

NGUYEN DU

KIM VAN KIEU

English Translation

by

LE-XUAN-THUY



KHAI - TRI

KIM - VẤN - KIỀU

NGUYỄN - DU

KIM - VÂN - KIỀU

ENGLISH TRANSLATION, FOOTNOTES

AND

COMMENTARIES

by

LÊ - XUÂN - THỦY

KHAI - TRÍ

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I have very much enjoyed reading the prepublication draft of Kiêu's adventures. The idealistic manner in which each dramatic episode is portrayed shows a people able to rise above a damaging fate and emerge strong and confident.

The translation is warm and colorful. You know that it is a translation but you feel that you are getting the full flavor of the original.

The footnotes give fascinating details on life in the East, presented graphically and understandingly. This version of Kiêu's story will bring as much pleasure to Westerners as the original has brought to its readers in the East.

Dr. Edward C. Britton

*I have read Mr. Lê-Xuân-Thủy's English translation of KIM-VÂN-KIẾU with manifest pleasure. Mr. Thủy has accomplished a great undertaking worthy of praise and admiration. Even though it has been said, «traduttore... tradittore» — something is lost in translating —, Mr. Thủy has presented the world with a **fait accompli** that can only be labeled priceless.*

In comparing the version with the Vietnamese text, I realize that Mr. Thủy is much more than a translator — he is a poet. The reader is given the niceties and delicate meanings of the poem in a fresh and inspired form. Mr. Thủy has taken the original and wrapped his version in a poetical veil creating a new «poem in prose.»

In this work Mr. Thủy has added a glittering gem to the crown of our national literature. He offers to Western readers a chance to taste the literary delights and some of the facets of the ethos of Vietnam.

Being sincerely inspired, Mr. Thủy has displayed a distinct and lustrous style that gives his «poem in prose» the traits of a new creation. I am sure this translation of KIM-VÂN-KIẾU will be welcomed with the ebullient enthusiasm it so richly deserves.

Dr. Nguyễn-văn-Thọ

Winner of Lecomte du Nouy Literary Prize 1960
Tourane 2nd October 1962

INTRODUCTION

Kim-Vân-Kiều, this perfect work to which one refers as one does to a drama of Shakespeare, a tragedy of Racine, a funeral oration of Bossuet, to the poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow or Robert Frost, is regarded as the most beautiful jewel of the Vietnamese language in painting the most tender sentiments of the human soul.

Kim-Vân-Kiều is a novel of 3250 verses of 6 and 8 syllables, which succeed each other alternately in a particular form of the Vietnamese prosody. This is an adaptation from a popular Chinese novel like « Le Cid, » adapted by Corneille from a Spanish drama of Guilhem de Castro. The author, Nguyễn-Du, knew how to insert in his work the qualities which did not exist in the original text, and succeeded in transforming a quite common story into a poetic masterpiece of the rarest quality.

Kim-Vân-Kiều has been regarded as a store of beautiful Vietnamese words that the Vietnamese use to express themselves in everyday conversations.

Nguyễn-Du, the author of *Kim-Vân-Kiều*, was born into a great mandarin family in 1765, in the village of Tiên-Điền, located in

the district of Nghi-Xuân, province of Hà-Tĩnh, Central Vietnam. Endowed with remarkable intelligence, at the age of nineteen he passed the tests reserved for the literati.

But, while young in age, this future great Vietnamese poet, perhaps better described as the future creator of Vietnamese poetry, received from political events a shock that affected him morally until the end of his lifetime. His adolescence was terminated tragically amidst the horrors of a civil war in which he sadly witnessed his king dethroned by the Tây-Son. From that time, he lived with a secret sorrow in his soul. He was one of those who were born as loyal as they were proud, one whom glory itself could not appease, and who, forced to accept certain honors at the beginning of the nineteenth century, suffered from them as if they were a kind of fatal treason toward the cause and the regime he had once served. His family had served the Lê for generations. As an heir to their devotion toward this dynasty, first he devoted all his intelligence, body and soul, to an attempt of restoration — a movement of which he was the leader — but he failed. Abandoning his active life, he spent some time in seclusion in the mountainous region of Hồng-Lĩnh, living in his own way, and pursuing the pleasures of hunting and fishing.

But, some time after, he was forced to accept the post of a mandarin by Emperor Gia-Long, following the latter's accession to the throne in 1802. Though accepting this honor reluctantly — for he had promised never to go out of his place of seclusion — he carried it out conscientiously. He occupied many official posts with distinction in the

province of Hà-Đông, in Huế, and subsequently in the province of Quảng-Bình. At the last location, he was elevated in 1813 to the rank of « Column of the Empire » in view of his wise administration.

Nguyễn-Du was selected three times to head an Embassy to Peking. Through the first mission he came in contact with a Chinese novel—the story of *Kim-Vân-Kiều*, which he adapted in Vietnamese verse. He transformed this picaresque and quite verbose Chinese novel into a long and picturesque story regarded as the most beautiful poetry ever written in the Vietnamese language. The story concerns a young maiden endowed with all spiritual and bodily graces ; an elite, who, placed between love and filial devotion, deliberately chose the harder way : she sold herself to save her father, a victim of an unjust calamity. And from that day, she passed from one misfortune to another until she sank into the most abject depravity. But, like the lotus, in the midst of this mire, she always preserved the pure perfume of her original nobility.

Nguyễn-Du had a second name, Thanh-Hiền, and used the name of Tổ-Như as his literary pseudonym.

Immediately after he had been entrusted with a third mission as Ambassador to the Court of Peking by the newly crowned Emperor Minh-Mạng, Nguyễn-Du died on August 10, 1820, at the age of fifty-five, of a serious disease for which he refused treatment. At his last gasp, he asked one of those who stood around to examine his pulse. When he was told that his body was growing cold, a sigh of

relief issued from his lips. «Good,» he murmured, and passed away without making any recommendation.

Nguyễn-Du was versed not only in Confucianism but also in Buddhism and Taoism. He excelled in music, painting, and in chess as well as in poetry — the four habitual distractions of a real scholar of the Far East.

In addition to «Kim-Vân-Kiều» (1813), we are indebted to him for three selections of poetry written in Chinese, a short poem of 34 verses written in a lighter vein, entitled «Words of a Young Hat Seller,» and a Vietnamese poem of 182 verses, «Chiêu Hồn» (1792). The latter composition was a stirring address to the departed dead, written on the occasion of the Buddhist All-Souls' Day.

Kim-Vân-Kiều, besides its literary value, has a psychological value which reveals the author's personality. In this masterpiece of Nguyễn-Du, every passage is superbly written and expressed with the utmost nobility of his soul. Even in the most scabrous passages, plain realism is avoided. His muse is never coarse. Its niceties conceal certain gross passages which are depicted so skillfully that they never offend the reader. Even the choice of metaphors and paraphrases resorted to so as to avoid any transgression of the rules of decency, denotes in itself an instinctive and constant care and respect for others.

Nguyễn-Du reached his aim. There is no Vietnamese not deeply affected by the verses of *Kim-Vân-Kiều*, whose echo seems to flow like waves of deep emotion that gathers love in his heart, a love

so strong that it appears to become a superstitious passion attached to him. For certain persons, chiefly the fair sex, these verses have become a selection of science, a book in which they can read their future. They open the book at random ; they consult the passage which first meets their eyes : this passage will constitute their horoscope.

How happy the writer who could, in one poem, make the whole soul of his race vibrate and sing !

For eons to come, under the dear Vietnamese roofs, during sweet hours of lovely nights under the lamplight, white-haired old men and young dreaming women will still read the adventures of Thúy-Kiều with everlasting curiosity and moving fervor.

Lê-Xuân-Thủy



Map of the region where the story of Kim-Vân-Kiêu took place.

CHARACTERS

of

KIM-VÂN-KIỀU

KIM-TRỌNG (Kim)	. . .	A young scholar, Kiêu's fiancé
THÚY-KIỀU (Kiêu)	. . .	The elder daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vương
THÚY-VÂN (Vân)	. . .	The second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vương

Mr. and Mrs. VƯƠNG	. . .	The parents of Kiêu, Vân, and Vương-Quan
VƯƠNG-QUAN	. . .	The son of Mr. and Mrs. Vương
ĐẠM-TIÊN	. . .	A dead singer
Mr. CHUNG	. . .	A secretary of the yamen
MÃ-GIÁM-SINH	. . .	Kiêu's first husband
TÚ-BÀ	. . .	A panderess, Mã-Giám-Sinh's partner
SỞ-KHANH	. . .	An adventurer and accomplice of Tú-Bà
MÃ-KIỀU	. . .	A mate in misery of Kiêu
THÚC-KỲ-TÂM (Thúc)	. . .	Kiêu's second husband

Old THÚC	Thúc's father
The Mandarin of Weihsien	
HOẶN-THƯ	Thúc's first wife
Mrs. HOẶN	Hoặn-Thu's mother
KHUYỀN and ỪNG	Two domestics of the Hoặn family
HOA-NÔ (Slave-Flower)	Kiều's servant name
The Old Governess of the Hoặn family	
TRÁC-TUYỀN	Kiều's religious name
XUÂN and THU	Two servants of the Hoặn family
GIÁC-DUYÊN	A bonzess
BẠC-BÀ	A pandèress
BẠC-HẠNH	Kiều's third husband, a nephew of Bạc-Bà
TAM-HỢP	A nun and prophetess
TỪ-HẢI	Kiều's fourth husband, a soldier of fortune
HỒ-TÔN-HIỆN	An imperial envoy
Mr. ĐỒ	A secretary of the Yamen of Weihsien

Kim - Vân - Kiều

*Trăm năm, trong cõi người ta,
Chữ tài, chữ mệnh, khéo là ghét nhau.
Trải qua một cuộc bể dâu,
Những điều trông thấy mà đau-đớn lòng ;
Lạ gì bỉ sắc, tư phong,
Trời xanh quen thói má hồng đánh ghen.*

Within the span of a hundred years of human existence, what a bitter struggle is waged between genius and destiny ! How many harrowing events have occurred while mulberries cover the conquered sea (1) ! Rich in beauty, unlucky in life (2) ! Strange indeed, but little wonder, since casting hatred upon rosy cheeks (3) is a habit of the Blue Sky.

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- (1) According to a legend, every 500 years a portion of the Ocean disappears and changes into a field of alluvium good for growing mulberries. Figuratively, this expression means that many transformations of men, things, and ideas have taken place.
- (2) This sentence can also be translated by « Rich in one thing, poor in the other. »
- (3) An expression used to designate young and beautiful women,

I

*Cảo thơm lần giở trước đèn,
« Phong-tình cổ-lục » còn truyền sử-xanh.
Rằng: năm Gia-tĩnh triều Minh,
Bốn phương phẳng-lặng, hai Kinh vững-vàng.*

CHAPTER ONE

The Vương Family

Fragrant manuscripts (4) turned open beside a lamp and also gallant old anthologies in their bamboo tablets relate that, in the period of Kia-Tsing (5), under the Ming — when the four regions were pacified,

(4) Manuscripts kept in aromatics to be preserved from insects. In other respects, it is possible that the expression must be understood figuratively here, in the meaning of famous, well-known.

(5) Year 1522 to 1567 A. D.

*Có nhà viên-ngoại họ Vương,
 Gia-từ nghĩ cũng thường-thường bậc trung.
 Một trai con thứ rất lòng,
 Vương-Quan là chữ, nổi dòng nho-gia.
 Đầu lòng hai ả tố-nga,
 Thúy-Kiều là chị, em là Thúy-Vân.
 Mai cốt-cách, tuyết tinh-thần :
 Một người một vẻ, mười phần vẹn mười.
 Vân xem trang-trọng khác vời,
 Khuôn trăng đầy-đặn, nét ngài nở-nang.*

and the two capitals well guarded — once there was a family of modest fortune and average station of a notable named Vương.

A son, Vương-Quan, perpetuating a progeny of literati, was the youngest of the children. The two heavenly-fair daughters, Thúy-Kiều, and Thúy-Vân, were as slender as apricot-trees, as pure as snow, and diverse in their perfection.

Vân's moonlike round face (6), and her brows like two unrolled silkworms, gave her a very imposing beauty. Her smile, like a bloom-

(6) Here, Thúy-Vân is described as having not ideal beauty, but an honest face. The rotundity of the face, compared to the disk of the full moon is exaggerated in this description.

*Hoa cười, ngọc thốt, đoan trang,
 Mây thua nước tóc, tuyết nhường màu da.
 Kiều càng sắc-sảo mặn-mà,
 So bề tài sắc, lại là phần hơn.
 Làn thu-thủy, nét xuân-sơn,
 Hoa ghen thua thắm, liễu hờn kém xanh.
 Một hai nghiêng nước nghiêng thành,
 Sắc đành đòi một, tài đành họa hai.
 Thông-minh vốn sẵn tính trời,
 Pha nghề thi họa, đủ mùi ca ngâm.
 Cung, thương, lầu bạc ngũ-âm,
 Nghề riêng ăn đứt hồ-cầm một trương.*

ing flower, and her voice of jade were indeed very comely. And what were clouds, compared to her hair, snow compared to her complexion ?

But Kiều exceeded her younger sister in grace, charms, and talents. The bow of her eyes looked like two graceful autumn waves, and of her brows, a mountain in spring. Flowers envied her brightness, and the willow shivered for not being so clear. With one sidelong glance, then another, she could subvert empires and put cities in revolution. In addition to her incomparable beauty and her peerless talents, intelligence came to her as a natural endowment. Kiều was not only fond of poetry and drawing, but

*Khúc nhà tay lựa nên chương,
 Một thiên bạc-mệnh lại càng nào nhân.
 Phong-lưu rất mực hồng-quần,
 Xuân-xanh xấp-xỉ tới tuần cấp-kế.
 Êm-đềm trưởng rủ màn che,
 Tường-đóng ong bướm đi về mặc ai.*

also of songs and beautiful verses. Being a thorough master of the Cung-Thương (7) five-tone scale, she excelled chiefly in playing the Ho guitar (8), and could compose a nice song by using a few familiar tunes. One of her romances, « The Cruel Fate, » was so sad that it could move one to tears.

As a flower among those who wore red trousers (9), Kiều reached the age of the first pin (10) in the prime of spring. Behind closed hangings and discreet curtains, she lived a peaceful life and never minded seductive bees and butterflies (11) who loafed and loafed around on the other side of the East wall.

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- (7) Two first notes of the Chinese classical five-tone scale.
 (8) A round guitar called peepa in Chinese, used by the famous Tchao-Kiun during her captivity at the Ho's.
 (9) In China, in days of yore, girls of good families wore red trousers.
 (10) Formerly, girls used to have their hair fixed with pins when they came of nubile age.
 (11) « Bees and Butterflies » is a stereotyped expression, pointing out gallants, seducers eager to please and flirt with the fair sex.

II

*Ngày xuân con én đưa thoi,
Thiều-quang chín chục đã ngoài sáu mươi.
Cỏ non xanh tận chân trời,
Cành lê trắng điểm một vài bông hoa.
Thanh-minh, trong tiết tháng ba,
Lễ là Tảo-mộ, hội là Đạp-thanh.*

CHAPTER TWO

The Tomb of Dam-Tiên

Spring days ran fast like the swallows darting their shuttles (12). Of ninety days of serene light, sixty had gone by. Green grass spread verdant far to the horizon. Boughs of pear-trees were starred with white flowers. It was the « Pure Light, » (13) in the third month.

For the tomb-trimming rite, to celebrate the first step on the

(12) The Chinese weaver's shuttle usually has the form of a swallow.

(13) In the third lunar month, by the end of April.

*Gần xa nô-nức yển anh,
 Chị em sắm-sửa bộ hành chơi xuân.
 Dập-dù tài-tử, giai-nhân,
 Ngựa xe như nước, áo quần như nêm.
 Ngổn-ngang gò đồng kéo lên,
 Thoi vàng vó rắc, tro tiền-giấy bay.
 Tà-tà bóng ngả về tây,
 Chị em thơ-thẩn dan tay ra về.*

grass, the crowd had come from all parts like orioles and swallows (14). Thúy-Kiều, Thúy-Vân, and their brother dressed and went out for a walk. On the road, distinguished gentlemen and elegant women passed to and fro, mingling the waves of their colorful garments with endless flows of horses and vehicles. Here and there, knolls and hillocks rose pell-mell. Ritual ingots lay strewn about the ground; ashes from burnt joss papers rose up in the sky (15).

The declining sun was sinking in the West. Hand in hand, they

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- (14) A consecrated expression that will be seen again frequently, pointing out a fashionable crowd, or, in general, distinguished gentlemen. Sometimes, it designates frivolous and debauched surroundings.
- (15) The Chinese and certain Vietnamese families have the custom of burning up near their relatives' tombs joss things, which look like silver or gold ingots. These things are supposed to be sent to the dead in the next world.

*Bước lần theo ngọn tiểu khe,
 Làn xem phong-cảnh có bề thanh-thanh.
 Nao-nao dòng nước uốn quanh,
 Dịp cầu nho-nhỏ cuối ghềnh bắc ngang.
 Sè-sè nắm đất bên đường,
 Dầu-dầu ngọn cỏ, nửa vàng nửa xanh.
 Rằng: « Sao trong tiết Thanh-minh,
 « Mà đây hương khói vắng tanh thế mà ? »
 Vương-Quan mới dẫn gần xa :
 « Đạm-Tiên nàng ấy xưa là ca-nhi.
 « Nổi danh tài sắc một thì,
 « Xón-xao ngoài cửa, hiếm gì yến anh.*

l lounged back along a rivulet, lingering over the sweet scenery before their eyes ; down below, the purling brook meandered under the narrow arch of a bridge which spanned the lower part of the stream.

An earth tomb covered with withered, green-yellow-pointed weeds rose into view on a side of the road.

« What ! » exclaimed Kiều. « Neither incense nor smoke, here, on this very day of Pure Light ? »

« Đạm-Tiên, the woman who is resting here, » Vương-Quan explained in full, « was formerly a singer well known for both her



Rằng : « Sao trong tiết Thanh-minh,
« Mà dây hương khói vắng tanh thế mà ? »

« What ! Neither incense nor smoke, here, on this very day of Pure Light ? »

« *Phận hồng-nhan có mong-mạnh,*
 « *Nửa chừng xuân, thoát gậy cành thiên-hương.*
 « *Có người khách ở viễn phương,*
 « *Xa nghe cũng nức tiếng nàng tìm chơi.*
 « *Thuyền tình vừa ghé đến nơi,*
 « *Thì đà trâm gãy bình rơi bao giờ !*
 « *Buồn không lạnh ngắt như tờ,*
 « *Dấu xe ngựa đã rêu lờ-mờ xanh.*
 « *Khóc than khôn xiết sự tình,*
 « *Khéo vớ duyên bấy là mình với ta !*

talent and beauty. The front door of her house was always crowded with orioles and swallows. But how frail the fate of that rosy face was ! The branch, which carried the divinely perfumed flower, suddenly broke in the prime of spring. Just then, a foreigner, knowing Đạm-Tiên by reputation, came for her from a remote country. But only when the love boat had come alongside was the man informed that the pin had broken and the vase had fallen down. In the empty and dismal room reigned a frigid silence. The ruts left by horses and vehicles were already covered with a light layer of green moss. Tears and complaints could not appease the foreigner's sorrow. 'Ah!' he said, 'decidedly, it is written that we are not to be destined for each other ! Since destiny

« *Đã không duyên trước chẳng mà,*
 « *Thì chi chút ước gọi là duyên sau.*
 « *Sấm-sanh nếp tử, xe châu,*
 « *Vùi nồng một nắm, mặc dầu cỏ hoa.*
 « *Trải bao thô lặn, ác tà,*
 « *Ấy mờ vô chủ, ai mà viếng thăm ! »*
 Lòng đau sẵn món thương tâm,
 Thoạt nghe Kiều đã dầm-dẫm châu sa :
 « *Đau-đớn thay, phận đàn-bà !*
 « *Lời rằng bạc-mệnh cũng là lời chung.*

did not want us to live together, may this small token witness our future union ! '

« He had a coffin of catalpa, a hearse adorned with pearls, and a discreet burial prepared for her. Weeds and wild flowers were not long in overgrowing the barrow. Since then, how many times the Lunar Rabbit has set (16) and the Solar Crow has bowed down (17) ! This is an abandoned tomb which no one has come to visit. »

What a queer heart Kiều had ! Hardly had she listened to the story when tears filled her eyes and fell down as pearls.

(16) (17) In poetry, the Moon is often called the Silver Rabbit, and the Sun the Gold Crow.

« *Phũ-phàng chi bầy Hóa-công !*
 « *Ngày xanh mòn-mỏi, má-hồng phôi-pha.*
 « *Sống làm vợ khắp người ta,*
 « *Hại thay ! thác xuống làm ma không chồng !*
 « *Nào người phượng chạ, loan chung,*
 « *Nào người tích lục, tham hồng là ai ?*
 « *Đã không kẻ đoái, người hoài,*
 « *Săn đây ta kiếm một vài nén hương.*
 « *Gọi là gặp-gỡ giữa đường,*
 « *Họa là người dưới suối vàng biết cho. »*

« What a harrowing destiny, that of this woman ! » complained Kiều. « Speaking of cruel fate is speaking of us all. Why are you so cruel, Creator ? Why did you make this green youth waste away and her rosy cheeks wither ? Alive, this girl was the wife of everybody. Alas ! She is now a phantom without a husband. Where are her former lovers, phoenixes attentive to her ? Where are the woers of her green youth, those who lusted after her rosy complexion ? Since no one has pity and mourns for her death, I want to burn a few sticks of incense which I have brought along with me, in witness of this accidental meeting. Maybe you will see my gesture, you who are now under the

Lâm-dâm khấn-khứa nhỏ to.
Sụp ngồi, đặt cỏ trước mồ, bước ra.
Một vùng cỏ ấy, bóng tà,
Gió hiu-hiu thổi một và bóng lau.
Rút trâm sẵn giắt mái đầu,
Vạch da cây, vịnh bốn câu ba vần.
Lại càng mê-mẩn tâm thần,
Lại càng đứng lặng tàn-ngàn chẳng ra.
Lại càng ủ-dột nét hoa,
Sầu tuôn đứt nối, châu sa vẫn dài!

Yellow Springs.» (18)

She murmured a whispered invocation, stooped and laid a little grass in front of the tomb, then made a step backward. The sun declined on this corner of poor sod, and the breeze blew softly on the heads of the reeds. Drawing out a pin stuck in her hair, Kiều traced a three-rhyme quatrain on the bark of a tree. Then, absorbed in a deep reverie, she became more and more motionless, as if deprived of thoughts. Her charming features became more and more gloomy. Her sorrow developed in such paroxysm that she melted into tears.

(18) The Next World.

