

ALAN AYLING & DUNCAN MACKINTOSH

A COLLECTION OF
CHINESE LYRICS

詞選

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選

This collection of some of the best examples of Chinese Lyrics (tz'u), with the T'ang and Sung dynasties predominant, covers a period of one thousand years (from about 750—1800 A.D.). Immensely popular with the Chinese, the lyric in the hands of some of the greatest poets was used for the expression of their liveliest and deepest feelings.

The authors reflect in translation not only the spirit of the original, but also something of its poetical ornamentations and lyric pattern. They present the reader not with a picture of inscrutability and of an alien culture, but of warmly human men and women who expressed their pleasures and their yearnings in a language common to them all over the centuries and formidably alive today.

The Chinese original of each poem faces the English and is written in a Chinese scholar's distinguished calligraphy. A 'Note on the Development of the Chinese Lyric' and several Appendices provide the reader with brief but illuminating social, cultural and historical background.

**Editor's Choice of
the Poetry Book Society**

"This is an anthology that I confidently expect to give much quiet civilised pleasure to a great many people. It is, indeed, unobtrusively but truly excellent."—*John Smith, Poetry Review.*

A Collection of
CHINESE LYRICS

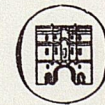
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ALAN AYLING

from translations of the Chinese by
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even in the field of literature there is much affinity between the East and the West.

The authors in their Preface have modestly said, 'If any such readers succeed in sharing the moods and feelings in these poems to the extent that they are encouraged to look further, this book's purpose will have been served.' Having read these poems, I may well say that they can be sure that this modest wish of theirs will be fulfilled.

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PREFACE

UNIQUE AMONG LANGUAGES used by the great civilizations of early history, Chinese has survived and matured through at least three thousand years, to be used today by a population which, we are told, will provide one out of every four people on earth by the end of this century.

Yet little of the vast treasure of Chinese literature has been translated for the English speaking public. Of course, it is one thing to translate, another to do so acceptably. Some of us recall early translations from the Russians which suggested more the behaviour of another species than common human experience superbly observed. We have been luckier in quality, if not in quantity, with our translators from the Chinese, even though some from the past century may read a little quaintly today. But it must be admitted that the Chinese language, and through this their literature, has been neglected. There still remains for the English mind the picture of a remote, inscrutable and probably incomprehensible people with too difficult a language and too alien a tradition.

It is a pity, and may one day prove to have been in the nature of a tragedy, that more young people have not followed the example set by George Thomas Staunton who, at the age of twelve, accompanied Lord Macartney on his embassy to China in 1793 and of whom the ambassador wrote:

Little Staunton was able to supply my wants on this occasion; for having very early in the voyage begun to study the Chinese (language) under my two interpreters, he had not only made considerable progress in it, but he had learned to write the characters with great neatness and celerity, so that he was of material use to me on this occasion; as he had been already before in transcribing the catalogue of the presents.

(See *An Embassy to China; Lord Macartney's Journal 1793-1794*, edited by J. L. Cranmer-Byng. Longman's, 1962, pp. 99-100.)

After such an opening a word of explanation, if not of apology, may seem to be required, when offering the public no

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