venture to think that the clue must be sought for in the Ku Wen, whence we shall find that certain characters, which are now monosyllabic, were once disyllabic or even polysyllabic. I am indebted to Mons. Terrien de Lacouperie for this hint.

2 I would call attention to one fact only, viz. that in the She King is perhaps the first mention of Sati [Suttee], unless the Mahabharata, which describes the sacrifice of Madri, the best beloved wife of Pandu, at her husband’s tomb, is older. Ode 6 of the 11th book of the 1st part alludes to the death of a prince at whose grave three of the bravest warriors of the nation were put to death. Herodotus (book iv. 71) mentions a similar custom among the Scythians. When the king dies he is buried in the country of the Gerghi. “In the remaining space of the grave they bury one of the king’s concubines, having strangled her, and his cup-bearer, a cook, a groom, a page, a courier and horses, and firstlings of everything. A year afterwards fifty of the king’s horses and fifty of his servants are strangled and stuffed with chaff, and stuck round the king’s monument.”

"Εν η δε τη λουτρομορφη της θεας των παλατων τα μικα επεκενερτε"
researches of other and abler students, adding at the same time my humble testimony to the richness of the mine which they have to work; but I hope that I may be spared to continue and complete my own task as far as my powers will permit me. I trust that I have said nothing to lay me open to the imputation of slighting the labours of those who have gone before me, or that would make me appear desirous to ignore the debt of gratitude which I owe to Dr. Legge in particular. I admit that there are, and must be, many errors and misconceptions in my translations; but I beg you to believe that the book really is a difficult one, and so let me conclude with the words of King Alfred: “And now he prays, and for God’s name implores every one of those whom it lists to read this book, that he would pray for him and not blame him, if he more rightly understand it than he could.”

Is this the origin of placing stone figures of animals and warriors round the graves of Chinese emperors and high officials? See also Ibn Batuta’s account of the burial of the Khan of Tartary.