Vân rằng : « *Chị cũng nức cười,
« Khéo dư nước mắt, khóc người đời xưa ! »*

Rằng : « *Hồng-nhan tự nghìn xưa,
« Cái điều bạc-mệnh có chừa ai đâu.*

« *Nỗi-niềm tưởng đến mà đau,
« Thấy người nằm đó, biết sau thế nào ? »*

Quan rằng : « *Chị nói hay sao,
« Một lời là một vụn vào khó nghe !*

« *Ở đây âm-khí nặng-nề,
« Bóng chiều đã ngã, dặm về còn xa. »*

« Dear Sister, » exclaimed Vân, deprecatingly, « how funny you are ! What a strange thing to shed your extra tears over the person of bygone times ! »

« Among rosy faces, » replied Kiều, « for millenniums, has this calamity, this cruel fate spared anyone ? This thought besets and tortures me. I am musing on the one who is resting here. Who knows what will become of me ? »

« How senseless what you said is ! » Quan cut in. « Every word you used for the dead, you applied it to yourself. It hurts me to hear it. Here, the air from the tombs is heavy. The sun is setting, and the way home is long. »

*Kiều rằng : « Những đấng tài-hoa,
 « Thác là thể-phách, còn là tinh-anh.
 « Dễ hay tình lại gặp tình,
 « Chờ xem, ắt thấy hiển-linh bày giờ. »*
*Một lời nói chưa kịp thưa,
 Phát đầu trận gió cuốn cờ đến ngay.
 Áo-ào đổ lốc, rung cây,
 Ở trong đường có hương bay ít nhiều.
 Đè chừng ngon gió lần theo,
 Dấu giày từng bước in rêu rành-rành.*

« When the elite pass away in the prime of their talents, »
 replied Kiêu, « only their bodies die, but their souls survive. Who
 knows whether my heart has not met the dead's ? Let's wait, and
 I am sure that her soul is going to manifest itself. »

As soon as she stopped speaking, and without one's having time
 to reply, a squall rose suddenly, lashing against the pennons (19),
 tearing leaves away, shaking the trees, and seeming to be mixed with
 a light perfume. By following the direction of the wind, and squeezing
 one after another, they saw shoe traces clearly imprinted pace by pace

(19) Formerly, Chinese tombs were adorned with poles of pennons on festival
 days.

*Mắt nhìn, ai nấy đều kinh,
Nàng rằng: « Đây thực tinh-thành chẳng xa.
« Hữu-tình ta lại gặp ta,
« Chớ nề u-hiển, mới là chị em. »
Đã lòng hiển-hiện cho xem,
Tạ lòng, nàng lại nói thêm vài lời.
Lòng thơ lai láng bồi-hồi,
Gốc cây, lại vạch một bài cổ thi.*

on the moss. One could read then a real fright on their faces.

« This is no doubt the effect of nothing but my faith ! » Kiều said. « My tender heart has found its like. Since we are sisters, it doesn't matter whether she is dead, and I am alive. »

To express her thanks for the dead's willing manifestation, Kiều added a few more words. Then, as her poetical soul was flooded with emotion, she traced one more classical versicle on the trunk of the tree.

III

*Dùng-dàng nửa ở nửa về,
Nhạc vàng đâu đã tiếng nghe gần-gần.
Trông chừng thấy một văn-nhân,
Lông buông tay khấu, bước lần dặm băng.
Đề-huề lưng túi gió trăng,
Sau lưng theo một vài thùng con-con.*

CHAPTER THREE

First Meeting of Kim-Trọng and Thúy-Kiều

They stood there, undecided, not knowing whether to stay or to leave for home. Suddenly, a clear sound of small bells reached their ears. In the distance, a scholar was coming along, walking a horse with the reins loose in his hand. A bag half-loaded with wind and moon-light (20) was slung around his shoulder. Bringing up the rear were a

(20) A baggage containing trivial things, which most literati, in days of yore, used to carry along with them during their travel.

*Tuyết in sắc ngựa câu dòn,
 Cỏ pha mùi áo nhuộm non da trời.
 Nẻo xa mới tỏ mặt người,
 Khách đà xuống ngựa, tới nơi tự tình.
 Hài vãn lần bước dặm xanh,
 Một vùng như thể cây quỳnh, cành giao.
 Chàng Vương quen mặt ra chào.
 Hai Kiều e-lệ nép vào dưới hoa.*

few little boys, trying to keep pace with his beautiful and snowlike frisky horse. Grass seemed as if mingling with the color of his robe dyed in clear sky blue.

Hardly had Vương-Quan and his sisters made out his features in the distance when the rider dismounted, and came forward so as to present them his compliments. No sooner had his embroidered shoes trodden on the grassy road than the whole corner seemed as if imbued with the splendor of jewelled trees and boughs of jade (21). As an acquaintance of the man, Vương-Quan moved forward to greet him. Staying behind, the two young girls shyly tried to hide themselves under a flowery branch.

(21) A classical hyperbole borrowed from Chinese poetry.



Hai Kiều e-lệ nép vào dưới hoa.

The two young girls shyly tried to hide themselves under a flowery branch.

*Nguyên người quanh-quất đầu xa,
Họ Kim tên Trọng vốn nhà trâm anh.
Nền phú-hầu, bậc tài-danh,
Văn-chương nét đất, thông-minh tính trời.
Phong-tư tài-mạo tuyết vờn,
Vào trong phong-nhã, ra ngoài hào-hoa.
Chung-quanh vẫn đất nước nhà,
Với Vương-Quan trước vẫn là đồng-thần.*

The man, Kim-Trọng, lived in a neighboring village and was well known to them as belonging to a wealthy family where one wore brooches and chin-pieces (22), a family of gentlemen of acknowledged merits and talents. The literary culture stood for one of the young man's hereditary virtues (23), and intelligence, one of his natural endowments. His manners, talents, and countenance surpassed the average. Not only did Kim-Trọng always live in the same region, but he was

(22) An expression used to designate a literary family. Brooches and chin-pieces were used to fix the literati's caps.

(23) That is, they were literati by heredity. In China and in Vietnam, heredity is supposed to come from geomantic influence that takes effect of ancestors' tombs. This explains the care that the Chinese and the Vietnamese have taken in the choice of the location of land for their family tombs.

*Trộm nghe thơm nước hương-lân,
 Một nền Đồng-tước, khóa xuân hai Kiều.
 Nước non cách mấy buồng thêu,
 Những là trộm dấu, thăm yếu chốc mòng.
 May thay giải-cầu tương-phùng,
 Gặp tuần đổ lá thỏa lòng tìm hoa.*

also an old schoolfellow of Vương-Quan. For many moons, sweet eulogies covering his charming girl neighbors had spread to him. It was also rumored that a certain Temple of Brazen Sparrows (24) had been hiding the spring of two beauties, and rivers and mountains (25) isolated their gynaeceum (26).

For an eternity, he had been consumed with his secret passion and had loved silently. What a chance then, this unexpected meeting ! At a venture of a leaf game (27), he met now the flower for which

(24) A temple mentioned in the famous novel « The Three Kingdoms, » and which was supposed to be built for two beautiful women named Kiều.

(25) The hyperbole « Rivers and Mountains » must be obviously understood figuratively here.

(26) A part of a house reserved for women, and in which embroiderings were made.

(27) A children's game in which the object is to draw out a flower among diverse leaves and twigs mixed at random.

*Bóng hồng nhác thấy nẻo xa,
 Xuân lan, thu cúc, mận-mà cả hai.
 Người quốc-sắc, kẻ thiên-tài,
 Tình trong như đã, mặt ngoài còn e.
 Chập-chờn cơn tình, cơn mê,
 Rón ngời chẳng tiện, dứt về chín khôn.
 Bóng tà như giục cơn buồn,
 Khách đà lên ngựa, người còn ghé theo.
 Dưới dòng nước chảy trong veo,
 Bén cầu tơ liễu bóng chiều thướt-tha.*

he had longed. Hardly had he seen the two rosy silhouettes in the distance when he recognized at once that both the spring orchid and the autumn chrysanthemum were of a charming beauty. And already the sovereign beauty and the heavenly endowment fell in love inwardly with each other despite their apparent reserve.

Kiều fluctuated between reality and dream. Staying there was improper, departing was painful. The wane of the day seemed to fill her with melancholy. The rider had already mounted, but she continued to look at him furtively. Down in the rivulet, the flowing water seemed wonderfully clear. Near the bridge, the silk of the willows trailed in the evening shades.

IV

*Kiều từ trở gót trước hoa,
Mặt trời gác núi chiếu đà thu-không.
Gương Nga chênh-chéch dòm song,
Vàng gieo ngân nước, cây lồng bóng sán.
Hải-đường lả ngọn đông-lân,
Giọt sương gieo nặng, cành xuân là-đà.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Augury Made to Thúy-Kiều

Kiều came back among her flowery curtains. The setting sun touched lightly the little hills ; gongs announced the fall of the day. The moon, the mirror of Hằng-Nga (28), glanced through the wire lattice, strewing gold trails on the water. Its beams passed through the foliage to rest on the yard. At the East wall, a camellia gently bent its head, pouring heavy drops of dew on dangling vernal boughs.

(28) The fairy of the moon.

*Một mình lặng ngắm bóng Nga,
Rộn đường gần với nỗi xa bời-bời :
« Người mà đến thế thì thôi,
« Đời phồn-hoa cũng là đời bỏ đi.
« Người đâu gặp gỡ làm chi,
« Trăm năm biết có duyên gì hay không ? »
Ngổn-ngang trăm mối tơ lòng,
Nén câu tuyết-diệu ngu trong tỉnh-tỉnh.
Chénh-chénh bóng nguyệt xế màn,
Tựa ngồi bên triển, một mình thin-thin.*

Lonesome and silent, Kiều contemplated the round disk, confusing, in her perplexity, the recent meeting with the remote past. ‘ That girl so lowly in her downfall, » she murmured, ‘ what destiny could be more cruel ? Her brilliant life is insignificant now. And that young man, who could he be ? What will occur from our meeting ? In this life, who knows whether any bond will link us forever ? »

A hundred mixed riddles disturbed her heart, prompting her to compose perfectly beautiful verses about the sentiments of her soul. The moonlight passed obliquely through the spring-roller blinds. Kiều sat down against the balustrade, and soon fell into a doze.

*Thoát đầu thấy một tiểu Kiều,
 Có chiều phong-vân, có chiều thanh-tân.
 Sương in mặt, tuyết pha thân,
 Sen vàng lãng-đăng, như gần như xa.
 Rước mừng, đón hỏi dò-la :
 « Đào-nguyên lạc lối đầu mà đến đây ? »
 Thưa rằng : « Thanh, khí, xưa nay,
 « Mới cùng nhau lúc ban ngày đã quên ?*

Suddenly, she saw a strange young and beautiful maiden. Her face reflected the purity of dew. Her body looked as though kneaded with snow, and her feet, like two gold lotus flowers (29), seemed indistinct as though they were near and distant at the same time.

« Oh Lady of the Peach Source (30) ! Have you lost your way ? »
 Kiều said as she went to meet the apparition and received her graciously.

« My eternal sister ! » replied the apparition. « Through sounds and through souls, we were together just a while ago this very day.

(29) A classical Chinese metaphor used to speak of women's feet in times of yore. This compliment was given first to the beautiful Fan-Fei, who, when walking on square tiles adorned with gold lotus flower, heard one say : « Each of your paces is a gold lotus flower. » Pace and foot are interpreted by the same word.

(30) An abode of Immortals in Chinese legends.

« Hàn-gia ở mái tây thiên,
 « Dưới dòng nước chảy, bên trên có cầu.
 « Mấy lòng hạ cổ đến nhau,
 « Mấy lời hạ tí ném châu gieo vàng.
 « Váng trình hội-chủ xem tường,
 « Mà xem trong sổ đoạn-trường có tên.
 « Ấu đành quả kiếp nhân-duyên,
 « Cũng người một hội, một thuyền đầu xa!

Would you have forgotten it ? My cold home lies on the other side of your West wall : a rivulet flows beneath, and a bridge spans it, above. A few thoughts of yours have come down to me, and your few condescending words have affected me as though they were from a rain of pearls and gold. I have respectfully begged my Master (31) to examine as to whether your name is on the list of girls with torn bowels (32). Alas! Resign yourself! The fruits of our lives are springing up in the destiny : you will be like me, of the same class, on

(31) Undoubtedly, it is about the white-browed Genie, the master of the courtesans, who will be mentioned in Chapter Eight.

(32) Reference is made to a story concerning a jenny gibbon, who, when her baby was taken from her, wailed so painfully that her bowels were torn asunder. Here, this expression is particularly used to designate deeply unhappy women.

« *Này mười bài mới, mới ra,*
« Câu thần lại mượn bút hoa vẽ-vời.»
Kiều vâng lĩnh ý đề bài,
Tay tiên một vẩy, đủ mười khúc ngâm.
Xem thơ nức-nở khen thầm :
« Giá đành tú-khẩu, cảm-tâm, khác thường !

the same boat, and without any difference. Here are ten poetical themes that have just been given me. To write these admirable poems, I must resort to your flowery brush. »

Deferring to her desire, Kiều undertook this improvisation. Her fairy hand finished the ten poems with one stroke of the brush (33).

Đạm-Tiên read the verses, sometimes praising aloud, occasionally admiring silently.

« Ah ! » she said. « The only thing one can say is that a mouth

(33) These ten poems written by Kiều on given subjects can be found in the book entitled « Thanh Tâm Tài Nhân. » Hereinafter are the titles, marks of the particular propensity of the heroine for melancholy : 1) Regrets for Having Too Many Skills ; 2) Pity for the Disinherited ; 3) Grievs of Parting ; 4) Souvenir of an Old Acquaintance ; 5) The Fate of a Beautiful Maid ; 6) Past Youth ; 7) Happy Days in a Garden ; 8) A Distressing Position ; 9) Sad Adventures ; 10) Remember the Absentee.

*« Ví đem vào tập đoạn-trường,
« Thì treo giải nhất, chi nhường cho ai ! »
Thềm hoa khách đã trở hài,
Nàng còn cầm lại một hai tự-tình.
Gió đầu sịch bức màn-mành,
Tình ra mới biết rằng mình chiếm bao.
Trông theo nào thấy đầu nào,
Hương thừa đường hãy ra vào đầu đây !
Một mình lưỡng-lự canh chầy,
Đường xa, nghĩ nổi sau này mà kinh.*

and a heart have woven this peerless lace-work and brocade ! Should this be reckoned among the selection of poems composed by torn-boweled girls, your verses would win the first prize. What else could triumph over yours ? »

The visitor had already turned on her heels toward the flowery perron, but Kiều still tried to keep her back as for more confidence. Suddenly, a gust of wind lashed noisily against the blinds. . . Kiều awoke and then realized that she had been dreaming. No one was seen in the direction of the perron, but a remaining light perfume still seemed to be floating in the air.

Lonesome, Kiều fell into a deep meditation amid the hush of the night.

*Hoa trôi, bèo dạt, đã đành,
 Biết duyên mình, biết phận mình thế thôi !
 Nỗi riêng lớp-lớp sóng gởi,
 Nghĩ đời con, lại sut-sùi đời con.
 Giọng Kiều rền-rĩ trướng loan,
 Nhà huyền chợt tỉnh, hỏi : « Con-có gì ?
 « Có sao trần-trọc canh khuya,
 « Màu hoa lẻ hầy dầm-dề giọt mưa ? »*

She took fright when she thought of the faraway route of the future.
 « Shall I become a flower going adrift or a floating duckweed ? » Kiều murmured. « Whatever it may be, I'll resign myself. That is my fate, my destiny, and that's all. »

Her thoughts assailed her like endless billows. Soon, sobs began to take part in her meditations. Her doleful voice went moaning far into the phoenix room (34), awaking the home day-lily (35).

« What's the matter ? » asked her mother. « Why are you restless so late in the night, small pear-flower still wet with rain water ? »

(34) A nuptial room.

(35) A day-lily is a kind of plant that is regarded as being able to make one forget his sorrow. Here, this expression means mother.

Thưa rằng : « Chút phận ngáy thơ,
« Dưỡng sinh đôi nợ tóc-tơ chưa đền.
« Buổi ngày chơi mả Đạm-Tiên,
« Nhấp đi, thoát thấy ửng liền chiêm bao.
« Đoạn-trường là số thế nào ?
« Bài ra thế ấy, vịnh vào thế kia.
« Cứ trong mộng-triều mà suy,
« Phận con thôi có ra gì mai sau ! »
Dạy rằng : « Mộng-triều cứ đâu ?
« Bỗng không mua nã chuốc sầu, nghĩ nao ! »

« Your little daughter is still young and stupid, » replied Kiều.
 « Brought into the world and nurtured by you, she has done not even the slightest thing to lessen her double debt due to you. In the course of the day, I went to the tomb of Đạm-Tiên. And, recently, no sooner had I fallen into a slumber than she appeared before me in my dream. Girl with torn bowels, what destiny does this phrase mean ? Look, Mother ! These are the subjects of poems she gave me to treat, and see what I have written. What does this dream presage ? It is easy to comprehend : the fate of your daughter can be considered hopeless forever. »

« What does this dream presage ? » her mother reproved her.

*Váng lời khuyên-giải thấp cao,
 Chưa xong điều nghĩ, đã đào mạch Tương.
 Ngoài song thả-thở oanh-vàng.
 Nách tường bóng liễu bay sang láng-giềng.
 Hiên tà gác bóng nghiêng-nghiêng,
 Nỗi riêng, riêng chạnh tắc riêng một mình.*

« Well, but nothing ! With no reason at all, you inflict sorrow and trouble on yourself. Just imagine ! »

Kiều yielded to these whispered maternal edifying and comforting exhortations. But she kept on musing over her dream, and the water of the Siang River (36) continued to flow.

A twittering of a yellow oriole rose on the other side of the window. From a corner of the wall, the bloom of the willows flew over to a neighboring house. On the West side, oblique shadows seemed to rest on the veranda.

Intimate thoughts were moving the heart of the lonesome girl.

(36) A Chinese river, in Hunan. It was told that two ladies named Nga-Hoàng and Nũ-Anh wept over the death of Emperor Thuan on the beach of the Siang River. Since then, the name of this waterway has been used to designate women's tears, and chiefly the tears of she who is cruelly parted from her beloved man.

V

*Cho hay là giống hữu-tình,
Đố ai gỡ mối tơ mảnh cho xong!
Chàng Kim từ lại thư-song,
Nỗi nằng canh-cánh bên lòng biếng khuấy.
Sầu đông càng khắc càng đầy,
Ba thu dọn lại một ngày dài ghê!*

CHAPTER FIVE

Secret Engagement of Kim-Trọng and Thúy-Kiều

Of what a curious fabric lovers are made! I defy anyone to unravel the silk threads entangled in their cores!

Back home among his books, Kim-Trọng was constantly obsessed by the remembrance of Thúy-Kiều. The more he probed his melancholy, the more profound was his sorrow. Each day seemed to be three

*Mây tản khóa kín song the,
 Bụi hồng leo-đèo đi về chiêm-bao.
 Tuần trăng khuyết, đĩa dầu hao,
 Mặt mơ-tưởng mặt, lòng ngao-ngán lòng.
 Bường văn hơi lạnh như đồng,
 Trúc se ngọn thỏ, tơ trùng phím loan.*

autumns long. It made him shiver ! The clouds of Tsin (37) hid completely the veiled windows (38). A rosy picture constantly haunted him in his dreams. One moon had gone by, and oil continued to ebb in the lamp. His face reflected the dream of the other face, and his heart was longing for the other heart. How cold the air in his study room was, as cold as copper ! The rabbit hair brushes began to show their stiffened points ; and the chords of the phoenix-fretted guitar started

(37) In poetry, allusion is often made to the clouds of Tsin (a Chinese province in Shansi). Here, this expression is, of course, used figuratively.

(38) An expression used to designate the remote windows of Kiều's house. The expressions « veiled windows, » « windows adorned with rosy curtains, » « peachy windows, » often point out the gynaeceum, and widely speaking, young girls.

*Mành tương phon-phót gió đàn,
 Hương gáy mùi nhớ, trà khan giọng tình :*
*« Vì chẳng duyên-nợ ba sinh,
 « Làm chi những thói khuyh-thành trêu ngươi ? »*
*Bàng-khuáng nhớ cảnh, nhớ người,
 Nhớ nơi kỳ-ngộ, vội dời chân đi.*
*Một vùng cỏ mọc xanh rì,
 Nước ngấm trong vát, thấy gì nữa đâu !*

getting loose (39). The silk blinds fluttered and rattled in the wind. Burnt incense spread a perfume of souvenirs ; and without love, tea seemed to release no aroma. « Ah ! » complained Kim-Trong, « if we had not been linked with each other for three existences, why was she so beautiful as to ruin cities and to torture my heart ? »

Unceasingly, in his thoughts, Kim-Trọng retraced the scene, the picture of his love, the place of the wonderful meeting. . . And, anxious, he set out for where he had met her.

But, arriving at the place, he could find nothing there but grass

(39) Guitar frets were sometimes carved in the form of a jenny phoenix. The expression « phoenix frets » is a consecrated, but stereotyped poetical phrase.

*Gió chiều như gọi cơn sầu,
 Vi-lô hiu-hắt như màu khơi-trêu.
 Nghề riêng nhớ ít, tưởng nhiều,
 Xăm-xăm đê nỏ Lam-kiều lần sang.
 Thâm nghiêm, kín cổng, cao tường,
 Cạn dòng lá thắm ; dứt đường chim xanh.*

growing verdant, soaked in dormant limpid water. The soft evening wind seemed to kindle melancholy. The reeds swung to and fro as if they were trying to tease the young man.

In the heart of a lover, it is the poor souvenirs that build a great love. Making up his mind, Kim-Trọng paced forward in the direction of the Lam bridge (40). How gloomy and severe the house looked behind its closed door and its high walls ! There existed not the smallest rivulet

(40) In the Tang period, one day, a young man named Búi-Hàng met a beautiful girl named Vân-Kiều. She handed him a poem, in which he read the verse, « Lam bridge is the sojourn of this immortal goddess. »

On another day, he crossed a bridge which bore this name. When he stopped at a tea hut for a drink, he was very surprised to find there the beautiful poetess playing the role of a tea seller. He asked for her hand in marriage. The girl's father laid down a condition : He owned a jade mortar, but with no pestle. His daughter would be given in marriage to him who could procure this missing accessory. Some time later, Búi-Hàng met a group of immortals. They gave him the requested jade pestle. Owing to this, he could finally marry Vân-Kiều, who was, in reality, an immortal. According to the legend, Tù-Hàng then lived an immortal life beside his beautiful wife.

*Lơ-thơ to liễu buông màn,
Con oanh học nói trên cành mĩ-mai.
Mấy lần cửa đóng, then cài,
Đầy thềm hoa rụng, biết người ở đâu ?*

for a red leaf (41) ; not the least way of entry for a blue bird (42) ! The silk of willows flagged down nonchalantly like blinds. On a branch, a jeering oriole was practicing his first notes. Everywhere, doors were closed and bolted. Flowers strewn about the threshold. But where to find the beloved ?

(41) One day, in the Tang period, a man called Vũ-Hưu found a bright red leaf in the current of a moat of the imperial citadel. He picked it up, and found on it a poem signed by one of the harem women. He improvised immediately another poem, and wrote it on the same leaf. He cast it back into the current, and the leaf, drifting back inside, ran by chance into the hands of Hàn-Thị, the author of the first poem. Later, Hàn-Thị figured among the 3,000 women disbanded out of the imperial service. She met Vũ-Hưu and became his wife, in whom he recognized his former correspondent by ways of moats.

(42) It was told that, one day, when Emperor Vũ-Đế was going out for an airing in his garden, a couple of blue birds flew in and alighted in front of him. The famous poet Đông-Phương-Sóc, who was beside the monarch at that moment, interpreted to him that these birds were the messages from the goddess Tây-Vương-Mẫu. A while after, announcement was made, in fact, that this legendarily beautiful goddess had come to ask him for an audience.

*Tần-ngần, đứng suốt giờ lâu,
 Đạo quanh, chợt thấy mái sau có nhà.
 Là nhà Ngô-Việt thương-gia,
 Buồng không để đó, người xa chưa về.
 Lấy điều du học, hỏi thuê,
 Túi đàn, cặp sách, đề-huê dọn sang.
 Cỏ cây, có đá, sắn-sàng,
 Có hiện Lãm-thúy, nét vàng chưa phai.*

He stayed there thoughtfully for many long hours. Then he started wandering around the house. At its back, he came across another dwelling. The latter belonged to a tradesman of Ou-Yueh (43), who, traveling far away, had left it unoccupied. Kim-Trọng presented himself as a student from another region, and asked to take the house on lease. Then he moved in, with nothing along but a case containing his guitar, and a few books as belongings. Trees and rock-works were there to his liking. On the terrace, the poetical inscription « Lãm-Thúy » (44) seemed as if freshly gilded. Kim-Trọng inwardly enjoyed such a

(43) A Chinese district located on the North section of the province of Chekiang.

(44) Here, Lãm-Thúy means « Contemplation of kingfishers, » but can also be translated by « Contemplation of Thúy-Kiều » — a happy omen of Kim-Trọng's loving scheme.

Măng thắm chốn đáy chữ bài,
 Ba sinh ấu hửn duyên Trời chi đáy!
 Song hồ nửa khép cánh mây,
 Tường-đồng ghé mắt, ngày ngày hằng trông.
 Tắc gang đồng tỏa nguyên phong,
 Tật-mù nào thấy bóng hồng vào ra.
 Nhận từ quán khách lân-la,
 Tuần trăng thấm-thoát nay đà thêm hai.
 Cách tường phải buổi êm trời,
 Dưới đào đường có bóng người thướt-tha.

prophetical inscription in this place. « Well, » he said to himself, « this is certainly a heavenly manifestation of this destiny that has linked us since three existences ago (45)! »

From his open window, which was cloaked with paper as a protecting cloud, Kim-Trọng spent hours every day peeping furtively at the opposite house. But the copper lock of its door remained constantly untouched. Nothing came into view, nothing of her rosy silhouette was seen in or out.

Almost two moons had gone by since the day he moved under this strange roof. Time continued to run away until one day, by favor of

(45) According to certain Buddhist beliefs, the predestination of two beings to be linked with each other, or contracted obligations, is valid for three successive re-incarnations.

*Buong cầm, xóc áo, vội ra,
Hương còn thơm nước, người đã vắng tanh.
Lần theo tường gấm dạo quanh,
Trên đào nhác thấy một cành kim-thoa.
Giơ tay với lấy về nhà :
« Đây trong khuê-các, đâu mà đến đây ?
« Gấm áo người ấy, báu này,
« Chẳng duyên chưa dễ vào tay ai cầm ! »
Liền tay ngắm-nghía, biếng nằm,
Hãy còn thoang-thoảng hương trầm chưa phai.*

a nice afternoon, there seemed to appear a silhouette in long dress hovering among the peach-trees on the other side of the wall. Kim-Trọng laid down his guitar, put his garments in order, and hurried out.

A sweet perfume was still floating in the air, but no one was in sight, nothing but frigid loneliness. As he paced along the mossy wall, he suddenly saw a gold hairpin on a branch of a peach-tree. Kim stretched out his arm, seized the pin, and took it home. « This came undoubtedly from a gynaeceum, » he said to himself. « Well, that woman. . . , this jewel. . . If we were not linked with each other by a mysterious destiny, it would be difficult for this to fall into my hand. »

Forgetting to go to bed, Kim sat up through that night to

Tan sương đã thấy bóng người;
Quanh tường ra ý tìm-tòi ngẩn-ngờ.
Sinh đà có ý đợi chờ,
Cách tường lên tiếng xa đưa ấm lòng :
« Thoa này bắt được hư không,
« Biết đâu Hợp-phố mà mong châu về ? »

admire the hairpin, which he constantly kept in his hand. The jewel was still imbued with a light santal perfume.

Next day, when the last haze was dispersed, he saw a feminine silhouette inching pensively to and fro along the wall as if looking for something. The young man, already on the watch, raised his voice over the wall, so as to probe the beauty's heart : « I have found a hairpin, and I don't remember where I found it. I don't know where Ho-Pou (46) is located, so I cannot return the pearls ! »

(46) Ho-Pou is a frontier town located in Kwantung. It was told that this town had once abounded with pearl-oysters. But one day, all pearl-oysters disappeared magically. The people imputed this unhappy happening to the cruelty of the administrators. The imperial government sent another governor named Mạnh-Khương, well known for his goodness and his wise policy ; immediately, pearl-oysters reappeared abundantly as though it were a manifestation of the divine approval. This historical allusion in this verse seems to have little relation with the text. It must be understood as a simple joke of Kim-Trọng, who meant : « Hello, beauty ! Don't waste your time in looking for it. The pin will not go back by itself where it was, like pearl-oysters of Ho-Pou ! »

Tiếng Kiều nghe lọt bên kia :

« *Ơn lòng quân-tử sá gì của rơi.*

« *Chiếc thoa nào của mấy mươi,*

« *Mà lòng trọng nghĩa, khinh tài, xiết bao ! »*

Sinh rằng : « Lân-lý ra vào,

« *Gần đây, nào phải người nào xa-xôi.*

« *Được rày nhờ chút thơm rơi,*

« *Kể đà thiếu-não lòng người bấy nay !*

« *Bấy lâu mới được một ngày,*

« *Dừng chân, gạn chút niềm tây gọi là. »*

« I thank you very much, generous gentleman, for not taking a lost thing, » Kiều's voice rose from the other side. « A hairpin is, in fact, of little value, but rare are virtuous hearts that disdain wealth ! »

« As inhabitants of the same village, we have met each other many times, » replied the young man. « I am one of your neighbors, not a stranger from another region. Owing to a little perfume dropped from you, today becomes a happy day to me. For many moons my heart has suffered. Now, this day, expected so long, has finally come. Ah ! Please stay a while, just a little while so that I may open my heart to you ! »

Vội về thêm lấy của nhà,
 Xuyên vàng đôi chiếc, khăn là một vuông.
 Bạc mây đón bước ngon tường,
 Phải người hóm nọ rõ-ràng chẳng nhe !
 Sợng-sùng giữ ý rụt-rè,
 Kê nhìn rõ mặt, người e cúi đầu.
 Rằng : « Từ ngãu-nhĩ gặp nhau,
 « Thăm trông, trộm nhớ, bấy lâu đã chồn.
 « Xương mai, tính đã rủ mồn,
 « Lăn-lừa, ai biết hãy còn hôm nay !

He hurried home, joining, as personal gifts, two gold bracelets and a silk handkerchief to the pin. Then, using a ladder as high as the clouds (47), he gently climbed onto the top of the wall. It was she, the same shy, reserved, and hesitating person whom he met on the other day. As he looked straight at her face, the young girl bowed her head confusedly.

« Since our last accidental meeting, » said Kim, « I have cherished my hope silently, and dreamed of you secretly. I have been so long overwhelmed that my body becomes now etiolated like an apricot-tree. Days were added to days without my hoping that a day as happy as today

(47) As we have seen, one is not afraid of using hyperbole in poetry.

*« Tháng tròn như gửi cung mây,
 « Trần-trần một phận ấp cây đã liễu !
 « Tiễn đây xin một hai điều,
 « Đài-gương soi đến dẫu bèo cho chẳng ! »
 Ngần-ngừ nàng mới thưa rằng :
 « Thói nhà băng tuyết, chất hàng phi-phong.*

would come to me. A full month went by with my heart confined in the Cloud Palace (48). I have decided to stay at the foot of a tree to the end, at the risk of my life like the man who chose this position (49). And here you are ! Please deign to tell me a few words. Oh, mirror ! Will your brightness reach this humble duckweed ? »

« The traditions of my family are pure like ice and snow (50), » replied Kiều hesitantly, « and we live on the growing of vegetables.

(48) Absent-minded.

(49) This is the legend that gave birth to the above verse : « One day, on the way to the town, a farmer came across a hare, which, chased by hunters, hit itself so hard against the trunk of a tree that it died on the spot. He picked up the dead game, and, since then, fancied that the hare hunting consisted uniquely of standing on the look-out under a tree. He put his theory into practice : he stayed at the foot of a tree for days, expecting with no avail another hare to come and hit its head against the tree. »

(50) A usual expression used to point out honest poverty.

*« Dầu khi lá thắm, chỉ hồng,
« Nén chăng thì cũng tại lòng mẹ cha.*

Whatever red love leaves (51) or rosy hymen threads may be (52), they

(51) See footnote 41.

(52) According to a legend, there was once a man named Oui-Kou. He went everywhere to look for a beautiful girl, who, besides her beauty, must be an ideal person of his dream. One night, when arriving at a pagoda, he saw, in the yard, an old man reading in the moonlight, holding a bag full of red threads (or rosy threads) in his hand. The book, which the old man was reading, was a register of marriages fixed in advance, and the red threads were used to unite those who had been destined for marrying each other. Oui-Kou, who came from a noble family, was curious to know which woman had been destined for him. The old man named a raggedly-dressed six-year-old girl, who was the daughter of a vegetables seller in the neighborhood. Raging at this derision, he decided to slay the child. Fortunately, the mother succeeded in saving her daughter by running away. The child had been, however, touched slightly at her temple by the point of Oui-Kou's sword. The latter, after long and inefficient pursuits throughout the region for more than ten years, came back home, deciding not to marry anyone whomsoever. But this was a vow easier to make than to hold. One day, an aunt of his introduced to him a gentle small girl, whom she had sheltered and fostered. The girl pleased him, and a few weeks later, she became his wife. One day, he remarked a scar at her temple, which she had constantly hidden with a small round paper by way of a plaster. He asked her to explain the cause of this scar. She told him the aggression of which she was victim when she was still a little child: her mother, too apprehensive for her life, deserted the country, and took her to the house of Oui-Kou's aunt. Here, she was sheltered and fostered until the day she met him.

This story illustrates the quite popular belief in the wedding predestination. The old man who read in the moonlight was called « The Old Man of the Moon ; » his book, the register of marriages ; and the red threads in his bag, the rosy hymen threads.

« Nặng lòng xót liễu, vì hoa,
 « Trẻ thơ đã biết đau mà dám thưa ! »
 Sinh rằng : « Rày gió, mai mưa.
 « Ngày xuân đã dễ tình-cờ mấy khi !
 « Dầu chẳng xét tấm tình si,
 « Thiệt đây mà có ích gì đến ai ?
 « Chút chi gấn-bó một hai,
 « Cho đành, rồi sẽ liệu bài mối-mạnh.
 « Khuôn-thiêng dầu phụ tấc thành,
 « Cũng liễu bỏ quá xuân-xanh một đời.

must depend upon my parents' decision. Oh ! Good heart full of pity for a frail willow, and of anxiety for an ephemeral flower ! How can I answer you when I am still a child ? »

« It blows today, and it might fain tomorrow, » said Kim. « Happy meetings do not often come to us in the spring of life. If you despise this heart quite distraught with love, then to whom will my sorrow be useful ? Please give me some small pledge to fix my fate, and I'll arrange to have a matchmaker for our union. If the sky opposes my sincere love, well ! then the spring of my life will flow in loneliness.

*« Lượng xuân dần quyết hẹp-hòi,
 « Công đeo-đuối chẳng thiết-thời lắm ru ! »*
*Lặng nghe lời nói như ru,
 « Chiều xuân dễ khiến, nét thu ngại-ngùng.*
Rằng : « Trong buổi mới lạ-lùng,
Nể lòng, có lẽ cầm lòng cho đang !
« Đã lòng quán-tử đa-mang,
« Một lời, vàng tạc đá vàng thủy-chung. »
Được lời như cỏi tấm lòng,
Giở kim-thoa với khăn hồng trao tay.

If your generosity remains indifferent to my love, shall I not have suffered enough in following you ? »

She listened silently, as though lulled by his words. Already an uneasiness showed in the expression of her eyes, like spring shining over a pale autumn.

« Everything seems new to me in this first meeting, » Kiêu said, « but I have too much consideration for your sentiments to be able to repress mine. Since I am the cause of the trouble of your generous heart, I accept your words, and I'll carve them on gold and on stone forever. »

Kim-Trọng felt his heart relieved at these words. He took out the gold pin and the silk handkerchief, and handed them to her.

*Rằng: « Trăm năm cũng từ đây,
« Của tin, gọi một chút này làm ghi. »
Sẵn tay khăn gấm, quạt quì,
Với cành thoa ấy, tức thì đổi trao.
Một lời gắn-bó tất-giao,
Mái sau đường có xôn-xao tiếng người.
Vội-vàng lá rụng, hoa rơi,
Chàng về viện sách, nàng dờn lầu trang.
Từ phen đã biết tuổi vàng,
Tình càng thắm-thía, dạ càng ngấn-ngor.*

« My life is united with yours from this very day, » he said. « May these modest pledges witness the words we have addressed each other. »

At that moment, Kiều held in her hand an embroidered silk handkerchief and a fan with the pictures of turnsoles painted on it. Immediately she exchanged these objects for the gold pin. Their oath was thus made, and they were linked to each other as if by glue and lacquer.

Suddenly, they seemed to hear a voice coming from the rear of the house. Like falling leaves and flowers, he hurried back to his books, and she, to her dressing-room.

Since then, like a touchstone in full contact with pure gold, their

Sông Tương một dải nông sờ,
Bén trông đầu nọ, bén chờ cuối kia.
Một tường tuyết trở sương che,
Tin xuân đâu dễ đi về cho năng.
Lần lần ngày gió đêm trăng,
Thưa hồng, rậm lục, đã chừng xuân qua.
Ngày vừa sinh-nhật ngoại gia,
Trên hai đường, dưới nữa là hai em.

love became more profound, and their hearts seemed more gloomy. Though the Siang River (53) was almost dried up, both were there, one waiting upstream, and the other, pining away for love downstream. Like snow and mist, they were kept apart by a high wall, and had a lot of difficulties in exchanging their love messages.

Windy and moonlit nights succeeded each other alternately. Roses showed more scarcely, and more verdant grew the bushes. Spring seemed to be on the wane when the family of Kiêu's mother celebrated

(53) In a famous Chinese poem, there exists the following complaint of a young girl when she was separated from her beloved : « You are upstream of the Siang River and I am downstream of it . . . , but both of us drink its water. »

*Tưng-bưng sắm-sửa áo xiêm,
Biện dâng một lễ, xa đem tấc thành.
Nhà lan thanh-vắng một mình,
Ngắm cơn hội-ngộ đã đành hôm nay,
Thì-trần thức thức sẵn bày,
Gót sen thoăn-thoắt dạo ngay mái tường.
Cách hoa, sẽ đặt tiếng vàng,
Dưới hoa đã thấy có chàng đứng trông.
« Trách lòng hờ-hững với lòng,
« Lửa hương chốc để lạnh-lùng bấy lâu.*

the birthday of her grandfather. Her parents, and her younger sister and brother happily prepared their festival dresses. With a rich chosen gift, they went out to offer their sincere affection to their grandparent.

Lonesome in her deserted house adorned with orchidaceae, Thúy-Kiều thought that this was an occasion for her to meet Kim. She managed to display many kinds of good things of the season on the table, then went out with a quick step straight to the wall. Hardly had she raised her soft golden voice through the flowers when Kim was already there, standing under a flowery branch.

« I must reproach you for your indifference, » whispered Kim. « Oh, my dear ! How could you let the incense grow so cold immediately after

« *Những là đắp nhớ đổi sầu,*
 « *Tuyết sương nhuộm nửa mái đầu hoa râm.* »
 Nàng rằng : « *Gió bắt, mưa cầm,*
 « *Đã cam tẻ với tri-âm bấy chầy.*
 « *Vắng nhà, được buổi kóm nay,*
 « *Lấy lòng gọi chút ra đây tạ lòng.* »
 Lăn theo núi giả đi vòng,
 Cuối tường dường có ngõ thông mới rào ;
 Xén tay mở khóa động đào,
 Rẽ máy trong tổ lối vào Thiên-thai.

it was kindled ? In order to chase away my sorrow, I have spent all my time dreaming of you. Now, my hair has become grey as if imbued with snow and dew. »

« It was winds and rains that kept me from you, » replied Kiều.
 « I am sorry for behaving so cruelly to the friend of my heart. The absence of my family gives me a little freedom today. Here is my heart, my dear ! I came to humbly thank you for your generous sentiments about me. »

She walked around the edges of the rock-works. There seemed to be a recently fenced passage at the end of the wall. Kiều tucked up her sleeves and opened the lock of the Peach Grotto (54) as to

(54) An abode of immortals.

Mặt nhìn mặt, càng thêm tươi,
 Bên lời vạn-phúc, bên lời hàn-huyên.
 Sánh vai về chốn thu-hiên,
 Góp lời phong-nguyệt, nặng nguyền non sông.
 Trên yén, bút-giá, thi-đồng,
 Đạm-thanh một bức tranh tùng treo trên.
 Phong-sương được vẽ thiên-nhiên,
 Mặt khen nét bút, càng nhìn càng tươi.

disperse the clouds to see more clearly the way to Thiên-Thai (55).

The more they looked at each other, the more happiness showed on their faces. She wished him ten thousand good things; he asked her how she endured the cold and heat (56). Then, side by side they went into the study room, whispering sweet words as light as winds and moonlights, and calling upon mounts and rivers to witness their solemn oaths.

Brush holders and copper cases of poems laid on the desk. Hanging on the wall was a wash drawing of a pine, so well depicted that it appeared as if affected by winds and mists. Kiều was entranced with admiration

(55) In Vietnamese legends, Thiên-Thai means a kind of paradise located in a grotto inhabited by fairies.

(56) Ritual compliments of ancient Chinese courtesy.

*Sinh rằng : « Phác-họa vừa rồi,
 « Phẩm đề, xin một vài lời thêm hoa. »*
*Tay tiên gió táp mưa sa,
 Khoảng trên, dèng bút thảo và bốn câu.*
*Khen : « Tài nhả ngọc phun châu,
 « Nàng Ban, ả Tạ cũng đâu thể vầy !*
*« Kiếp tu xưa ví chưa dày,
 « Phúc nào nhắc được giá này cho ngang ! »*

over those brush strokes that seemed alive before her eyes.

« This is a rough sketch I have just finished, » Kim said. « Please write a few words to embellish it. »

With her fairy hand, Kiều laid the brush on the upper part of the picture, and scribbled a quatrain like the wind lashing against the falling rain.

« Wonderful ! » exclaimed Kim. « You really have the talent of emitting jade and pearls ! Even the famous Pan or the young poetess Tsie could not write better than this ! If the good deeds of your antecedent lives were not immense, what chance would be heavy enough to replace them (57) ? »

(57) That is, « If your talents were not a just reward acquired from your good deeds performed during your antecedent lives, the chance, alone, would not be able to make them so great. »

Nàng rằng : « Trộm liếc dung-quang,
 « Chẳng sản ngọc-bội, thời phùng kim-môn.
 « Nghĩ mình phận mỏng cánh chuồn,
 « Khuôn-xanh biết có vuông tròn mà hay?
 « Nhớ từ năm hãy thơ ngây,
 « Có người tướng-sĩ đoán ngay một lời :
 « Anh-hoa phát-tiết ra ngoài,
 « Nghìn thu bạc-mệnh một đời tài-hoa.

« When I looked furtively at your handsome face, » said Kiều,
 « I said to myself that, if you did not wear jade at the Court, you must
 belong at least to the Gold Door (58). When I think of my
 destiny that is as frail as the dragonfly's wing, I wonder whether
 Heaven will consent to bless our union. I remember, when I was still
 a child, a physiognomist made this prediction : « When your
 interior light and beauty shine outside, one thousand autumns of cruel
 fate will condemn your beauty and talents. » So, when I look at you,

(58) This sentence means, « If you were not a gentleman with a good
 position to be one of the jade-wearing dignitaries in the Court, you
 must be at least an eminent scholar. »

*« Trông người lại ngắm đến ta,
 « Một dày, một mỏng, biết là có nên ? »
 Sinh rằng: « Giải-cầu là duyên,
 « Xưa nay nhân định thắng thiên cũng nhiều.
 « Ví dầu giải-kết đến điều,
 « Thì đem vàng đá mà liều với thân. »
 Đủ điều trung-khúc ân-cần,
 Lòng xuân phơi-phới, chén xuân tàng-tàng.
 Ngày vui ngắn chẳng dài gang,
 Trông ra ác đã ngắm gương non đoài.*

I think of myself. You are a noble man, I am a humble girl. Is it wise of us to live together ? »

« Isn't our meeting a revelation of destiny ? » Kim said. « So far, man's firmness has often triumphed over destiny. If any unhappy event occurs against our union, I will immolate my whole life to realize our oaths that have been carved on gold and stone. »

Thousands of their inmost secrets were revealed to each other. Their hearts seemed younger and lighter ; the spring wine began to plunge them into a sweet inebriety. But the happy day was too short even to cover a span. Far on the West, the Solar Crow (59) had already hidden its mirror

(59) See footnote 16 and 17.

*Vắng nhà chẳng tiện ngồi dài,
Giã chàng, nàng mới kíp dờn song-sa.
Đến nhà vừa thấy tin nhà,
Hai thân còn giờ tiệc hoa chưa về.
Cửa ngoài vội rủ rèm the,
Xăm-xăm băng lối vườn khuya một mình.
Nhặt thưa, gương gọi đầu cành,
Ngọn đèn trông lọt trướng huỳnh hắt-hiu.*

behind the chain of mountains. Thinking that it was not decent to linger longer when her family was absent, Kiều took leave of him, and hurried home.

Hardly had she disappeared behind the silk-curtained windows when news came in : her parents had to stay away longer for the party had not ended. Kiều hastened to pull down the veil curtain of the front door. With a quick step, she rushed out and crossed the garden already plunged in the night shades.

The moon cast its beams over the ends of the Loughs, forming alternatively thick and transparent screens. In the house, a lamplight danced gently in the breeze, glittering through a pulled-down mosquito-net.

Sinh vừa tựa án thiu-thiu,
 Giở chiều như tỉnh, giở chiều như mê.
 Tiếng sen sẽ động giấc hòè,
 Bóng trăng đã xế hoa lê lại gần.
 Bâng-khuâng đỉnh Giáp, non Thần,
 Còn ngờ giấc mộng đêm xuân mơ-màng.
 Nàng rằng : « Khoảng vắng đêm trường,
 « Vì hoa nên phải đánh đường tìm hoa.

Beside it was Kim, dozing, half awake, half asleep, with his back against the desk.

The noises of the lotus feet drove him out of his sophora dream (60). There, under the declining moon, was coming his love, white like a pear-flower. Kim's unhinged spirit loitered between the peak of Kia and the top of the Chen mountain (61). He still thought of being a prey to a spring-night dream.

« Through a deserted space and a long night, » Kiêu said, « on account of my love, I had to make a way to come here for my beloved.

(60) A sophora dream means a nice dream. Allusion is made to a dream of a scholar named Chen Yu Fen. The latter, when asleep at the foot of a sophora, dreamed that he was appointed prefect and married to the Emperor's beautiful daughter.

(61) These two mountains were considered sojourns of immortals.

« Bảy giờ rõ mặt đôi ta,
« Biết đâu rồi nữa chẳng là chiêm bao? »
Vội mùng làm lễ rước vào,
Đài-sen nổi sáp, song-đào thêm hương.
Tiến thề cùng thảo một trương,
Tóc máy một món, dao vàng chia đôi.
Vàng trắng vàng-vạc giữa trời,
Đinh-ninh hai miếng, một lời song-song.
Tóc tơ căn-vặn tấc lòng,
Trăm năm tạc một chữ đồng đến xương.

Here we are now, face to face. Who knows whether this meeting will not be a dream? »

Kim hastened to politely invite her to come in. He refilled the lotuslike tallow-chandelier with oil, and put more incense in the perfume pan, which was in the form of a peach. Then, together they wrote their oaths on a sheet of paper. With a gold knife, they cut two locks of their hair, mixed them up, and cut them asunder. Above, in the sky, the moon shone brightly. Solemnly, they exchanged the same oath. Many inmost sentiments, as little as silk threads, were repeated to

*Chén hà sánh giọng quỳnh-tương,
 Dải là hương lộn, bình gương bóng lờng.
 Sinh rằng : « Gió mát trăng trong,
 « Bấy lâu nay một chút lòng chưa cam ;
 « Chày sương chưa nện cầu Lam,
 « Sợ lần-khán quá ra sòm-sơ chẳng ? »
 Nàng rằng : « Hồng diệp, xích thằng,
 « Một lời cũng đã tiếng rằng tương-tri.*

each other. The word « union » was thus carved in their bones for life. Together, they drank an ambrosial wine contained in a golden yellow cup. From their waist-bands exhaled a mixed perfume ; the screen mirror framed the shadows of their enamoured faces.

« The wind is so fresh, » said Kim, « and the moon looks so limpid that they evoke all my inmost aspirations so far unsatisfied. As the jade pestle has not pounded yet on the Lam bridge (62), I am afraid of carrying the matter too far to behave correctly. »

« We have been contracted by red leaves and by rosy threads (63), »

(62) See footnote 40.

(63) That means, « We are now engaged to each other. »

« *Đừng điều nguyệt nọ, hoa kia,*
 « *Ngoài ra, ai lại tiếc gì với ai.* »
Rằng : « Nghe nổi tiếng Cầm-đài,
 « *Nước-non lưng những lảng tai Chung-Kỳ.* »
Thưa rằng : « Tiện-kỹ sá chi!
 « *Đã lòng dạy đến, dạy thì phải vâng.* »
Hiền sau treo sẵn cầm-trang,
Vội-vàng sinh đã tay nâng ngang mảy.

replied Kiêu. « Our given word suffices to link us forever. Let's put aside then all frivolous gallantries, so we shall have nothing to regret for our behavior. »

« Your reputation on playing the guitar has spread to me, » Kim said. « For a long time I have tried through mountains and waters, like Tchong Ky (64), to listen to the sounds of your guitar. »

« Oh ! My talent is of little account ! » Kiêu replied humbly. « Why speak of it ? But as this is an order from you, you will be obeyed. »

Just then they saw a round guitar hung on the wall at the end of the veranda. Kim hastened to take it down and presented it to Kiêu with a gracious and gallant gesture.

(64) A famous music connoisseur. He understood so well the music played by a famous guitarist named Bá-Nha that he could read his thoughts while the latter played the guitar.

*Nàng rằng : « Nghề mọn riêng tay,
« Làm chi cho bận lòng này lắm thân ? »
So dần dấy vũ, dấy văn,
Bốn dây to nhỏ theo vần cung, thương.
Khúc đầu Hán, Sở chiến trường,
Nghe ra tiếng sắt, tiếng vàng chen nhau.
Khúc đầu Tư-mã Phụng-cầu,
Nghe ra như oán, như sầu, phải chăng ?*

« I have learned this humble art just for myself. Why are you interested in such annoyance ? » Kiều said as she harmonized both major and minor chords one after another, then the four high and low chords, according to the Cung Thương scale (65).

Then she started playing « The Battle Field of the Han and the Tchou (66). » What a piece of music ! When listening to it, one would think there existed a mingling of sounds of iron and gold. Next was the « The Phoenix after His Jenny, » composed by Se-Ma. What would they think of this one ? Wasn't it a song of hatred and

(65) See footnote 7.

(66) This piece and those which will be mentioned in this book are ancient classical pieces of Chinese music.

*Kê-Khang này khúc Quảng-Lãng,
 Một rừng Lưu-thủy, hai rừng Hành-vân.
 Quát-quan này khúc Chiêu-quân,
 Nửa phần luyện chúa, nửa phần tư-gia.
 Trong như tiếng hạc bay qua,
 Đục như nước suối mới xa nửa vò ;
 Tiếng khoan như gió thoảng ngoài,
 Tiếng mau sầm-sập như trời đổ mưa.
 Ngọn đèn khi tỏ khi mờ,
 Khiến người ngồi đó cũng ngơ-ngẩn sầu.*

sorrow ? Here came another one, « The Glory of Imperial Tombs, » by Ki-Kang. One would think water was running and clouds were traveling through the flow of its notes. Finally was the piece « Tchao-Kium at the Frontier Gate, » sometimes praising the prince's love, sometimes depicting the regret of his relatives. The music seemed alternately pure like the cries of traveling cranes, and confusing like a forlorn noise from a spring flowing down into a waterfall. The andantes began as softly as a gentle breeze outdoors, then gave place to a rush of allegro notes that sounded like a shower.

Nearby, the lamplight, dimming and shining alternately, appeared to



Tiếng khoan như gió thoảng ngoài. . .

The andantes began as softly as a gentle breeze outdoors. . .

Khi tựa gối, khi cúi đầu,

Khi vò chín khúc, khi chau đôi mày,

Rằng : « Hay thì thật là hay,

« Nghe ra ngậm đắng, nuốt cay thế nào !

« So chi những bậc tiểu-tao,

« Dột lòng mình cũng nao-nao lòng người. »

Rằng : « Quen mất nét đi rồi,

« Tẻ vui, thôi cũng tính trời biết sao !

he plunging the listener into a deep sorrow. Leaning against the pillow, Kim bowed his head and frowned as though seized by a lot of trouble.

« What a talent ! » exclaimed the young man. « It is a high talent, indeed ! But what an impression of bitterness and sorrow your performance gave me when I listened to it ! Why did you choose such mournful pieces of music, which undoubtedly have crushed your heart and afflicted others. »

« I always give way to this lack of reserve, » replied Kiêu.
« Whether moodiness or gaiety, it is a heavenly endowment, and we

*« Lời vàng, vàng linh ý cao,
 « Hoa dần-dần bớt chút nào được không. »
 Hoa hương càng tỏ thức hồng,
 Đầu mày, cuối mắt, càng nồng tấm yêu.
 Sóng tình dường đã xiêu-xiêu,
 Xem trong âu-yếm, có chiều lả-lơi.
 Thưa rằng : « Đừng lấy làm chơi,
 « Dẽ cho thừa hết một lời đã nao !
 « Vẽ chi một đóa yếu đào.
 Vườn hồng, chi dám ngăn rào chim xanh.*

cannot change it. But I'll listen to your precious advice and follow your noble suggestions. Maybe, with this, shall I come little by little to lessen my faults. »

The flagrant flower grew rosier. The more they glanced at each other, the more inebriating was their love. When the passion assaults seemed to abate a little, Kiều realized that her sweetheart, in the effusion of his fondness, appeared to go a little far into familiarity.

« Don't give up yourself to this game ! » Kiều said deprecatingly
 « Please keep away from me, and let me have my say ! It is of little worth, a frail peach-flower. Who dares fence up a rosy garden from a

« *Đã cho vào bác bổ-kính,*
 « *Đạo tông phu, lấy chữ trinh làm đầu.*
 « *Ra tường trên Bộc, trong dâu,*
 « *Thì con người ấy ai cầu làm chi !*
 « *Phải điều ăn-xối ở thì,*
 « *Tiết trăm năm, nỡ bỏ đi một ngày !*
 « *Ngãm duyên kỳ-ngộ xưa nay,*
 « *Lúa đôi ai lại đẹp tày Thôi, Trương.*

blue bird (67) ? But that I shall be ranked among those who have the right to wear hemp trousers and thorn pins (68), as a faithful wife, I must remain virgin above all. Who would run after those women who were seen at their rendezvous with their men on the beach of the Pou river (69), under the mulberry-trees ? Are we made to live together as momentary lovers ? Shall I have, in one day, to sacrifice my whole life ? Of all accidental unions that have existed so far, what couple is more matched than Tsoui

(67) Kiêu compared herself to a garden which birds were free to enter to destroy its flower.

(68) In China, women of first rank were entitled to wear hemp trousers and thorn pins at the death of their parents-in-law.

(69) A river in Shantung often referred to in poetry books. Its beaches were used as a rendezvous place for young lovers of both sexes.

« Máy-mưa đánh đổ đá-vàng,
« Quà chiều nên đã chán-chường yến-anh.
« Trong khi chấp cánh, liền cành,
« Mà lòng rẻ-rúng đã dành một bên !
« Mái tấy để lạnh hương nguyên,
« Cho duyên đầm-thắm ra duyên bẽ-bàng.
« Gieo thoi, trước chẳng giữ-giàng,
« Để sau nên thẹn cùng chàng bởi ai ?

and Tchang (70) ? Their illegitimate loves broke their sacred oaths. Too obliging, the swallow had fatigued the oriole. While they were joined up like two love-birds and two intertwining-boughed trees, their hearts, in reality, had been already weary of each other. They let the incense of their oath cool down on the West side of the temple of Si-Chouang and transform their beautiful amatory novel, which was to end by a happy marriage, into a guilty liaison. Ah ! I would rather hurl the shuttle (71) than stay still without defense to be later ashamed before you. And then who

(70) The beautiful Tsoui gave herself to her sweetheart Tchang behind the pagoda of Si-Chouang. After this illegitimate intercourse, Tchang refused to marry her.

(71) Allusion was made to Sie Kouen, who, too desirous of courting closely a weaving girl, received a shuttle hurled full at his face by this latter.

*« Vội chi ép liễu hoa nài,
« Còn thân còn một đền-bồi có khi. »
Thấy lời đoan-chính dễ nghe,
Chàng càng thêm nể, thêm vì mười phần.*

would be at fault ? Why did you hasten to ravish the flower of the willow without its consent ? As long as I live, be sure that, one day, you will have what belongs to you. »

In listening to these virtuous and reasonable words, Kim felt more consideration and respect for the young girl.

VI

*Bóng tàu vừa lạt về ngân,
Tin đâu đã thấy cửa ngán gọi vào.
Nàng thì vội trở buồng thén,
Sinh thì dạo gót sân đào vội ra.
Cửa sài vừa ngỏ then hoa,
Gia-đồng vào gửi thư nhà mới sang.*

CHAPTER SIX

Kim's Departure

Outside, the shadow of the roof was turning pale in the silver moonlight. Suddenly, a call echoed in through the sliding door. Kiều hastened back to her gynaeceum while the young man stepped out into the flowery garden.

No sooner had he drawn the flowery bolt out of the wooden gate than

*Đem tin thúc-phụ từ-đường,
 Bơ-vơ lữ-thần tha-thương đẽ-huề.
 Liêu-dương cách trở sơn-khê,
 Xuân-đường kíp gọi Sinh về hộ tang.
 Mảng tin xiết nỗi kinh-hoàng,
 Băng mình lên trước đài-trang tự tình.
 Gót đầu mọi nỗi đình-ninh,
 Nỗi nhà tang-tóc, nỗi mình xa-xói :*

a young servant appeared and handed him a letter, announcing the death of one of his uncles. The dead's temporary coffin, the letter said, was on the way home, but it was still in Liaoyang (72), a faraway country beyond the yonder mountains and rivers. Kim was urgently called by his father to come and take part in the obsequies.

How to describe Kim's stupor at this bad news ? Secretly, he slipped to his love's apartment to announce to her his misfortune. He told her in detail what had happened, how his family was in mourning, and how far he would have to go shortly.

(72) A town in Manchuria, on the South of Moukden.

« Sự đâu chưa kịp đôi-hỏi,
 « Duyên đâu chưa kịp một lời trao tơ.
 « Trăng thề còn đó tro-trơ,
 « Dám xa-xối mặt, mà thừa-thót lòng.
 « Ngoài nghìn dặm chốc ba đông,
 « Mới sáu khi gỡ cho xong còn chầy !
 « Gìn vàng, giữ ngọc, cho hay,
 « Cho đành lòng kẻ chun mây, cuối trời. »
 Tai nghe ruột rối bời-bời,
 Ngáp-ngừng, nàng mới giải lời trước sau :

« This event came to me so unexpectedly, and gives us no time to get acquainted with each other, » complained Kim. « How grievous our love is ! We don't even have a little while to exchange our hymen words ! The moon that witnessed our oaths is still there, and I hope that, even out of sight, our hearts will remain united forever. Thousands of miles will separate me from you for three winters. How long will this parting be until the day I may unravel the knot of my sorrow ? Oh, my darling ! Take care of your precious gold and jade person so as to assure the heart of him who will be leaving as far as the feet of forlorn clouds, at the end of the sky ».

Kiều felt quite upset at these words. « Oh, Old Man with silk

« Ông tơ gàn-quải chi nhau,
 « Chưa vui sum-hợp đã sầu chia-phôi !
 « Cùng nhau trót đã nặng lời,
 « Dẫu thay mái tóc, dám rời lòng tơ !
 « Quân bao tháng đợi, năm chờ,
 « Nghĩ người ăn gió, nằm mưa, xót thắm.
 « Đã nguyện hai chữ đồng-tâm,
 « Trăm năm thề chẳng óm cầm thuyền ai.

threads (73)! » she said dolefully after a while of hesitation. « Why are you opposed to our union ? The joy of union has not filled our hearts, and already we have to suffer the sorrows of parting. Since serious oaths have been exchanged between us, time can change only the color of my hair, but not the steadiness of my heart. No matter how many months and years I must wait, my heart will follow you wherever you go. Oh, my dear ! I already suffer at the thought that you are going to be exposed to winds and rains. Since I have sworn my perpetual fidelity, I promise you not to play the guitar in another boat (74) for the rest of my life.

(73) See footnote 52

(74) This expression implies a woman, who, during her fiancé's absence, played the guitar to please another man in another boat.

*« Còn non, còn nước, còn dài,
« Còn về, còn nhớ đến người hôm nay.»
Dùng-dằng chưa nỡ rời tay,
Vàng đồng, trông đã đứng ngay mái nhà.
Ngại-ngùng một bước, một xa,
Một lời trân-trọng, châu sa mấy hàng.
Bước yén, quảy gánh, vội-vàng,
Mối sầu xẻ nửa, bước đường chia hai.*

As long as there exist mountains and rivers in this world, no matter how long your absence will be, I hope that you will come back and remember the person you have met today.»

They stayed there, hand in hand, as if afraid of deciding to part. Day was beginning to dawn, right on the other side of the roof. How difficult this hour of separation was! Kim-Trọng inched away, hesitating and reluctant to see the distance increasing between him and his love. She said her last solemn word of farewell and burst into tears.

Kim had his horse saddled, then left the spot in a hurry. The servant brought up the rear, the baggage rocking at both ends of a yoke laid on his shoulder.

From now on, the lovers went their separate ways and shared the

*Buồn trông phong cảnh quê người,
Đầu cành quén nhất, cuối trời nhận thừa.
Nào người cũ gió, tuần mưa,
Một ngày nặng gánh tương-tư một ngày.*

common sorrow. Kim sadly looked back at the scenery of this strange region. From the end of a branch rose the precipitating cries of a cuckoo. Straight ahead, a scattered flock of flying wild geese spotted the line of the horizon.

Far behind, Kiều lived gloomy hours, obsessed by the picture of her sweetheart who was going to face the inclemency of the seasons. Days succeeded days, and each day that went by seemed to aggravate her lovesickness.

VII

*Nàng còn đứng tựa hiên tây,
Chín hồi vẫn-vít như vầy mỗi tơ.
Trông chừng khói ngát song thưa,
Hoa trôi-giạt thắm, liễu xơ-xác vàng.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Sacrifice of Thúy-Kiều

Kiều was still standing there, leaning against the balustrade of the West veranda. The more she tried to unravel the entangled skeins of her thoughts, the deeper was her perplexity. Far yonder, the smoke of incense was seen curling out through the scattered bars of a window. Down below, a red flower was drifting along the waterway (75), under the shade of a yellow

(75) The author did not mention the exact location of the canal, but from the description, this waterway must flow not very far from the West part of Kiêu's house.

*Tần-ngần dạo gót lầu-trang,
 Một đoàn măng thọ ngoại-hương mới về.
 Hàn-huyền chưa kịp dãi-dề,
 Sai-nha bỗng thấy bốn bề xôn-xao :
 Người nách thước, kẻ tay đao,
 Đầu trấu, mặt ngựa, ào-ào như sóng,
 Già giang một lão một trai,
 Một dây vô-lại buộc hai thâm-tình.
 Đầy nhà vang tiếng ruồi xanh,
 Rụng-rời khung cửa, tan-tành gói may.*

willow stripped of its leaves. Kiều left the place and wearily dragged herself around her dressing room.

Suddenly her family appeared, back from the birthday party. Scarcely had they had time to pour out their sentiments before a group of sinister-looking satellites, armed with cudgels and daggers, swarmed in from four sides of the house. The room was soon filled with heated cries and vociferations. They seized the old man and his son, put pillories around their necks, and unjustly chained them together. The buzzing of green flies (76) rose from all parts. The rogues began to ransack the house,

(76) An expression used to imply dangerous persons.

Đờ tể-nhuyễn, của riêng tây,
 Sạch-sành-sanh vét cho đầy túi tham.
 Điều đâu ai buộc ai làm ?
 Nay ai đan đập, giắt gièm bồng dưng ?
 Hỏi ra sau mới biết rằng :
 Phải tên xưng-xuất tại thành bán tơ.
 Một nhà hoảng-hốt, ngẩn-ngơ,
 Tiếng oan dậy đất, án ngờ lòa máy.
 Hạ tù, van lạy suốt ngày,
 Điếc tai lân-tuất, phũ tay tời-tàn.

upsetting the weaving loom, and breaking the boxes of threads. Nothing of value was left : fine silks and familiar objects were seized and disappeared into their greedy pockets.

What had been happening ? Who could be the creator of this ? Who could have set this sudden trap ? Inquiries were made, and finally they were informed that all this calamity had come from a false denunciation of a silk tradesman. The whole family were quite frightened and upset by the event. This was, indeed, a shocking injustice and a slander to stir up the earth and to overcast the sky !

A full day of entreaties for mercy was wasted with no avail. The executioners turned a deaf ear to the victims' cries and pleas for pity. Their



Một dây vô-lại buộc hai thám-tình.
... and unjustly chained them together.

Giường cao rút ngược dây oan,
 Dẫu là đá cũng nát gan, lộ người !
 Mặt trông đau-đớn rung-rời,
 Oan này còn một kêu Trời, nhưng xa.
 Một ngày lạ thói sai-nha,
 Làm cho khốc-hại chẳng qua vì tiền.
 Sao cho cốt-nhục vẹn-tuyền,
 Trong khi ngộ biến từng quyền biết sao ?
 Duyên hội-ngộ, đức cù-lao,
 Bền tình, bền hiếu, bền nào nặng hơn ?

brutal hands continued to beat ruthlessly the old man hanged upside-down at the end of a rope attached over a beam of the roof.

Even a heartless stone would be shaken before such a scene. Pain and fear were read on the faces of the miserable ones. Should one make an appeal to the Sky ? But the Sky was too far to save them from this injustice. There was nothing to wonder concerning the proceedings of these satellites : they usually caused such irreparable disasters to secure money.

« How can I rescue the life of this person so dear to me ? » Kiêu murmured dolefully. « In such an unhappy circumstance, the better way is to yield to force. Otherwise, what is to be done, then ? Between a happy

Để lời thề hải minh sơn,
 Làm con, trước phải đền ơn sinh-thành.
 Quyết tình, nàng mới hạ tình :
 « Dẽ cho để thiếp bán mình chuộc cha ! »
 Họ Chung có kẻ lại già,
 Cũng trong nha-dịch, lại là từ-tám ;
 Thấy nàng hiếu trọng tình thâm,
 Vì nàng, nghĩ cũng thương thắm xót vầy.

hymen and the parents' nine labors (77), which one outweighs the other ?
 There is no alternative for me : I must put aside the solemn oaths exchanged
 before the ocean and the mountains, and pay my debt to my parents for what
 they have done for me. »

Making up her mind, Kiều rushed forward.

« Give way to your servant ! » she cried out. « I want to sell myself
 for the life of my father ! »

Standing nearby was an old clerk named Chung. Quite different
 from his fellow satellites, his good heart was deeply moved before such a
 filial devotion. Feeling a secret pity and a generous compassion for the

(77) It is by deference that we call labors what constitutes joy and pleasure
 of our parents. These nine labors consist of birth, nursing, caresses,
 weaning, feeding, education, supervision, care, and protection.

*Tính bài lót đó, lườn đây,
Có ba trăm lượng, việc này mới xuôi.
Hãy về tạm phó giam ngoài,
Dẫn nàng qui-liệu trong đôi ba ngày.
Thương lòng con trẻ thơ-ngáy,
Gặp cơn vạ gió, tai bay bất kỳ!
Đau lòng tử biệt sinh ly,
Thân còn chẳng tiếc, tiếc gì đến duyên!*

maiden, he meditated upon a safe course for her family.

« Well, » he said to himself, « to bribe and circumvent the authorities, I think three hundred taels are enough to come to a good arrangement. »

First of all, he used his own home as a temporary jail to confine the prisoner. Then, he came to meet Kiều, and advised her to try to settle the matter within two or three days.

Oh ! How pitiful this young and innocent child was ! Misfortune fell upon her head as surely as a squall of wind. The separation of living persons was as much painful as having a death in one's family. Since she had not a bit of regret for her own life, of what importance would love be to her ?

*Hạt mưa sá nghì phận hèn,
 Liệu đem tấc cỏ, quyết đền ba xuân.
 Sự lòng ngỏ với băng-nhân,
 Tin swong đồn-đại, xa gần xón-xao.
 Gần miền có một mụ nào,
 Đưa người viễn khách tìm vào vấn danh.
 Hỏi tên, rằng : « Mã-Giám-Sinh ; »
 Hỏi quê, rằng : « Huyện Lâm-Thanh cũng gần. »*

« My body is worth only a drop of water, and I must sacrifice my blade of grass to pay my debt to the three months of spring (78), »

Kiều said to herself as she set out to expose her scheme to a matchmaker.

The news spread like a mist and became the unique subject for gossip.

Soon came an old woman from a neighboring village, in company of a stranger, whom she introduced as desiring to make inquiries about Kiêu's name (79). In reply to a few questions, the matchmaker gave the information

(78) A metaphor borrowed from a classical Chinese poem. The blade of grass designates the heart of a young girl, offered in redemption of good deeds that another person performed for her sake — compared to the light of spring in the third month, which designates the parents.

(79) One of the six Chinese wedding ceremonies, consisting of entering in contact with the family of the girl offered in marriage, after preliminary negotiations engaged by the matchmaker.

*Quá niên trạc ngoại tứ tuần,
 Mày râu nhẵn-nhụi, áo quần bảnh-bao.
 Trước thầy, sau tớ xôn-xao,
 Nhà băng đưa mối, rước vào lầu trang.
 Ghế trên ngồi tót sỗ-sàng ;
 Buồng trong mới đã giục nàng kíp ra.
 Nỗi mình thêm tức nỗi nhà,
 Thềm hoa một bước, lệ hoa mấy hàng.*

that the man was called Mã-Giám-Sinh, and was born in Weihsien (80), a nearby district. The stranger appeared to be a little over forty years of age, well shaved and exquisitely dressed.

With his servants bringing up the rear noisily and the matchmaker leading the way, the pretender was ceremoniously showed to the gynaeceum. He chose an honor seat and sat down discourteously.

By that time, the matchmaker had already stolen into Kiều's room, and was urging her to go out. The wretched girl was overloaded with her own misfortune and the cruel event that had happened to her family. No sooner had she stepped out than her

(80) A sub-prefecture of Shantung, which was not so close to Kiều's region as assured by the matchmaker.

*Ngại-ngùng dín gió e sương,
 Ngùng hoa bóng thẹn, trông gương mặt dày.
 Mỗi càng vén tóc, bắt tay,
 Nét buồn như cúc, điệu gầy như mai.
 Đán-đo cân sắc, cân tài,
 Ép cung cầm nguyệt, thử bài quạt thơ.
 Mặn nồng một vẻ một ưa,
 Bằng lòng, khách mới tùy cơ dặt-dìu.*

tears dropped like falling flowers. She inched forward, hesitating like a weak and frail creature afraid of wind and dew. Kiều felt ashamed at the sight of the flowers and at the reflection of her face in the mirror. The more the matchmaker tried to stroke her hair and caress her hands, the gloomier she was. Her face looked like a mournful chrysanthemum, and her body seemed as thin as an apricot-tree.

They appraised and discussed her beauty and her talents. She was forced to play the guitar and write a versicle on a fan. Each of her gestures seemed full of charm.

« Here I am, at the Lam bridge for a jade (81), » the stranger started

(81) See footnote 40.

*Rằng: « Mua ngọc đến Lam-Kiều,
« Sinh-nghi, xin dạy bao nhiêu cho tường. »
Mối rằng: « Đáng giá nghìn vàng,
« Dóp nhà, nhờ lượng người thương dám nài ! »
Cờ-kè bớt một thêm hai,
Giờ lâu ngã giá vàng ngoài bốn trăm.
Một lời thuyên đã êm giã,
Hãy đưa canh-thiếp, trước cầm làm ghi.
Định ngày nạp thái vu-qui,
Tiền lưng đã có, việc gì chẳng xong !*

bargaining, satisfied with the maiden's performance. « Now as for wedding gifts, how much do I have to pay for her ? »

« She is worth a thousand taels in gold, » intervened the matchmaker, « but, in its misfortune, the family doesn't insist and relies upon your generosity. »

Long debates ensued concerning the merchandise. One tael was reduced to be increased by two. Finally, they were of one accord upon a price that slightly exceeded four hundred taels. A last word was given, and the bargaining ceased. Then, cards which bore the names and ages of the betrothed were exchanged as reciprocal pledges. They fixed the day for

*Một lời cậy với Chung-công,
 Khất-từ tạm lịnh Vương-ông về nhà.
 Thương tình con trẻ, cha già,
 Nhìn nàng, ông những máu sa, ruột dẫu.
 « Nuôi con những ước về sau,
 « Trao tơ phải lúa, gieo cần đáng nơi.
 « Trời làm chi cực bấy trời !
 « Nay ai vu thác, cho người hợp tan ?*

wedding gifts and that of wedding celebration (82).

With money on hand, what affair could not be settled ? They sent word to Mr. Chung for his help. The latter requested a temporary caution, then released Kiều's father.

How pitiful the fate of this young child and of her old father was ! Looking at his daughter, the old man felt most grievous, as though blood were flowing out of his heart and his bowels were withering.

« How many plans I had set for your future in bringing you up ! » he said dolefully. « I expected to give you in marriage to a good man, like a ball aimed at a right target. Oh ! Heaven ! Why have you afflicted us so cruelly ? Who

(82) This shows that Kiều was married in due forms, and not simply sold as a merchandise.

« Búa rìu bao quân thân tàn,
« Nỡ đày-đọa trẻ, càng oan-khốc già
« Một lần sau trước cũng là,
« Thôi thì mặt khuất, chẳng thà lòng đau ! »
Theo lời càng chảy dòng châu,
Liều mình, ông đã gieo đầu tường vôi.
Vội-vàng kẻ giữ, người coi,
Nhỏ to, nàng lại tìm lời khuyên can :

has cast his slander to break our union ? Let tortures and atrocities be inflicted on my exhausted life. Why do you expose my child to such a harrowing adventure ? Do you know that, by so doing, you would condemn me to a more mournful life ? Death comes to me today or tomorrow, it makes no difference. I would rather die than live in suffering ! »

An unceasing flow of tears accompanied his words. Suddenly, the old man stood up and, as though making a firm decision, leapt forward so as to drive his head against the whitewashed wall. But he was stopped in time by those who stood around, and kept under close watch.

« Về chi một mảnh hồng-nhan,
 « Tóc-tơ chưa chút đền ơn sinh-thành.
 « Dáng thư đã thẹn nàng Oanh,
 « Lại thua ả Lý bán mình hay sao ?
 « Cỗi xuân tuổi hạc càng cao,
 « Một cây gánh vác biết bao nhiêu cành.
 « Lòng tơ dầu chẳng dứt tình,
 « Gió mưa âu hắt tan-tành nước-non.

« My frail beauty is of little account, » whispered Kiều, trying to persuade her father. « Brought into the world and nurtured by you, I have done not the slightest thing to pay my debt to you. I feel ashamed when I think of the young Ti-Ying (83). Do I also have to yield to the beautiful Li-Ky who sold herself (84) ? Though burdened with age like a cedrella (85) and like a crane (86), you are the unique tree to carry innumerable branches (87). If my poor heart hesitated to break its

(83) Ti-Ying obtained grace for her father, condemned to castration, by presenting a petition to Emperor Ouen-Ti.

(84) Under the Tang dynasty, the beautiful Li-Ky sold herself as a slave so as to get money to feed her parents.

(85) The cedrella stands for longevity.

(86) The crane also symbolizes longevity.

(87) Here, Kiều meant that, though very old, her father was the unique person to support the overburdening family charges.

« Thà rằng liều một thân con,
« Hoa dầu rã cánh, lá còn xanh cây.
« Phận sao đành vậy cũng vầy,
« Cầm như chẳng đổi những ngày còn xanh.
« Cũng đành tính quẩn, lo quanh,
« Tan nhà là một, thiệt mình là hai. »
Phải lời ông cũng ém tai,
Nhìn nhau giọt ngấn, giọt dài gối-ngang.

dearest links, we all should be destroyed like mountains and rivers burst upon by raging storms and winds. So, I prefer to sacrifice my person to save the family. One falling flower is no great matter providing that the tree can remain green with its foliage. I submit to the fate that is reserved for me, and I feel it all right for me. Please take it for granted as though I could not survive when I was still a child ! Don't give yourself too much trouble for nothing. It might ruin this dear home and endanger your own life. »

The old man seemed convinced by this comforting reasoning. They looked at each other, and tears continued to flow down their cheeks.

Mái ngoài họ Mã vừa sang,
Tờ hoa đã ký, cán vàng mới trao.
Trăng già độc-địa làm sao !
Cầm dây chẳng lựa, bước vào tự-nhiên !
Trong tay đã sẵn đồng tiền,
Dầu lòng đổi trắng, thay đen, khó gì,
Họ Chung ra sức giúp vì !
Lễ tâm đã đặt, tụng kỳ cũng xong.
Việc nhà đã tạm thông-dong,
Tình-kỳ giục-giã đã mong độ về.

But here Mã-Giám-Sinh was, appearing again in the front room. The promised sum changed hands immediately after the signing of the wedding agreement. Cruel Old Man of the Moon (88)! Why do you link the threads together at random without selecting them? Now, changing white into black was no longer difficult when one had enough money on hand. Mr. Chung did his best to help them: he took the gift, and declared the lawsuit cancelled.

The family affairs were thus settled for the time being. Shortly

(88) See footnote 49.

Một mình nàng, ngon đèn khuya,
 Áo đầm giọt lệ, tóc se mái sầu.
 « Phấn dầu, dầu vẩy cũng dầu,
 « Xót lòng đeo-đẳng bấy lâu một lời !
 « Công-trình kẻ biết mấy mươi,
 « Vì ta khăng-khít cho người dở-dang.
 « Thề hoa chưa ráo chén vàng,
 « Lỗi thề, thôi đã phũ-phàng với hoa !

after came the period of the three stars (89), announcing the bride's departure.

Lonesome beside a late lamp, Kiều was dampening her dress with tears and twisting her hair sorrowfully. « Thus is my fate, » she murmured. « Whatever it may be, I must accept it as it is reserved for me. But how much I suffer when I think of the exchanged oath that has been kept so long in my heart ! So many pains to come to such a meeting, and now he has no issue because of my fault ! The oath of wine has not yet dried in the gold cup, and already I have perjured and broken my love.

(89) The three stars of Orion are well known as favorable to wedding celebration when they appear in the sky.

*« Trời Liêu non nước bao xa,
 « Nghĩ đâu rẽ cửa, chia nhà tự tôi !
 « Biết bao duyên-nợ thề-bời,
 « Kiếp này thôi thế thì thôi còn gì ?
 « Tái-sinh chưa đốt hương thề,
 « Làm thân trâu ngựa đền nghì trúc mai.
 « Nợ tình chưa trả cho ai,
 « Khỏi tình mang xuống tuyền-đài chưa tan ! »*

How far is it from here to Liaoyang (90), across mountains and rivers ? Ah ! Think that I myself have destroyed my own home ! So many debts have been created by our oaths ! This life is finished for me, and my hopes are gone forever ! Oh, my love ! Later, should I have a chance to come back to this world to keep the incense of our oaths from dying out, I would change into a buffalo or a horse to serve you and to pay you my debt for your love and friendship. As long as I shall not have paid this debt, the burden of my love will never be relieved even in the Palace of Springs (91). »

(90) Name of the province where Kim-Trọng went to take part in his uncle's obsequies.

(91) The Next World.

*Nỗi riêng, riêng những bàn-hoàn,
 Dầu chong trắng đĩa, lệ tràn thấm khăn.
 Thúy-Vân chợt tỉnh giấc xuân,
 Dưới đèn ghé đến ân-cần hỏi-han :
 « Cơ trời dẫu bể đã đoan,
 « Một nhà để chị riêng oan một mình.
 « Có gì ngồi nhẩn tàn canh,
 « Nỗi riêng còn mắc với tình chi đây ? »
 Rằng : « Lòng đương thốn-thức đầy,
 « Tơ-đuyến còn vương mối này chưa xong.*

Kiều was obsessed by her intimate thoughts. Oil began to dry up in the disk, and her handkerchief was thoroughly soaked with her tears.

Thúy-Vân suddenly woke up from her virginal sleep. Guided by the lamplight, she silently stole close to her sister.

« How mysterious the caprice of nature is in the change of seas into fields of mulberries, » Vân addressed her with solicitude. « For the whole family, you have to suffer alone! But, why have you been sitting so late, my dear sister? Do you have any particular sentimental trouble ? »

« My heart is overflowed with sorrow, » Kiêu said dolefully.

« *Hở mối ra cũng thẹn-thùng,*
 « *Để lòng thì phụ tấm lòng với ai!*
 « *Cây em, em có chịu lời,*
 « *Ngồi lên cho chị lạy rồi sẽ thưa.*
 « *Giữa đường đứt gánh tương-tư,*
 « *Giao loan chấp mối tơ thừa mặc em.*
 « *Kể từ khi gặp chàng Kim,*
 « *Khi ngày quạt ước, khi đêm chén thề.*

« I still have to unravel the last knot of my entangled hymen thread. I feel ashamed to tell you my secret. But keeping it to myself would mean betraying another person. I would ask you to do me a favor. If you agree to it, please sit down so that I may prostrate myself before you before I tell you the object of my request (92). »

« I have a love engagement, » Kiều continued ; « it is now broken in the midst of its way. Please try to use the phoenix glue (93) to stick the two ends of the remaining silk thread together ! Since I met the gentleman Kim, one day, I gave him my fan as a pledge of our engagement. And

(92) A Chinese etiquette that precedes a solemn act, a confession, etc.

(93) The phoenix glue appeared to have the efficacy of sticking two ends of silk thread together. In this text, the silk thread means the rosy hymen thread.

« Sự đầu sóng gió bất kỳ,
 « Hiếu tình có lẽ hai bề vẹn hai ?
 « Ngày xuân em hãy còn dài,
 « Xót tình máu-mủ, thay lời nước non.
 « Chì dầu thịt nát xương mòn,
 « Ngậm cười chín suối hãy còn thơm lây.
 « Chiếc vành với bức tờ mây,
 « Duyên này thì giữ, vật này của chung.

one night, we drank together in the same oath cup. But since this eventual misfortune falls upon me like billows and winds, how may I find an issue to satisfy my filial devotion and my love ? My young sister ! Long spring days are destined for you ! Have pity for me who am of the same blood as yours ! Replace me in the realization of the oaths I made before mountains and rivers ! So, when I become but dead flesh and bone dust, my soul, enjoying a part of the honor of what you are going to do for me, will ever be happy by the Nine Springs (94). Take these bracelets and this paper that bear our oaths ! Keep my marriage vow, and may these pledges be your common property !

(94) The Next World.

« Dầu em nên vợ, nên chồng,
 « Xót người mệnh bạc, át lòng chẳng quên.
 « Mất người còn chút của tin,
 « Phím đàn với mảnh hương nguyên ngày xưa..
 « Mai sau, dầu có bao giờ,
 « Đốt lò hương ấy, so tơ phím này ;
 « Trông ra ngon cỏ lá cây,
 « Thấy hiu-hiu gió thì hay chị về.
 « Hồn còn mang nặng lời thề,
 « Nát thân bồ- liễu, đền nghì trúc-mai.

« My young sister, ~~when~~ you are united with your husband, you
 will have pity for me, and you will remember me, won't you ? When
 I am no more in this world, preserve these small pledges, these guitar
 frets, and the rest of incense of our former oaths. Later, whenever you
 happen to burn this incense or stretch chords over these frets, take a look
 at grass and leaves outside. If they move in the breeze, it means
 that your sister is there.

« My soul still carries the heavy weight of my oaths. I'll sacrifice

* Dạ-đài cách mặt khuất lời,
 « Rảy xin chén nước cho người thác oan.
 « Bây giờ trám gầy, gương tan,
 « Kẽ làm sao xiết muôn vàn ái-ân !
 « Trăm nghìn gửi lại tình quân !
 « Tơ-duyên ngắn-ngủi có ngần ấy thôi.
 « Phận sao phận bạc như vôi ?
 « Đã đành nước chảy, hoa trôi lỡ-làng.

my frail body to pay for his love and friendship. When I am exiled to the Night Palace (95), when we cannot meet and exchange our words, please pour a cup of water (96) on the ground for her who has to die unjustly. Now, since the hairpin has broken and the mirror has been shattered, how can I depict all the sweet and amorous feelings that I have about him ? I want to prostrate myself one hundred thousand times before the lord of my heart ! The thread of our love is not allowed to extend longer Oh, my fate ! Why is it so cruel ? My life becomes a drifting flower in a current

(95) An abode for dead.

(96) A ritual libation before a prayer, an invocation. In this text, Kiều, by modesty, asked for the humblest of offerings.

*« Ôi Kim-lang ! Hỡi Kim-lang !
 « Thôi thôi ! thiếp đã phụ chàng từ đây ! »
 Cạn lời, hồn ngất máu say,
 Một hơi lặng-ngất, đôi tay lạnh đồng.
 Xuân, huyên chợt tỉnh giấc nồng,
 Một nhà tấp-nập, kẻ trong người ngoài.
 Kẻ thang, người thuốc bời-bời,
 Mới giàu cơn vụng, chưa phai giọt hồng.
 Hỡi : « Sao ra sự lạ-lùng ? »
 Kiêu càng nức-nở, mở không ra lời.*

from now on. Oh, Kim, my love ! All is finished, well finished ! I shall have betrayed you from this day ! »

Words choked in her throat, and giddiness took hold of her. Her breath failed, and she collapsed unconscious ; both of her hands seemed as cold as copper.

Right then her parents suddenly awoke from their heavy sleep. The room soon swarmed with people. In and out they bustled, one carrying a decoction, the other a medicine. What a hubbub ! The attack was soon over, but tears continued to flow down the rosy cheeks. On being asked about such a strange faint, Kiêu sobbed with renewed ardor, unable to utter a word.

Nỗi nàng, Vân mới rí tai:

« *Chiếc vành này với tờ-bồi ở đây. . .* »

— « *Này cha làm lỗi duyên may,*

« *Thôi thì nỗi ấy sau này đã em!*

« *Vì ai rụng cây, rơi kim.*

« *Để con bèo nổi, máy chìm vì ai?*

« *Lời con dặn lại một hai,*

« *Dẫu mòn bia đá, dăm sai tắc vàng!* »

Vân then showed them the bracelets and the sheet of paper.

« Here are the bracelets. . . and this paper. . . » she whispered to their ears.

« So, it is your father who has broken your union! » said the old man. « Well, your younger sister will be there to replace you ! Who has separated the black-mustard-seed from the amber (97) ? Who has caused the needle to fall ? Who is at fault for leaving the duckweed to float downstream and the cloud to sink (98) ? My dear daughter, all the pressing words that you have repeated to me will be

(97) A symbol of union: the seed of black mustard adheres to the electrified amber stick like the iron does to the magnet.

(98) This sentence means, « Who is at fault for separating two creatures who met so miraculously ? »

Lay thôi, nàng lại rón chiềng :
« Nhờ cha trả được nghĩa chàng cho xuôi.
« Sá chi thân-phận tôi-đòi,
« Dẫu rằng xương trắng quẻ người, quân đầu ! »
Xiết bao kẻ nổi thâm sầu !
Khắc canh đã giục nam-lâu mấy hồi.
Kiều hoa đầu đã đến ngoài,
Quân huyền đầu đã giục người sinh ly.

carried out. The steles can be worn out, but I'll never fail to comply with the wishes of your golden heart ! »

Kiều humbly approached her father and prostrated herself before him.

« My dear father, » she said, « thanks to you, I shall be able to pay my debt to the man I love. No matter how lowly the fate of this servant will be, I won't mind even if I shall have to leave my bones to whiten in a foreign country. »

How could one depict all the sorrows of this maiden ? A rushing roll of drum sounds echoed from the South watchtower, announcing the end of the watch.

Outside, a flowery palanquin, coming from nowhere, stopped right in front of the house. Sounds of violins and flutes rose as though urging

Đau lòng kẻ ở, người đi,
 Lệ rơi thấm đá, tơ chia rũ tằm.
 Trời hôm, mây kéo tối rằm,
 Dầu-dầu ngon cỏ, đầm-đầm cảnh sương.
 Rước nàng về đến trú-phường,
 Bốn bề xuân tỏa, một nàng ở trong.
 Ngập-ngừng then lục, e hồng,
 Nghi lòng, lại xót-xa lòng đôi phen.

separation. How could one depict the grief of those who stayed behind and those who were leaving? Stones were soaked with their tears, and pain broke their hearts like exhausted worms emptied of their silk (99).

By the end of the day, defiling heavy clouds covered the sky completely, spreading their dark mantle over the earth. The grass displayed its withering points, which shivered gloomily under damp boughs of trees.

The bride's procession arrived finally at a tavern. She was left there, forlorn within four walls of spring, ashamed of her green innocence, and anxious concerning her beauty. The more Kiều retraced the phases of her love, the more painful was her suffering.

(99) A realistic image, corresponding to the expression, « So painful as if one's bowels were torn away. »

« *Phẩm tiền rơi đến tay hèn,*
 « *Hoài công nắng giữ, mưa gùn với ai !*
 « *Biết thân đến bước lạc-loài,*
 « *Nhị đào thà bẻ cho người tình-chung !*
 « *Vì ai ngăn đón gió đông,*
 « *Thiệt lòng khi ở, đau lòng khi đi.*
 « *Trùng-phùng dầu họa có khi,*
 « *Thân này thôi có còn gì mà mong !*

« I thought that my person was worthy of an immortal life, »
 she murmured dolefully, « and here I am, in the hands of a villain.
 How useless all my pains were in keeping my body intact from the
 sun and rain for him ! I would rather have offered the pistil of my
 peach-flower to my sweetheart had I known that I should come to
 this downfall. Ah ! Who has kept both of us from enjoying the West
 wind (100) ? Departing is painful, but staying behind would be of
 equal sorrow to me (101) ! If ever I had a chance to meet him some
 day, my body would have been stained, and there would be nothing left

(100) In Extreme Orient, the West wind brings salutary freshness from the Ocean. In this text, this expression means happiness.

(101) « My departure will separate me from my true-love, but if I stayed behind, my father would be put in jail again. »

« Đã sinh ra số long-đong,
« Còn mang lấy kiếp má hồng được sao ? »
Trên yên sẵn có con dao,
Giấu cầm nàng đã gói vào chéo khăn.
« Phòng khi nước đã đến chân,
« Dao này thì liếu với thân sau này. »
Đêm thu, một khắc một chày,
Bóng-khuáng như tỉnh, như say một mình.
Chẳng ngờ gã Mã-Giám-Sinh,
Vẫn là một đứa phong-tình đã quen.

to hope for. Destined for an uncertain life, how could I continue to live a pure life of a rosy-cheeked girl ? »

Her glance caught at random a knife lying on the desk. She furtively took it and rolled it up in a corner of her scarf.

« This knife, » Kiều said to herself, « might be of good use in settling my fate in case of dishonor. »

The night lagged along and time continued to run by. Kiều was still sitting on her bed, deeply absorbed in her thoughts, as though plunged into a state of half-consciousness.

Who was Mã-Giám-Sinh, in reality ? This man to whom she was

*Quá chơi lại gặp hồi đen,
 Quen mời lại kiếm ăn miền nguyệt-hoa.
 Lầu xanh có mụ Tú-Bà,
 Làng chơi đã trở về già hết duyên.
 Tình-cờ chẳng hẹn mà nên,
 Mạt-cưa, mướp đắng, đôi bên một phùng.
 Chung lưng mở một ngôi hàng,
 Quanh năm buôn phấn bán hương đã lành.*

married was but a depraved wretch. Leading a rollicking life, he had been once in bad trouble. So, to get out of this bad situation, he had resorted to one of his old procedures : running after riches in gallant surroundings. Among this world of green houses (102) lived an old woman named Tú-Bà. Having formerly led a very gay life, she was now burdened with age and had lost all her charm. They got acquainted with each other by chance without premeditation. What a couple ! A sawdust and a bitter gourd (103), to be put in the same basket ! They became partners and cooperated in opening a kind of odd shop. What they traded the

(102) A consecrated locution used to designate houses of pleasure, undoubtedly because of the colors of their woodwork.

(103) Allusion made to an anecdote about two rogues. One sold sawdust instead of bran to the other ; and the latter, as a set-off, sold bitter gourds instead of cucumbers to his fellow. Soon these two rogues became partners when they found that they were of the same candle.

Đạo tìm khắp chợ thì quê,
 Giả danh hầu-hạ, dạy nghề ăn chơi.
 Rủi may, ầu cũng sự trời,
 Đoạn-trường lại chọn mặt người vô-duyên.
 Xót nàng chút phận thuyền-quyên,
 Cảnh hoa đem bán vào thuyền lái buôn.
 Mẹo lừa đã mắc vào khuôn,
 Sinh-nghi rẻ giá, ngính-hón sẵn ngày.

year around consisted only of made-up and perfumed women. Towns and countries were marked by their travels, in search of young girls, whom they pretended to take into their service, but in reality, to be trained to lead a life of prostitution.

Whether good or bad luck, alas ! It is an affair of Providence ! Calamity decreed that their choice fall upon this unlucky girl. How pitiful this young innocent and ill-fated girl was ! How could this flowery branch foresee that she had been sold to a group of traffickers ? Through ruse and delusion, she was now caught in the trap : with a few trivial wedding gifts, the procession had succeeded in bringing the maiden to them on a fixed day.

Mằng thắm cờ đã đến tay,
Càng nhìn vẻ ngọc, càng say khúc vàng,
« Đã nên quốc-sắc, thiên-hương,
« Một cười này, hắt nghìn vàng chẳng ngoa !
« Về đây, nước trước bẻ hoa,
« Vương-tôn, quý-khách, át là đua nhau.
« Hắt ba trăm lạng kém đâu,
« Cũng đà vừa vốn, còn sau là lời. »
Miếng ngon kè đến tận nơi,
Vốn nhà cũng tiếc, của trời cũng tham:

Mã-Giám-Sinh inwardly enjoyed seeing the flag fall into his hands. The more he looked at her, the more trouble filled his inebriated heart.

« She is really of queenly beauty, » he said to himself. « A smile of hers is worth truly a thousand gold taels ! Here she is, in my house. The first thing to do is to pick this flower. I am sure that princes and noble customers will contend for this girl. They shall pay at least three hundred taels. This will be enough to redeem the stake I have been playing. The following receipts will be all profit ! »

He felt too tempted by this choice piece, which was now within his range. But what would become of the interests of the house once this windfall lost its purity ?

« Đào tiên đã bẻ tay phàm,
 « Thì vịn cành quít cho cam sự đời.
 « Dưới trần mấy mặt làng chơi,
 « Chơi hoa, đã dễ mấy người biết hoa !
 « Nước vô lựu, máu mào gà,
 « Mượn màu chiếu-tập lại là còn nguyên.

« When an immortal's peach (104) is exposed within the reach of a profane person,» Mã continued to sketch his plan, « why not bend down the branch for this sweet thing? In this low world, among revelers and would-be amateurs, how many are real judges of flowers? With a little juice from the peel of a pomegranate and a few drops of blood from a cock's comb (105), and with a little makeup

(104) A kind of peach grown by immortals, which legends depict to be of a big size and a nice, rosy color. It was told that any profane person who had the chance of eating one might become an immortal. The Chinese thought that these peaches could be found in an abode of immortals located on a high mountain in North China, viz. , the mount Thiên-sơn. One can reach this mountain by walking through the Thiên-Thai grotto, where a legend told that two scholars named Lư and Nguyễn had come once to meet the fairies of their hearts.

In Vietnam, some Vietnamese also believe in the existence of a grotto of immortals in the district of Tòng-Sơn, province of Thanh-Hóa.

(105) This strange pharmacopoeia, for external use, is regarded as having a color that gives to deflowered girls an appearance of virginity.

« Mập-mò đánh lặn con đen,
 « Bao nhiêu cũng bấy nhiêu tiền, mất chi ?
 « Mụ già hoặc có điều gì,
 « Liều công mất một buổi quì mà thôi.
 « Vả đây đường xá xa-xôi,
 « Mà ta bất động, nửa người sinh nghi. »
 Tiếc thay một đóa trà-mi !
 Con ong đã mở đường đi lối về.
 Một cơn mưa gió nặng-nề,
 Thương gì đến ngọc, tiếc gì đến hương.

and art, a girl can be put back again in good condition. In semi-darkness, the greenhorns can easily be deceived. So many times, so much money, nothing is lost ! If the hag happens to suspect something, well, a few hours of penitence will settle the matter. Besides, being quite far from home, if I continue to stay inactive, they may conceive a suspicion about this abnormal thing. »

Ah ! Poor flower of camellia ! Here the bee came, and to and fro he opened his way. . . What a squall of rain and wind ! No regard was given

Đêm xuân một giấc mơ-màng,
 Đuốc hoa để đó, mặc nàng nằm trơ.
 Giọt riêng tầm-tã tuôn mưa,
 Phần cảm nỗi khách, phần dơ nỗi mình.
 « Tưởng chi là giống hoi-tanh !
 « Thân nghìn vàng để ó danh má hồng !
 « Thôi còn chi nữa mà mong,
 « Đời người thôi thế' là xong một đời ! »
 Giận duyên, tủi phận, bời-bời,
 Cắm dao, nàng đã toan bài quyền-sinh.

to her frail jade, no pity was had for this light perfume ! How to describe that night full of nightmares ?

The light of the flowery torches left in the room shone over the girl, abandoned and forlorn in the bed. Bitter tears flowed down endlessly, imbued of hatred for that stranger, and full of shame for her stained body.

« What a repugnant scene ! » Kiều complained dolefully. « This body, which was a thousand times purer than gold, is now stained forever along with the honor of a rosy-cheeked maiden. All is finished now ! Nothing is left to hope for ! When a human life comes to such a downfall, it would be better to put an end to it. »

Cursing her destiny, lamenting over her fate, she drew the knife out

Nghĩ đi, nghĩ lại một mình :
« Một mình thì chớ, hai tình thì sao ? »
« Sau dầu sinh sự thế nào,
« Truy nguyên chẳng kéo lụy vào song-thần.
« Nỗi mình âu cũng giãn dần.
« Kịp chầy thôi cũng một lần mà thôi ! »
Những là đo-đán ngược xuôi,
Tiếng gà nghe đã gáy sới mái tường.
Lầu mai vừa rúc còi sương,
Mã-Sinh giục-giã vội-vàng ra đi.

of the scarf, and prepared to put an end to her days. « This could be done if I were alone, » a flow of thoughts overwhelmed her. « But what will become of my parents ? If something happened to break out, on investigations, surely one would not fail to cast trouble upon them. Since this concerns only my person, I must behave more reasonably and take less severity toward myself. Right now or later, this must happen one day ! »

She kept on weighing her arguments, but did not know which way to turn. Outside, cocks' crows rose so sonorously that they seemed to come through the roof and walls. A horn blast from a watchtower was still echoing in the morning mist when Mã-Giám-Sinh's voice rose outside, urging the departure.

*Đoạn-trường thay lúc phân kỳ.
Vó câu khắp-khến, bánh xe gáp-ghềnh.
Bề ngoài mười dặm tràng-đình,
Vương-ông mở tiệc tiễn-hành đưa theo.
Ngoài thì chủ khách dập-dìu,
Một nhà-huýen với một Kiều ở trong.
Nhìn càng lã-chã giọt hồng,
Rỉ tai, nàng mới giải lòng thấp cao :
« Hổ sinh ra phận thơ-đào,
« Công cha, nghĩa mẹ kiếp nào trả xong?*

Kiều left the place, gloomily. The horses' hocks hobbled slightly while the wheels of the coach spun on the uneven road. After ten miles of riding, they arrived at a second halting-place. At Mr. Vương's order, a ritual farewell party was organized in honor of the bride.

While hosts and guests were bustling outside, Mrs. Vương followed her daughter into her room. No sooner were they face to face than rosy tears flowed down their cheeks as if mixed with blood.

« Oh, my dear Mother ! I feel ashamed of being born into this life of a frail peach-tree, » Kiêu whispered to her mother, confidentially. « I don't know whether, in my future existence, I may

« *Lỡ-làng nước đục, bụi trong,*
 « *Trăm năm để một tấm lòng từ đáy-*
 « *Xem gương trong bấy nhiều ngày,*
 « *Thán con chẳng kéo mắc tay bợn già :*
 « *Khi về, bỏ vắng trong nhà,*
 « *Khi vào đôi-đóa, khi ra vội-vàng.*
 « *Khi ăn, khi nói lỡ-làng,*
 « *Khi thấy, khi tỏ, xem thường, xem khinh.*

pay my debt for what you and Father have done for me ! This wedding is a mere deception. My purity has been thrown into dirty water. From now on, must I live one more hundred years, I will ever keep this poignant remorse in the bottom of my heart.

« From what has happened these few days, I am sure, Mother, that I have fallen into the hands of an old rogue. On the very day of our first union, he left me alone in a deserted house. When he entered my room, he seemed to have a constrained air ; and when he left, he did it as if he ran away from me. He has been very clumsy during meals and talks. I have noticed no respect on the part of the servants for their master, and they even seemed

« Khác màu kẻ quý, người thanh,
« Ngắm ra cho kỹ, như hình con bướm.
« Thôi con, còn nói chi con,
« Sống nhờ đất khách, thác chôn quê người ! »
Vương-bà nghe bấy nhiều lời,
Tiếng oan đã muốn vạch trời kêu lên.
Vài tuần chưa cạn chén khuyên,
Mái ngoài, nghỉ đã giục liền ruổi xe.

to despise him. His manners appeared quite different from those of distinguished and noble men. Please watch him more closely, and you will see. He has all the appearance of an adventurer. All is finished for your daughter, and there will be nothing else to tell about her from now on ! Alive, a foreign land will be her home, and dead, it will be her tomb. »

Listening to all these words, Mrs. Vương wanted to cry out and tear down the sky for justice.

Many a time the farewell cup had changed hands, and many a time they tried to empty it with no avail. Outside, Mã-Giám-Sinh's voice rose again, urging the coach to get ready for departure.

Xót con lòng nặng chề-chề,
Trước yén ông đã nần-nì thấp cao :
« Chút thân yếu liễu, thơ đào,
« Dóp nhà đến nỗi giấn vào tôi người.
« Từ đây góc bể, chân trời,
« Nắng mưa thui-thủi, què người một thân.
« Nghìn tầm nhờ bóng tùng quán,
« Tuyết sương che-chở cho thân cát-đàng. »

Deeply depressed with pity for his daughter, Mr. Vương approached Mã's saddle. « Please have pity for this frail willow and tender peach ! » said the poor father entreatingly. « Because of an unexpected calamity that has fallen upon my family, she is now brought down to servitude. From this minute, I don't know how far she is going away from me, and for which corner of the ocean and endless horizon she will be bound. Whatever it may be, rainy or sunny, she will be living forlorn in a strange country ! Oh, please protect her under the generous shade of your bamboo and pine (106) and safeguard the body of this frail mistletoe from snow and dew ! »

(106) These two trees, with their evergreen foliage, stand for men old in age but still young and strong in appearance. Most old persons are very pleased when they are compared to these trees. Mr. Vương thus recommended his daughter to Mã-Giám-Sinh, about whom he was less informed than his wife.

Cạn lời khách mới thưa rằng :
« Buộc chân, thôi cũng xích-thằng nhiệm trao.
« Mai sau dầu đến thế nào,
« Kìa gương như nguyệt, nọ dao qui thần ! »
Đùng-đùng gió giục, máy vùn,
Một xe trong cõi hồng-trần như bay.
Trống vời, gạt lệ, phân tay,
Góc trời thăm-thẳm, ngày ngày dăm-dăm.

« Our feet have been linked with each other by red hymen threads, »
replied Mā-Giám-Sinh. « Later, if whatever happens to her by my fault,
may the mirrors of the sun and of the moon reflect the picture of my
indignity, and the infernal blade be the instrument of castigation ! »

The coach got under way, then, with a deafening noise, rattled
along the road. It soon disappeared behind a whirlpool of rosy dust,
as though a squall were blowing through a rolling cloud.

The poor parents were still standing at the parting place, trying
to dry up their farewell tears.

Days followed other days, and there was no day that they did
not turn their eyes in the direction of the lost and remote horizon.

VIII

*Nàng thì dặm khách xa-xăm,
Bạc phau cầu giá, đen rằm ngàn mây.
Vi-lô san-sát hơi may,
Một trời thu để riêng ai một người.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

Exile

Far, far away she was going, across hoar-frost covered bridges, and toward an unknown land. In front of her, clouds expanded like an enormous darkish veil as far as the horizon. Reeds bent their heads, forming an even wave at each dry and cold North wind. All the autumn sky seemed to be putting on a gloomy coat as if to share the bride's sorrow. The night fell upon the path of travel,

*Dặm khuya ngất tạnh mù khơi,
 Thấy trăng mà thẹn những lời non sông.
 Rừng thu từng biếc chen hồng,
 Nghe chim như nhắc tấm lòng thần-hôn.
 Những là lạ nước, lạ non,
 Lâm-Chuy vừa một tháng tròn tới nơi.
 Xe châu dừng bánh cửa ngoài,
 Rèm trong đã thấy một người bước ra.*

dispersing the mass of thick haze. Above, the firmament appeared so high that it seemed to have no horizon. Kiều felt ashamed at the sight of the moon, a witness of the oaths that she had exchanged with her true-love before mountains and rivers. Moving rosy spots mingled with the blue green of the foliage of the autumn forest. Voices of nocturnal birds rose in the night as though reminding her of her duties that she had been failing to perform day and night toward her parents.

How strange the scenery appeared to her eyes along the road ! The procession finally arrived in Ihsien (107) after a full month of travel. No.

(107) A city in Shantung. Though it will be mentioned in this story as located near the coast, as a matter of fact, it is situated at least one hundred kilometers from the coast. Maybe the alluvia of the Yellow River (Hwang Ho) have modified the coast since the episode of the Ming.

*Thoạt trông lờn-lợt màu da,
Ấn gì cao lớn, đầy-đà làm sao ?
Trước xe lờ-lã han chào,
Vàng lờ, nàng mới bước vào tận nơi.
Bén thì mấy ả mày ngài,
Bén thì ngồi bốn năm người làng chơi.
Giữa thì hương lửa hân-hoi,
Trên treo một tượng trắng đôi lông mày.
Lầu xanh quen thói xưa nay,
Nghề này thì lấy ông này tiên-sư.*

sooner had the pearl coach stopped in front of the door of a house than she saw a person step out from behind a blind. It was an old woman, a pallid-faced creature whom everyone could make out at first sight. But what a woman ! What had she eaten to be so burly and so heavy ? She came near the coach, familiarly welcomed the newcomer, and inquired about her health. Then, at her invitation, Kiều stepped into the house.

The room was crowded with people. On one side were several girls with finely trimmed brows ; on the other sat four or five playboys. In the middle a dozen incense sticks were burning. Above, hanging on the wall was a picture of a white-browed genie. For centuries this genie

*Hương hoa hôm sớm phụng-thờ,
Cô nào xấu vía, có thừa mỗi hàng.
Cổ xiêm, lột áo chần-chường,
Trước thần, sê nguyên mảnh hương lăm-rằm.
Đổi hoa lót xuống chiếu nằm,
Bướm ong bay lại ăm-ăm tí vi.
Kiều còn ngơ-ngẩn biết gì,
Cứ lời lay xuống, mụ thì khấn ngay :*

had been treated as the big boss by the green houses. Twice a day, morning and evening, they offered flowers and incense to him as a token of their worship. If bad luck fell upon a girl, well, she would have no chance to get a good clientele. Quickly, to make up for her loss, she came before the genie, immodestly stripped herself of her skirt and her chemise, burned a little incense, and murmured a prayer, imploring her god to come to her help. Then, she changed the flowers on the altar, took away the old ones, and laid them beneath the mat of her bed. All of this was done with the hope that luck would come back and that the revelers from all parts would swarm in for her like bees and butterflies.

Kiều was still quite confused, not knowing what to say, when the old woman bade her to kneel down and prostrate herself before the altar.

« Cửa hàng buôn bán cho may,
 « Đêm-đêm hàn-thực, ngày-ngày nguyên-tiểu.
 « Muốn nghìn người thấy cũng yêu,
 « Xôn-xao anh-yến, dập-dìu trúc-mai.
 « Tin nhận vẫn lá thư bài,
 « Đưa người cửa trước, rước người cửa sau! »

« May the affairs of the house become more and more prosperous! » the old woman murmured a prayer. « May every night be as happy as the festival day of cold meal! May every day bring into our house as many people as on the fifteenth day of the first moon (108)! May all the thousands and thousands of persons, who will come here to see you, become enamoured of you! May orioles and swallows swarm into this house and attach themselves to you like bamboos and apricot-trees (109)! May wild geese carry to you an endless flow of letters! May you have the chance to accompany

(108) In China, they celebrated every year a cold meal on the third day of the third moon. The second festival was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the first moon. Both festivals were always crowded with people.

(109) The bamboo and the apricot-tree are small trees, which Chinese painters like to paint together in their pictures. These trees stand for good friendship.

*Lạ tai, nghe chưa biết đâu,
 Xem tình ra cũng những màu dờ-dang.
 Lễ xong hương-hỏa gia-đường,
 Tú-Bà vắt-nóc lên giường ngồi ngay.
 Dạy rằng : « Con lạy mẹ đây,
 « Lạy rồi sang lạy cậu mày bên kia. »
 Nàng rằng : « Phải bước lưu-ly,
 « Phận hèn vâng đã cam bẻ tiểu-tinh.*

satisfied customers to the front door only to welcome new ones coming in by the rear entrance ! »

How odd these prayers sounded to her ears ! Kiều understood not a bit of their meaning, but it seemed to her that there existed some unexplainable thing.

After making another prostration before the ancestors' altar, the old woman — who called herself Tú-Bà — climbed onto a divan and sat down unceremoniously.

« My daughter, » she ordered, « come here and prostrate yourself before your mother ! Then, go to the next room to pay your respects to your uncle ! »

« Separated from my family by an unexpected disaster, » objected Kiều, « I have already submitted to the rank of a concubine.

« Điều đầu lấy yến làm anh,
 « Ngây-thơ chẳng biết là danh-phận gì ?
 « Đủ điều nạp-thái vu-qui ;
 « Đã khi chung-chạ, lại khi đứng ngồi.
 « Giờ ra thay bậc, đổi ngôi,
 « Dám xin gửi lại một lời cho mình. »
 Mụ nghe nàng nói hay tình,
 Bấy giờ mới nổi tam bành mụ lên :

But why did you give the oriole the name of the swallow (110)? I am young and naïve, and don't know what fate and name you are giving me. All necessary ceremonies such as delivery of gifts, nuptial procession were well celebrated as they must be done. Besides, we have lived maritally, in intimacy as well as in other circumstances. And now I see that you are trying to modify my role and my rank. I take the liberty to ask you for a word to clear up this affair. »

At these words, the termagant understood what had happened. « Ah !

(110) « But, why this confusion of titles and roles ? »

« *Này này sự đã quả-nhiên,*
 « *Thôi đã cướp sống chồng mình đi rồi !*
 « *Bảo rằng : Đi dạo lấy người,*
 « *Đem về rước khách kiếm lời mà ăn.*
 « *Tuồng vớ-ngheĩa, ở bất nhân,*
 « *Buồn mình trước đã tằn-mần thử chơi.*
 « *Màu hồ đã mất đi rồi,*
 « *Thôi thôi vốn liếng đi đời nhà ma !*
 « *Con kia đã bán cho ta,*
 « *Nhập gia phải cứ phép nhà tao đây.*

The affair is clear now ! » She boomed into a rush of fury. « So, you have stolen my husband from me ! That rascal ! I told him to make a tour of the country in search of girls for the house, for the customers, for money ! That ungrateful and heartless scoundrel ! Oh ! How pitiful I am ! The villain has yielded to temptation and has profited from this piece of good luck ! Now, that the layer of varnish has been taken off, what will become of the capital ? Gone, I am sure, it is gone with the devil ! As for you, little scamp ! You are sold to me, and since you belong now to this house, you must submit to its rules. When the old rogue tried to

« *Lão kia có giờ bài-báy,*
« *Chẳng vãng vào mặt mà mày lại nghe ?*
« *Cớ sao chịu tốt một bề,*
« *Gái tơ mà đã ngựa nghề sớm sao !*
« *Phải làm cho biết phép tao ! »*
Cháp bì-tiến, rắp sẵn vào ra tay.
Nàng rằng, « Trời thăm đất dày !
« Thân này đã bỏ những ngày ra đi !
« Thôi thì thôi có tiếc gì ! »
Sẵn dao tay áo, tức thì giờ ra.

humbug you, why didn't you tell this to his face instead of listening to him ? Why did you offer no resistance ? So young in age, and you already long for this kind of vice ? Wait and see what I can do to put you under my law ! »

Sooner said than done, the vicious hag rushed for a leather whip, and got ready to lash at the weak girl.

« Oh, profound skies ! Oh, vast earth ! » lamented Kiều. « I have sacrificed this poor body since the day of my departure. All is finished, quite finished ! What should I have to regret ? »

*Sợ gan, nát ngọc liều hoa,
 Mụ còn trông mặt, nàng đã quá tay.
 Thương ôi, tài sắc bậc này,
 Một dao oan-nghiệt, đứt dây phong-trần!
 Nỗi oan võ-lỡ xa gần,
 Trong nhà người chết một lần như ném.
 Nàng thì bần-bất giốc tiền,
 Mụ thì cầm-cấp, mặt nhìn hồn bay.*

She took out the knife which she had always kept in her sleeve. All were afraid that she dared not make an attempt on her own precious life. But scarcely had the old woman looked at the girl's face before the latter's hand made a deadly movement. Oh ! How pitiful this beautiful and peerlessly talented girl was ! The cruel knife had cut off the bond which linked her with this dusty and windy world !

The news of this unjust treatment spread so fast throughout the region that the house soon swarmed with curious people. The young girl laid there, on the floor, lifeless as if plunging into an eternal dream. Nearby was the old hag, shivering with fear, fixing upon her victim such ghastly eyes that one thought she herself was ready to give up the ghost.

Vực nàng vào chốn hiên táy,
 Cát người coi-sóc, rước thầy thuốc men.
 Nào hay chưa hết trần-duyên,
 Trong mê đường đã đứng bên một nàng.
 Rì ràng : « Nhân-quả dờ-dang,
 « Đã toan trốn nợ đoạn-tràng được sao !
 « Số còn nặng nghiệp má-đào,
 « Người dầu muốn quyết, trời nào đã cho ?
 « Hãy xin hết kiếp liên-bồ,
 « Sông Tiền-đường sẽ hẹn-hò về sau. »

Old Tú-Bà had the wounded girl carried into a room located on the West side of the house. Then, she appointed a watcher to tend her, and sent for a medicine practitioner.

Who could believe that Kiều was still attached to this dusty world ? In her torpor, she seemed to see a young woman standing near her bed.

« Your karma has not been over, » whispered the stranger. « How can you escape from your suffering debt ? As a girl with peachy cheeks, you still have to carry the burden of your destiny. Even if you wanted to put an end to this, Heaven would not consent to it. Try to get out

*Thuốc-thang suốt một ngày thâu,
 Giấc mê nghe đã giầu-giầu vờ tan.
 Tú-Bà chực sẵn bên màn,
 Lựa lời khuyên-giải mơn-man gỡ dần :
 « Một người dễ có mấy thân !
 « Hoa xuân đương nhụy, ngày xuân còn dài.
 « Cũng là lỡ một lần hai,
 « Đá vàng sao nỡ ép-nài mây-mưa !*

of this life of a frail reed and willow (111). I'll come and meet you at the Chientang river later (112). »

After a full day of medical care, Kiều seemed to slowly recover consciousness. Beside her mosquito-net was old Tú-Bà, continuing her long watch.

« How pleasant our life would be if we had many existences ! » said the big woman, trying to settle the matter with her sweet and comforting words. « Your vernal flower is blooming, and long spring days are still ahead for you. I committed an error and a foolishness in forcing your golden

(111) Here, the young stranger wanted to persuade Kieu to submit and get over her present weak physical state.

(112) A river in the province of Chekiang. This river disembogues into the far end of the Gulf of Hangchow.

*« Lỡ chun trót đã vào đây,
 « Khóa buồng xuân, để đợi ngày đào non.
 « Người còn thì của hãy còn,
 « Tìm nơi xứng-đáng là con cái nhà.
 « Làm chi tội báo oan-gia,
 « Thiệt mình mà hại đến ta hay gì ? »
 Kề tai mấy nỗi nằn-nì,
 Nàng nghe dường cũng thị-phi rạch-ròi.
 Vả trong thần-mộng mấy lời,
 Túc-nhân âu cũng có trời ở trong.*

virtue to frivolous loves. But, since a wrong road has led you into this house, well, confine yourself in your spring room, and wait until someone comes to solicit your hand in marriage. As long as you are alive, you will lose nothing that belongs to you. I shall look for a very suitable match, a young man from a good family for you. Why try to drop injustice upon innocent people ? In injuring yourself, why did you want to ruin me, too ? »

Kiều seemed to discern truth from falsehood, and to be convinced by the old woman's insisting words that she was whispering into her ears. Besides, according to the words addressed

*Kiếp này nợ trả chưa xong,
Làm chi thêm một nợ chồng kiếp sau ?
Lặng nghe thấm-thía gót đầu,
Thưa rằng : « Ai có muốn đầu thế này.
« Được như lời thế là may,
« Hẳn rằng mai có như vậy cho chăng ?
« Sợ khi ong bướm đãi-đàng,
« Đến điều sống đục, sao bằng thác trong ! »*

her in one of her recent dreams, undoubtedly there must be a hand of Heaven in human destiny. « Well, » the young girl said to herself, « I cannot settle my debt in my present life, why accumulate and put it off for a next existence ? »

She silently listened to the burly woman's alluring speech, which began to take effect.

« Who wanted this be so ? » replied Kiều weakly. « It will be good luck for me if I may obtain what you have just promised. But, what you said today, will you repeat it on the morrow ? I am afraid that the bees and the butterflies will persist in making love to me ; in such a situation, I prefer dying pure to living a muddy life. »

Mẹ rằng: « Con hãy thông-dong,
 « Phải điều lòng lại đối lòng mà chơi!
 « Mai sau ở chẳng như lời,
 « Trên đầu có bóng mặt trời rặng soi. »
 Thấy lời quyết-đoán hăn-hoi,
 Đành lòng, nàng cũng sẽ nguôi-nguôi dần.
 Trước lầu Ngưng-bích khóa xuân,
 Về non xa, tấm trắng gần ở chung,
 Bốn bề bát-ngát xa trông,
 Cát vàng cồn nọ, bụi hồng dặm kia.

« My child, » said the old woman, « take it easy ! I don't seek to betray you for my pleasure ! It ever my act perjures my words, may the sun, which shines over our heads, judge this grave transgression ! »

At these definitive and solemn words, Kiều resigned herself, and calmed down by degrees.

A wing of the house, marked with the inscription « Condensed Azure, » served as the sanctuary of her spring. In front of it was a fringe of remote mountains, melting in the beams of the neighboring early rising moon. Around spread the vast horizon. Far away were the sand-hills mingling their yellow color with the rosy dust of surrounding roads.

*Bẽ-bàng mây sớm đèn khuya,
Nửa tình, nửa cảnh, như chia tấm lòng.
Trông người dưới nguyệt chén đồng,
Tin sương luống những rày trông mai chờ.
Bên trời góc bể bơ-vơ,
Tấm son gột rửa bao giờ cho phai ?
Xót người tựa cửa hôm mai,
Quạt nồng ấp lạnh, những ai đó giờ ?*

As at the sight of morning clouds, Kiều felt ashamed to be in the light of the lamp. The scenery which was unrolling before her eyes seemed to recall to her the old souvenirs still carved in her heart. Not long ago, her true-love was still beside her, in the moonlight, drinking with her out of the same oat cup. And now he was so isolated, so forlorn in a faraway corner of the ocean and under an unknown sky. Maybe he had been waiting with no avail for the dew to carry happy news from her ! Oh, when could she clean her pure and innocent heart of all this blemish ? And how pitiful her parents were ! Maybe, in this hour, they were waiting for her, on the threshold of the front door, as they had done every morning and evening. Who would take care of fanning them in summer and

*Sán Lai cách mấy nắng mưa ?
 Có khi gốc tử đã vừa người ôm.
 Buồn trông cửa bể chiều hôm,
 Thuyền ai thấp-thoáng cánh buồm xa-xa ?
 Buồn trông ngọn nước mới sa,
 Hoa trôi man-mác biết là về đâu ?
 Buồn trông nội cỏ dàu-dầu,
 Chân mây mặt đất một màu xanh-xanh.*

keeping them warm in winter (113)? Oh, Courtyard of Lai (114)!
 How far did rains and the sun separate you from the exile? Maybe, in
 this hour, the trunk of the old catalpa could have increased in size, large
 enough for an armful. . .

Kiều mournfully looked at the seaport plunged in the dim light of
 dusk. Far off, someone's sail seemed to be dancing vaguely on smooth
 waves. The gloomy foaming billows appeared before her eyes as if covered
 with drifting flowers bound for an unknown horizon. Fields of withered

(113) In China and Vietnam, of old, to keep the parents warm in winter,
 good children often covered themselves with their parents' blankets
 so as to give them a comfortable heat before their parents went
 to bed.

(114) A wise man, named Lai-Kai, still had his parents alive when he was
 70 years old. He always dressed like a child so as to give his
 parents the impression that they were still young.



Buồn trông cửa bể chiều hôm.

Kiều mournfully looked at the seaport plunged in the dim light of dusk.

*Buồn trông gió cuốn mặt duềnh.
Om-sòm tiếng sóng kêu quanh ghế ngồi.
Chung-quanh những nước non ngời,
Đau lòng lưu-lạc nên vài bốn câu.*

grass spread sadly up yonder. Land and horizon mixed with each other, forming a bluish color. Sorrow invaded her heart as winds lashed against the bay. The flat noise of waves echoed endlessly all about. Feeling so forlorn among these unknown waters and mountains, Kiều improvised a few versicles about the suffering of her exile.

IX

*Ngậm-ngùi rủ bức rèm châu,
Cách tường, nghe có tiếng đẩu họa vờn.
Một chàng vừa trạc thanh-xuân,
Hình-dung chải-chuốt, áo khăn dịu-dàng.
Nghĩ rằng cũng mạch thư-hương,
Hỏi ra mới biết rằng chàng Sở-Khanh.*

CHAPTER NINE

Sở-Khanh

Deeply affected, Kiều was going to drop the pearl curtain when an unknown voice rose from the other side of the partition, reciting a poem composed of the same rhymes.

Through an opening, Kiều saw a young man in the prime of spring, dandyish, and harmoniously dressed. « This man must come from a literary family, » Kiều thought. She inquired about his name, and one replied

*Bóng Nga thấp-thoáng dưới màn,
Trống nàng, chàng cũng ra tình đéo-đai.
« Than ôi ! sắc nước hương trời !
« Tiếc cho đầu bóng lạc-loài đến đây !
« Giá đành trong nguyệt trên mây,
« Hoa sao, hoa khéo đọa-đày bấy hoa ?
« Nỗi gan riêng giận trời già,
« Lòng này ai tỏ cho ta, hỡi lòng ?
« Thuyền-quyển ví biết anh-hùng,
« Ra tay tháo cũi, sổ lồng, như chơi ! »*

that he was called Sở-Khanh. The stranger seemed to fall in love with the young girl immediately after he caught a glimpse of her silhouette through the curtain.

« Why, how could such a queenly beauty, such a heavenly perfume be lost in this place ? » he exclaimed, aloud. « How regretful it is, indeed ! This treasure should be enthroned on the moon or on a cloud instead ! Poor flower ! How could you come to such a downfall ? I already feel angry at the injustice of the Old God. Who could help you understand me and the inmost sentiments in my heart ? Oh graceful one ! Oh pure one ! If you knew my bravery, I would break down the bars and get you out of your cage easily. »

*Song thu đã khép cánh ngoài,
Tai còn đồng-vọng mấy lời sắt-đan.
Nghĩ người thôi lại nghĩ mình,
Cảm lòng chua-xót, lạt tình chơ-vơ.
Nhưng là lẫn-lữa nắng mưa,
Kiếp phong-trần biết bao giờ là thôi ?
Đánh liều nhả một hai lời,
Nhờ tay tế-độ vớt người trầm-luân.
Mảnh-tiền kẻ hết xa gần,
Nỗi nhà báo-đáp, nỗi thân lạc-loài.*

Kiều had already closed the outer shutters of the gloomy door, but the echo of the firm promises still rang into her ears. She thought of the stranger, then of herself. His words of compassion seemed to go deep into her heart and made her less forlorn.

« If I continue to wait from one day to another, » Kiêu said to herself, « when does my life in this dusty and windy world come to an end ? »

Making up her mind, she took the risk and wrote a few lines to the young man, imploring him to stretch his generous hands to rescue her out of this hopeless situation. She included in the paper everything that had happened to her, from her act of gratitude

*Tan sương vừa rạng ngày mai,
 Tiễn-hồng nàng mới nhận lời gửi sang.
 Trời tây lãng-đăng bóng vàng,
 Phục-thư đã thấy tin chàng đến nơi.
 Mở xem một bức tiên-mai,
 Rành-rành « Tịch Việt » có hai chữ đề.
 Lấy trong ý-tức mà suy :
 « Ngày hai-mươi-một, tuất thì phải chăng ? »*

toward her parents to her sad adventure in this house of shame.

The next day, as soon as the last haze was dispersed and day was beginning to dawn, she had a messenger deliver the letter to her gallant knight.

The West horizon was still colored with yellow beams when the man's answer came in. She opened the letter and found two words « Tịch » and « Việt » (115) clearly written on a page adorned with an apricot-flower. Kiều pondered over, and succeeded in deciphering these secret words, which meant, « I'll come and meet you on the twenty-first, from

(115) The Chinese characters « Tịch » and « Việt, » after an analysis of their elements, reveal this meaning : « Twenty-first day, at Tuat hour (from 19:00 to 21:00 o'clock). » This riddle constituted a message written in cipher.

*Chim hóm thoi-thót về rừng,
Đóa trà-mi đã ngậm trăng nửa vành.
Tường đông lay động bóng cành,
Rẽ song, đã thấy Sở-Khanh lên vào.
Sượng-sùng đánh dạn ra chào,
Lay thối, nàng mới rí trao án-cần.
Rằng : « Tôi bèo-bọt chút thân,
« Lạc đàn mang lấy nợ-nần yến-anh.*

19:00 to 21:00 o'clock. »

The evening birds, one by one, started flying back to the woods. The late moon had appeared, half-concealing itself behind a bunch of camellia-flowers. Suddenly, the branch shadows on the West wall danced slightly. Kiều opened her window and saw Sở-Khanh stealing upstairs in silence. Quite confused, but screwing up her courage, she went out to greet him.

« I am but a humble duckweed or a light foam, » Kiều clasped her hands and whispered. « I live here like a lost bird among orioles

« *Dám nhờ cốt-nhục tử sinh,*
« *Còn nhiều kết-cỏ ngậm vành về sau !* »

and swallows (116). Alive, I entrust you with my flesh, and dead, I entrust you with my bones. I promise to become later a tussock of woven grass (117) and a bird carrier of bracelets (118) to mark my gratitude. »

(116) That means, « I am here like a lost bird among this surrounding of frivolity and debauchery. »

(117) Under the Tang dynasty, a man named *Nguy-Thu*, at the point of death, did not want his young and beautiful concubine to outlive him. As his last will, he ordered his son named *Khoa* to bury alive this woman along with his corpse in the same coffin. *Nguy-Khoa* did not carry out this paternal order, which seemed too barbarous to him. This benevolent act, performed against the last will of a father, met its reward later. In a fight with a warrior named *Đỗ-Hợi*, *Khoa* suddenly found that his adversary was caught in a tussock of grass. He profited from this opportunity and killed his foe. The father of his father's concubine appeared later in one of his dreams to reveal to him that he had entangled the tussock of grass intentionally to put *Đỗ-Hợi* at his mercy.

(118) Under the Han dynasty, one day, a man named *Dương-Bao* witnessed an unequal fight between a little yellow sparrow and a sparrow-hawk. The little sparrow was wounded and fell on the ground. He picked him up, tended him, then released him. This charitable action toward a bird was rewarded later. One day, a yellow-clad boy appeared before him, gave him four gold bracelets, and assured him that these jewels would bring happiness to him and to his future lineage. He became, in effect, very famous later.

Lặng ngồi lẩm-nhẩm gât đầu :

« Ta đây phải mượn ai đâu mà rằng !

« Nàng đã biết đến ta chẳng,

« Bể trăm-luán, lấp cho bằng mới thôi ! »

Nàng rằng : « Muốn sự ơn người,

« Thế nào xin quyết một bài cho xong. »-

Rằng : « Ta có ngựa truy-phong,

« Có tên dưới trướng, vốn dòng kiện-nhi.

« Thừa cơ lên bước ra đi,

« Ba-mươi-sáu chước, chước gì là hơn ? »

« Here I am, » Sỡ-Khanh nodded and said, after a while sitting in silence. « You have found a right man for you. Since you have addressed yourself to me, even if I had to fill up the ocean in which you are drowning, I would do it to save you. »

« Thousands of solutions depend upon your generosity, » replied Kiêu. « Please make a definite decision, no matter what it may be, in order to come to a solution. »

« I own a very fast steed, » said Sỡ-Khanh, « and a sturdy servant under my command. Let's avail ourselves of this opportunity and leave this place secretly. Of the thirty-six possible means of escape, which is

« Dẫu khi gió kếp, mưa đơn,
« Có ta đây cũng chẳng can-cớ gì ! »
Nghe lời, nàng đã sinh nghi,
Song đà quá đỗi, quản gì được thân.
Cũng liều nhắm mắt đưa chân,
Mà xem con Tào xoay-vặn đến đâu !
Cùng nhau lên bước xuống lầu,
Song-song ngựa trước, ngựa sau một đoàn.
Đêm thu khắc-lặn canh tàn,
Gió cây trút lá, trăng ngàn ngậm sương.

better than this one ? Whatever happens, whether a broken wind or a simple rain, I shall be there and you will have nothing to fear. »

At these words, Kiều felt a shadow of suspicion. She then realized that she had gone a little too far into this engagement. But what did her life matter to her ? Why not take a risk in this adventure to see how far fickle Fate would guide her destiny ?

Together, they stole down the staircase, got onto the saddle, and rode away, one after the other.

The autumn night lagged along. Drops of dew fell down regularly like water dripping from a water-clock. Watch time was on the wane.

*Lối mòn cỏ lợt mùi sương,
Lòng quê đi một bước đường, một đau-
Tiếng gà xao-xác gáy mau,
Tiếng người đầu đã mái sau đây-dàng-
Nàng càng thốn-thức gan vàng,
Sở-Khanh đã rẽ dây cương lối nào!
Một mình khôn biết làm sao,
Dậm rìng bước thấp, bước cao hỡi-hùng-*

Yellow leaves showered down at every gust of wind. Behind a chain of mountains, the setting moon was trying to hide its mirror. On the beaten path, the grass seemed discolored under a layer of dew. Homesickness overwhelmed the wretched girl more and more deeply as she continued to ride on the road.

Suddenly, precipitating cocks' crows echoed all about, and an uproar of human voices rose from behind the escaping girl. Her heart throbbed with fear. She turned around for her champion, but Sở-Khanh had vanished somewhere along with his horse. Quite confused, Kiều sat petrified on the saddle of her hobbling horse, lonesome in the

*Hóa-nhi thật có nữ lòng,
 Làm chi dày tía, vò hồng, lấm nau!
 Một đoàn đồ đến trước sau,
 Vuốt đầu xuống đất, cánh đầu lên trời?
 Tú-bà tốc thẳng đến nơi,
 Hăm-hăm áp điệu một hơi lại nhà.
 Hung-hăng chẳng hỏi, chẳng tra,
 Đang tay vùi liễu, giáp hoa tươi-bời.
 Thịt da ai cũng là người,
 Lòng nào hồng rụng, thắm rời, chẳng đau!*

heart of the woods. Oh ! How pitiless you are, Creator ! Why stamp on this rosy and purple flower which had already had much pain in her heart ?

As if to answer her fears, a group of men and women rushed out from both sides of the road. Where to find claws for her to dig into the ground, or wings to fly up in the sky ? Here old Tú-Bà came, darting straight in her direction. Puffing and blowing, she seized the girl and dragged her back home all in a breath. No questions, no investigation ! Her brutal hands beat ruthlessly on the frail willow and lamentable flower. What human being made of skin and of flesh, what heart did not suffer at the sight of so much brutality inflicted on such a rosy and splendid creature ?

*Hết lời thú-phục, khẩn-cầu,
Uốn lưng thịt đổ, giáp đầu máu sa.
Rằng : « Tôi chút phận đàn-bà,
« Nước non lìa cửa, lìa nhà, đến đây.
« Bảy giờ sống thác ở tay,
« Thân này đã đến thế này thì thôi !
« Nhưng tôi có sá chi tôi,
« Phận tôi đành vậy, vốn người để đáu ?
« Thân lươn bao quản lấm đầu,
« Chút lòng trinh-bạch từ sau cũng chừa ! »*

Confession followed words of submission and entreaties. Finally, exhausted, the poor girl collapsed, bumping her bloody head against the floor.

« I am only an unfortunate woman, » moaned Kiều. « Mountains and rivers have separated me from my home and family. And here I am, with my whole life in your hands. How could I anticipate that my body would come to this condition ? All is finished ! As for me, I am of little account, now. This fate is reserved for me, and I resign myself to it ! But, what about your capital ? As an eel, I am not afraid of dirtying my head in creeping in the mire ; henceforth, I promise to rid myself of my poor scruples of chastity. »

*Được lời mụ mới tùy cơ,
Bắt người bảo-linh làm tờ cung-chiến.
Bày vai có ở Mã-Kiều,
Xót nàng, ra mới đánh liều chịu đoan.
Mụ càng kể nhứt, kể khoan,
Gạn-gùng đến mực, nồng-nàn mới tha.
Vực nàng vào nghỉ trong nhà,
Mã-Kiều lại ngỏ ý ra dặn lời :*

The old panderess availed herself of these words. She required a third person to go bail for Kiêu, and made out a written engagement. Among Kiêu's mates in misery there existed a girl named Mã-Kiều. The latter, feeling a deep pity for the ill-fated girl, took the risk of serving herself as a caution for her friend. The cruel woman went on grumbling, sometimes severely, occasionally sweetly, trying to lay down the narrowest conditions ; then finally, she pardoned her victim only after a final warm speech.

Kiêu was carried into an inner room where she was allowed to enjoy a short rest.

« *Thôi đà mắc lận thì thôi!*
 « *Đi đâu chẳng biết con người Sở-Khanh?*
 « *Bạc-tình nổi tiếng lâu xanh,*
 « *Một tay chôn giết mấy cảnh phù-dung!*
 « *Đà-đao lập sẵn chước dùng,*
 « *Lạ gì một cốt, một đồng xưa nay!*
 « *Có ba-mươi lạng trao tay,*
 « *Không dưng chi có truyện này, trò kia!*
 « *Rời ra trở mặt tức thì,*
 « *Bớt lời, liến chó tráy chi mà đời!* »

« You have let yourself be taken in stupidly, » Mā-Kiều told her confidentially. « Nothing can be redeemed now ! Where did you come from to ignore that fellow Sở-Khanh, an unfaithful lover notorious in this world of green houses ? How many ephemeral flowers like you have been buried by him ! This feint, well, is one of his ready skills in fencing. Little wonder that the witch and the medium have been working hand in glove with each other ! The scoundrel got thirty taels from the old hag, otherwise he would not have played this comedy. No wonder he backed out of his promises immediately after giving them. Keep your tongue, and for your life, don't do imprudent things ! »

Nàng rằng: « Thề-thốt nặng lời,
 « Có đầu mà lại ra người hiểm-sâu ! »
 Còn đương suy trước, nghĩ sau,
 Mặt mẹ đã thấy ở đầu dẫn vào.
 Sờ-Khanh lên tiếng rêu-rao :
 « Nọ nghe rằng có con nào ở đấy.
 « Phao cho quuyến gió rủ mây,
 « Hãy xem có biết mặt này là ai ? »

« He did, however, make serious oaths ! » replied Kiều. « How could I think that he was so dangerous a fellow ? »

Kiều was still pondering over what had happened when there appeared a face on an areca-spathe (119), the well-known face of Sờ-Khanh.

« What's the matter ? » the latter raised his voice. « I am informed that among you there is a bitch who said to everyone that I have beguiled her. Let her come here and look at this face of mine to see who I am ! »

(119) The areca-spathe, when well dried, has the form of a large and rigid leaf. It is used to wrap and to cover articles of food which one wants to preserve from dust and flies. This is also a consecrated expression used to designate an impudent person whose face seems as if protected by an areca-spathe.

Nàng rằng: « *Thôi thế thì thôi!*
« *Rằng không thì cũng vâng lời là không!* »
Sở-Khanh quát mắng ùng-ùng,
Bước vào vừa rập thị hùng ra tay.
Nàng rằng: « *Trời nhé có hay!*
« *Quyến anh, rủ yến, sự này tại ai?*
« *Đem người giấy xuống giếng thôi,*
« *Nói rồi, rồi lại ăn lời được ngay!*
« *Còn tiền ‘Tích Việt’ ở tay,*
« *Rõ-ràng mặt ấy, mặt này chứ ai?* »

« All right, Sir! All right! » Kiêu said. « You say that you have done nothing wrong to me, well, I obey your orders and also agree that you have done nothing wrong to me! »

Fuming and storming, Sở-Khanh took a step forward and raised his hand as if to commit some violence.

« Oh, just Heaven! » Kiêu cried out. « You have known it! Who has seduced the oriole and induced the swallow to run away? Who has dashed me down into this chasm? Now he dares come here to deny what he said. I still keep the letter with the characters ‘Tích’ and ‘Việt’ on it. It is this face, this filthy face of yours, and of no one else! »

*Lời ngay, đồng mặt trong ngoài,
Kẻ chê bất nghĩa, người cười vô-lương!
Phụ tình án đã rõ-ràng,
Dư tưởng, nghi mới kiểm đường tháo lui.*

The sincerity of her words affected greatly the persons remaining in the place. One branded Sở-Khanh with perfidiousness, the other laughed at his treachery. The verdict was thus clearly returned against this unfaithful hypocrite. Unable to conceal his shame, he hastened to beat a retreat.

X

*Buồng riếng, riếng những sọt-sùi,
Nghĩ thân mà lại ngậm-ngùi cho thân.
Tiếc thay trong giá trắng ngần!
Đến phong-trần cũng phong-trần như ai.
« Tẻ vui cũng một kiếp người,
« Hồng-nhan phải giống ở đời mai ru!*

CHAPTER TEN

Downfall

Confined in her room, Kiều let bitter tears share her meditations. The more she thought of herself, the more grievously she suffered. What a pity for such a girl purer than snow, and whiter than silver ! Here she was now, in this windy and dusty world, undergoing the same misfortunes of life as those which had fallen upon others.

« Whatever sorrow or gaiety may be, » Kiều murmured, thoughtfully « it is but life. Furthermore, the life of a beautiful woman does not last

*« Kiếp xưa đã vụng đường tu,
 « Kiếp này chẳng khéo đền bù mới xuôi!
 « Dầu sao bình đã vỡ rồi,
 « Lấy thân mà trả nợ đời cho xong!»
 Vừa thàn nguyệt sáng, gương trong,
 Tú-Bà ghé lại thông-dong dăn-dò :
 « Nghề chơi cũng lắm công-phu,
 « Làng chơi ta phải biết cho đủ điều.»
 Nàng rằng : « Mưa gió dập-dìu,
 Liều thân thì cũng phải liều thế thôi ! »*

forever ! Since I was awkward in perfecting one of my previous existences, now, I cannot escape from redeeming what I failed to perform. The vase has been broken, and whatever I do cannot repair it ! May my body finish paying then the debt for this existence ! »

Soon came the period of the bright moon and of its limpid mirror. Old Tú-Bà dropped in to see her.

« The art of entertaining people, » she advised her sweetly, « is a difficult one ! In this world of pleasure, we must know it thoroughly. »

« Rains and winds have overwhelmed my life, » replied Kiêu.
 « I have already sacrificed my body, and I don't want to go farther ! »

Mẹ rằng : « Ai cũng như ai,
 « Người ta ai mất tiền hoài đến đây ?
 « Ở trong còn lắm điều hay.
 « Nỗi đêm khếp mở, nỗi ngày riêng chung.
 « Ngày con thuộc lấy làm lòng,
 « Vành ngoài bảy chữ, vành trong tám nghề.
 « Chơi cho liễn chán, hoa chê,
 « Cho lẫn-lóc đá, cho mê-mẩn đời,

« My daughter, » retorted the old panderess, « all men are alike ! Do you think they would come here for nothing ? In this profession, there still exist many other amusing things : games of hide-and-seek by night, intimacy or gay company by day. Listen to this, my daughter, and keep this in mind : there are seven interior attitudes (120), and eight intimate techniques (121) to amuse people until they are sated with the willow-

(120) The seven kinds of classical sentimental comedies to perform for a customer, so as to make him believe in a real passion, consist of : pretending to weep amorously ; having one's name tattooed on the other's skin ; speaking of a wedding ; of suicide ; of running away with him ; exchanging locks of hair ; and exchanging oaths.

(121) Eight classical techniques the description of which would be improper in this book. It suffices to know that each of them matches one of the following types of customers : small, burly, ardent, peaceful, experienced, inexperienced, sentimental, and those liking nothing but material love.

*« Khi khóe-hạnh, khi nét-ngài,
 « Khi ngám-ngợi nguyệt, khi cười-cợt hoa.
 « Đều là nghề-nghiệp trong nhà,
 « Đủ gần đây nét, mới là người soi. »*
*Gót đầu vàng dạy mấy lời,
 Đường cháu nét nguyệt, đường phai vẽ hồng.
 Những nghe nói, đã then-thùng,
 Nước đời lắm nổi lạ-lùng khát-khe !*

flower (122), until you can turn them upside down like stones, and until they completely lose consciousness. You must know how to charm them, sometimes by the tips of your lips, sometimes by the corners of your eyes, sometimes by reciting alluring poems, and occasionally by the flower of your smiles. All of this is the profession of this house ! When you have all these qualities, well, my daughter, that day you should be a really clever girl ! »

Kiều listened submissively to all of the old woman's advice. She could not help raising her curved eyebrows, and her rosy complexion seemed to turn pale. Listening to these words was enough to fill her with shame ! What strange surprises and complications this life was reserving for her !

(122) In Chinese, the willow-flower stands for licentiousness, illegitimate pleasure.

*Xót mình cửa các, buồng khuê,
Vỡ lòng, học lấy những nghề-nghiệp hay !
Khéo là mặt dạn mày dày !
Kiếp người đã đến thế này thì thôi !
Thương thay thân-phận lạc-loài !
Dầu sao cũng ở tay người biết sao ?
Lầu xanh, mới rủ trướng đào,
Càng treo giá ngọc, càng cao phẩm người.
Biết bao bướm lả, ong lơ !
Cuộc say đầy tháng, trận cười suốt đêm.*

She wept over her fate. Born into a noble family, she had now to learn this strange profession almost right at the beginning in life.

« Oh, » she murmured, dolefully, « I must be a very shameful girl to accept all of this ! What human being can fall more lowly ? How pitiful I am to be lost in this filthy world ! But whatever it may be, I can do nothing now to save myself from their hands ! »

Ever since that time, Kiều confined herself in the green house, behind rosy curtains. The more she maintained the price of her jade, the more distinguished she was. Gallant and brassy bees and butterflies swarmed in. Parties of revelry succeeded each other. Some lasted a full month, and

*Dập-dù lá, gió càn chim,
 Sớm đưa Tống-Ngọc, tối tìm Trùng-Khanh.
 Khi tỉnh rượu, lúc tàn canh,
 Giật mình, mình lại thương mình xót-xa.
 Khi sao phong gấm rủ là,
 Giờ sao tan-tác như hoa giữa đường?
 Mặt sao dày gió dạn sương?
 Thân sao bướm chán, ong chường bấy thân?*

laughter could be heard every night until dawn. Kiều was like a leaf which fluttered at the passing of many breezes, and like a branch offered to many birds. The morning was spent in saying good-bye to a Song-Yu, and the evening, in welcoming a Tchang-Kinh (123).

But reality struck her each time inebriety faded away with the last scent of night. She thought of herself and seemed as if overwhelmed by her own sorrowful fate. How could it happen that she, previously brought up in silk and brocade, was now to wither like a trampled flower in the middle of the road? How could such a face become used to winds and mist? How could such a body succeed in sating bees and butterflies?

(123) In Chinese stories, these characters were well known for their lives full of loves and splendors.

Mặc người mưa Sở, mây Tần,
 Những mình, nào biết có xuân là gì !'
 Đồi phen gió tựa, hoa kề,
 Nửa rèm tuyết ngậm, bốn bề trăng thâu.
 Cảnh nào cảnh chẳng đeo sầu ?
 Người buồn, cảnh có vui đâu bao giờ !
 Đồi phen nét vẽ, câu thơ,
 Cung cầm trong nguyệt, nước cờ dưới hoa.

Though offered to the caresses of revelers who came from the rainy Tsou¹ and the cloudy Tsin (124), Kiều felt within not a bit of the sweetness of love.

Sometimes she spent hours among flowers and in the breeze, contemplating the curtains half-covered with snow as the moonlight bathed the surrounding landscape. But what scenery does not bring melancholy ? When one is sorrowful, no scenery can give him a ray of gaiety. Sometimes, she spent hours drawing, or composing verses, or playing the guitar in the moonlight, or playing chess under the flowers, so as to

(124) Two regions of ancient China. They bear now the names of Hopei and Shansi. « Rains and clouds » is also an expression used to designate material intercourses.

*Vui là vui gương kẻ là,
 Ai tri-âm đó mận-mà với ai ?
 Thờ-ơ gió trúc, mưa mai,
 Ngẩn-ngơ trăm nỗi, giúi-mài một thân.
 Nỗi lòng đòi đoạn xa gần,
 Chẳng vò mà rối, chẳng rần mà đau !
 Nhớ ơn chín chữ cao sâu,
 Một ngày một ngả bóng dàu tà-tà.*

provide herself with a bit of gaiety. But this gaiety was but a forced one.
 Who could be a real friend to understand her and share her sentiments ?

Now, neither the poetry of the wind blowing through the bamboo-trees, nor the drizzle dripping on the apricot-trees could move her heart. Her thoughts were constantly obsessed by the multiple events that had overthrown her way of existence. Old memories flowed back to her, in her loneliness. She seemed deeply affected by the past and the present phases of her life. No trouble had occurred, and yet her thoughts were constantly entangled. No one had beaten her, and yet she felt deeply hurt. She thought of her parents, to whom she owed the nine labors (129). Day after day, their lives would gradually fade like the shadows of

(125) See footnote 77.

*Dặm ngàn, nước thăm, non xa,
 Nghĩ đau thân-phận con ra thế này ?
 Sân hòe đôi chút thơ-ngây,
 Trán cam, ai kẻ đỡ thay việc mình ?
 Nhớ lời nguyên-v ước ba-sinh,
 Xa-xôi ai có biết tình chàng ai ?*

the mulberries in sunset. At the other end of the abrupt road, on the other side of the yonder mountains and rivers, how could they believe that their dear daughter had come to so low a downfall? In the yard of sophoraes (126), where there remained two young and naïve children, who could replace her to offer good and sweet things to her old parents?

Kiều sorrowfully thought of the solemn oaths that she had exchanged with her true-love. « In that forlorn country, does he know what has been

(126) The yard of sophoraes indicates children of the same family. Reference is made to a man named Ouang-Yeon who owned a yard planted with three sophoraes. All of his three sons occupied very high posts in the ancient royal Chinese court. This expression is used to designate a happy posterity.

*Khi về hỏi liễu Chương-đài,
 Cảnh xuân đã bẻ cho người chuyển tay?
 Tình sâu, mong trả nghĩa dày,
 Hoa kia đã chấp cây này cho chưa?
 Mỗi tình đôi đoạn vô tơ,
 Giấc hương-quan, luống lẫn mơ canh dài.*

passing in my heart? Surely, when he comes back, he will inquire about the willow of Tchang-Tai (127) to see whether its vernal boughs have been broken and changed hands many times. Ah! I should like to redeem my deep love by eternal fidelity! Has the flower that I chose, been united with the tree of my love (128)? »

The skein of her thoughts became more and more entangled. Visions of familiar scenes of her native country constantly haunted her in her long nightly dreams.

(127) Reference is made to a poem written in the period of the Han. Hàn-Hồng, the author of this poem, wrote to his beloved named Lieu (Lieu means willow), inquiring whether the willow of Tchang-Tai, very green previously, had not been broken off from its boughs by other hands.

(128) This sentence means, « Has my younger sister Thúy-Vân been married to Kim-Trọng as I asked her to do for my sake? »

Song-sa vò-vô phương trời,
Nay hoàng-hôn đã, lại mai hôn-hoàng.
Lần-lần thả bạc ác vàng,
Xót người trong hội đoạn-tràng đòi cơn !
Đã cho lấy chữ hồng-nhan,
Làm cho, cho hại, cho tàn, cho cán !
Đã đẩy vào kiếp phong-trần,
Sao cho si-nhục một lần mới thôi !

Ah ! How forlorn she felt now, under this strange sky and behind these silk curtains ! Gold twilight of today faded away to be succeeded by the crepuscular gold of the morrow. The silver lunar Rabbit and the gold solar Crow (129) rose and set alternately.

« How strange Heaven is ! » Kiều murmured dolefully as she thought of herself, then of her mates in misery. « After elevating them to the rank of beautiful women, He wants them to taste the extreme limit of ruin and destruction in compensation for this slight advantage. Now, exiled to this windy and dusty world, they still have to drink the cup of shame at least once before obtaining His mercy ! »

(129) See footnotes 16 and 17.

XI

*Khách du bồng có một người.
Kỳ-Tâm họ Thúc, cũng nài thư-hương.
Vốn người huyện Tích, châu Thường,
Theo nghiêm-đường mở ngôi hàng Lâm-Chuy.
Hoa-khôi mộ tiếng Kiều-nhi,
Thiếp hồng tìm đến hương-khue gọi vào.*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Kiều and Thúc

One day an itinerant customer named Thúc-kỳ-Tâm appeared. The man belonged to a literary family in Hangchou, of the sub-prefecture of Wuhsi (130). In the company of his severe father, he came to Weihsien and opened a mercantile shop in this region. Very impressed by the reputation of this queen of flowers, Thúc

(130) A town of Kiangsu, situated between Shanghai and Nanking.

*Trướng tô, giáp mặt hoa đào,
 Vẻ nào chẳng mặn, nét nào chẳng ưa ?
 Hải-đường mơn-mỡn cành tơ,
 Ngày xuân càng gió, càng mưa, càng nồng !
 Nguyệt-hoa, hoa-nguyệt, nào-nùng,
 Đêm xuân ai dễ cảm lòng được chẳng ?
 Lạ gì thanh, khí lễ hằng,
 Một dây một buộc, ai giằng cho ra ?*

set out for the green house and sent a rose-colored card (131) to her perfumed room.

No sooner had he sat face to face with his peach-flower behind frieze curtains than the young man was immediately fascinated by her manners and enamoured with her lovely features. Like a young bough of camellia in its full splendor, the more stormy or rainy the weather was, the sweeter she became in the spring of love. The transports of their passion seemed like the moon transmitting its beams on the flowers, or like the flowers bathed in moonlight. During such a spring night, what lovers can moderate the effusion of their hearts ? Why wonder ?

(131) A ritual color for invitations or visiting-cards.

Sớm đào, tối mận, lân-la,
Trước còn trăng gió, sau ra đá vàng.
Dịp đầu may-mắn lạ đường!
Lại vừa gặp khoảng xuân-đường lại què.
Sinh càng một tỉnh mười mê,
Ngày xuân, lắm lúc đi về với xuân.
Khi gió gác, khi trăng sân,
Bầu tiên chúc rượu, cầu thần nổi thơ.

Isn't union through souls a normal law? Who could break this link
when they had willingly made the knot themselves?

After this meeting, they continued to contact each other by
exchanging peaches in the morning and plums in the evening. Their
love, as light as moonlight or the breeze at the beginning, became
soon as heavy as stone or gold.

As to favor this furtive love affair, a happy event occurred
unexpectedly: Thúc's father had to travel back to his native country
for some business. This time, the young man seemed to lose his
wits, and his love increased tenfold. He spent most of the spring
days answering the call of love. Sometimes they spent hours
on the balcony, enjoying the fresh breeze, occasionally sitting on

*Khi hương sớm, khi trà trưa,
Bàn vầy điểm nước, đường tơ họa đàn.
Miệt-mải trong cuộc truy-hoan,
Càng quen thuộc nết, càng dan-dịu tình.
Lạ cho cái sóng khuynh-thành,
Làm cho đổ quán, xiêu đình, như chơi.
Thúc-sinh quen thói bốc rời,
Trăm nghìn đổ một trận cười như không!*

the terrace, contemplating the bright moon in the sky, tasting the immortals' wine, and playing the divine game of completing chains of verses. How many times they sat side by side, breathing the early perfume of dawn and enjoying the aroma of tea at noontime! Playing chess also occupied a large part of their time besides their addiction to playing guitars in concert. Nothing obsessed them now but the thought of running after pleasures. The more they became acquainted with each other, the warmer was their passion. How strange it was, the beauty of this girl! Really, it could subvert cities, overthrow buildings, and with ease make palaces totter! Thúc became used to playing ducks and drakes with his money: he had paid hundreds and thousands of taels, just for laughing, as though money were nothing

*Mụ càng tỏ lục, chuốt hồng,
Máu tham hễ thấy hơi đồng thì mê.
Dưới trăng, quyen đã gọi hè,
Đầu tường lửa lựu lập-lòe đâm bóng.
Buồng the phải buổi thông-dong,
Thang lan, rủ bức trướng hồng, tẩm hoa.
Rõ màu trong ngọc, trắng ngà,
Dày-dày sẵn đúc một tòa thiên-nhiên.*

to him. As for the old woman, she showed more attention to her beautiful boarder. With her greed, what could more easily increase her inebriety than the odor of money?

The call of cuckoos rose in the moonlit night, announcing the coming of summer. In a corner of the wall, firelike buttons of a pomegranate-tree started blooming.

Kiều profited from this hour of liberty to take a perfume bath in her room. Through the light rosy gauze curtain, the silhouette of her body stood out as white and transparent as if it were made of jade and ivory. It resembled truly a perfect statue and a divine masterpiece.

Sinh càng tỏ nét, càng khen,
 Ngụ tình tay thảo một thiên luật Đường.
 Nàng rằng : « Váng biết lòng chàng,
 « Lờ lờ châu ngọc, hàng hàng gấm thêu.
 « Hay hèn lẽ cũng nói-điều,
 « Nỗi quê nghĩ một hai điều ngang-ngang.
 « Lòng còn gửi áng mây vàng,
 « Họa vắn, xin hãy chịu chàng hóm nay. »

The young man conceived a great admiration for his sweetheart as he considered her qualities more deeply. Unable to keep these sentiments to himself, Thúc improvised and wrote to her a poem in a particular form of the Dương prosody (132).

« My young Lord, » said Kiều, « I understand your feelings about me. Your words are like pearls and jade, and your verses like a rich brocade. No matter how good or poor my talent is, I should complete the chain of your verses. But old souvenirs of my native country are troubling my mind. My soul is traveling far away and floating on

(132) A kind of poem composed of eight sentences of seven syllables each.

Rằng: « Sao nói lạ-lùng thay!
 « Cành kia chẳng phải cỗi này mà ra? »
 Nàng càng ủ-dột thu-ba,
 Đoạn-trường lúc ấy dờ mà buồn-tênh :
 « Thiếp như hoa đã lìa cành,
 « Chàng như con bướm lượn vành mà chơi.
 « Chúa xuân đành đã có nơi,
 « Ngán ngày, thôi chớ dài lời làm chi ! »

forlorn golden clouds. For a reply to your poem (133), please excuse me for today! »

« Why did you speak such strange words? » exclaimed Thúc.
 « Aren't you a branch of the tree of this house (134) ? »

Kiều looked more gloomy at these questions. She seemed as if struck by her present fate and could not conceal her sorrow.

« I am like a flower torn off its branch, » replied Kiêu, « and you are a butterfly hovering around for pleasure. Besides, you have already had

(133) In China and in Vietnam, one used to play a game particularly reserved for literati. This game consisted of answering a poem composed by another person, by improvising another poem of the same form and the same rhymes.

(134) « Aren't you a daughter of the owner of this house ? »

*Sinh rằng : « Từ thừa tương-trì,
 « Tám riêng, riêng những nặng vì nước non ;
 « Trăm năm tính cuộc vương trồn,
 « Phải dò cho đến ngọn nguồn, lạch sông. »*
*Nàng rằng : « Muốn đổi ơn lòng,
 « Chút e bên thú, bên lòng dễ đau.
 « Bình-Khang nấn-ná bấy lâu,
 « Yếu hoa, yếu được một màu điểm-trang.*

a queen to care for your spring. Days are short, why waste them with your long speeches ? »

« Since the day of our first acquaintance, » said Thúc, « I have always cherished serious sentiments of an eternal love, and planned for our union. So, I must inquire about the source and sound the bottom of the river (135). »

« I thank you very much for your kindness, » replied Kiều. « But if you marry me, and if I go with you, I am afraid that troubles might come to both of us. On the one hand I have lived for a long time in this quarter of Bình-Khang (136). In loving me,

(135) « So I must inquire about your origin. »

(136) A quarter of Shansi, formerly well known for its houses of pleasure.

« Rời ra lờ phẩn, phai hương,
 « Lòng thêm giữ được thường-thường mãi chẳng?
 « Và trong thềm quế, cung trăng,
 « Chủ-trương đã có chị Hằng ở trong.
 « Bấy lâu khăng-khít dài dòng,
 « Thêm người, người cũng chia lòng riêng-táy.
 « Về chi chút phận bèo mây,
 « Làm cho bể ái, khi đầy khi vơi.

you love, in reality, but a flower covered with a borrowed brightness. When this make-up fades and its perfume evaporates, will your heart always remain the same? On the other hand sister Hằng-Nga has been there to reign over the terrace of cinnamon-trees and the lunar palace (137). For a long time you have been united with each other by a marriage link. If another woman came in, you would be forced to divide your love. I am but a humble duckweed met accidentally by a cloud on its passage. Why pay too much attention to it so as to cause an ebb and flow in your conjugal love? A

(137) Here, Kiều wanted to imply that Thúc was a married man.

« Trăm điều ngang-ngửa vì tôi,
 « Thân sau ai chịu tội trời ấy cho ?
 « Như chàng có vưng tay co,
 « Mười phán cũng đáp-điểm cho một vài.
 « Thế trong dầu lớn hơn ngoài,
 « Trước hàm sư-tử gửi người đằng-la.
 « Cúi đầu luồn xuống mái nhà,
 « Giấu chừa lại tội bằng ba lửa nòng.
 « Ở trên còn có nhà thông,
 « Lòng trên trông xuống, biết lòng có thương ?

hundred possible troubles might be caused by my presence. And who then, in the future, would undergo the punishment of Heaven ? I you had, my young Lord, a pair of powerful arms, maybe you could give me a little protection. But if the wife were more masterful than her husband, it would be putting my weak liana before the mouth of a lioness. Must I stoop and creep under your roof like a servant ? If so, the acid jealousy of a spouse would be for me thrice more atrocious than being under the fire of a furnace. Furthermore, there still exists your father. I don't know whether his generous heart will condescend unto

« *Xá chi liễu ngô, hoa tường,*
 « *Lầu-xanh, lại bỏ ra phường lầu-xanh !*
 « *Lại càng dơ-dáng đại-hình,*
 « *Đành thân-phận thiếp, nghĩ danh-giá chàng.*
 « *Thương sao cho vẹn thì thương,*
 « *Tính sao cho vẹn mọi đường thì vãng.»*
 Sinh rằng : « *Hay nói đề chừng,*
 « *Lòng đầy, lòng đầy, chưa từng hay sao ?*
 « *Đường xa chó ngại Ngó, Lào,*
 « *Trăm điều hãy cứ trông vào một ta.*

having pity for my fate? What will he think of me, a willow which grows on the road or a flower which blooms on a wall? As a girl of a green house, he might send me back to the green house to fall to an even lower disrepute, and to appear even more stupid. I am of little value, and can accept this as reserved for my fate. But I am apprehensive for your reputation! So, take care that no trouble occur because of our love. If you can arrange everything, well, I shall be at your service. »

« You are really too prudent in your words! » said Thúc.
 « Haven't our hearts sufficiently understood each other? Fear nothing,

*« Đã gần chi có đường xa,
 « Đá-vàng cũng quyết, phong-ba cũng liều. »
 Cùng nhau căn-dẫn đến điều,
 Chi non, thề bẻ, nặng gieo đến lời.
 Ni-non đêm ngắn tình dài,
 Ngoài hiên tỏ đã non đoài ngắm gương..
 Mượn điều trúc-viên thêu lương,
 Rước về hãy tạm giấu nàng một nơi.*

my dear ! We are not going as far as the country of Ngô or Laos !
 In any circumstance, rely upon me, and me alone ! We are already
 too close to each other to envisage forlorn obstacles. I have decided to
 marry you and to face any tempest to maintain our love. »

They continued to discuss many other things so as to assure
 each other, calling mountains and rivers to witness their solemn and
 definitive oaths. The night seemed as if too short for them to pour
 out all their inmost sentiments.

Outside, on the West, the lunar rabbit (138) began to conceal its
 bright mirror behind the chain of mountains. Under pretense of going out

(138) See footnote 16.

*Chiến, hòa, sắp sẵn hai bài,
 Cây người thầy-thợ, mượn người dò-la.
 Bán tin đến mẹ Tú-Bà,
 Thua cơ, mẹ cũng cầu hòa, dám sao.
 Rõ-ràng của dân, tay trao,
 Hoàn-lương một thiếp, thân vào cửa công.
 Công tư đôi lẽ đều xong,
 Gót tiên phút đã thoát vòng trần-ai.*

to enjoy the fresh air in a bamboo pavilion, Thúc took Kiều away with him, and temporarily hid her in a place of safety. Then, he planned two solutions to get his beloved definitely out of the house of shame, either by violence or by gentleness. First, he asked a clever man to prepare the ground and tell the news to old Tú-Bà.

Defeated, the old panderess preferred peace. What is the use of resisting? A requested sum was handed to her in good and due form. A deed of restitution of the poor girl was made out and submitted to the authorities. Everything was settled according to law and to private agreements.

Kiều was now as free as an immortal who had succeeded in escaping

*Một nhà sum-hợp trúc mai,
Càng sáu nghĩa bể, càng dài tình sông.
Hương càng đượm, lửa càng nồng,
Càng xói vẻ ngọc, càng lồng màu sen.*

from a world full of dust and misery. She and Thúc started their new life, united like a bamboo and an apricot-tree (139). New links tied them together — a link of gratitude as profound as an ocean, and a link of love as endless as a river. The more the incense blazed, the more ardent was its flame. The jade now brightened more brilliantly, and the lotus exhaled a more subtle perfume.

(139) See footnote 111.

XII

*Nửa năm hơi tiếng vừa quen,
Sân ngô cành biếc đã chen lá vàng.
Giậu thu vừa nảy giò sương,
Gối yén đã thấy xuân-đường đến nơi.
Phong-lôi nổi trận bời-bời,
Nặng lời e-ấp, tính bài phân-chia.*

CHAPTER TWELVE

A Good Mandarin

Half a year passed in wonderful intimacy. In the courtyard, yellow leaves had already mingled with the green boughs of the dryades. Young buttons had hardly shot out from autumnal fences when Thúc's father, on his well-padded saddle, returned from his voyage.

How could one describe the old man's rage when he discovered

*Quyết ngay biện-bách một bề,
Dạy cho má phấn lại về lầu-xanh.
Thấy lời nghiêm-huấn rành-rành,
Đánh liều sinh mới lấy tình nài kén.
Rằng: « Con biết tội đã nhiên,
« Dẫu rằng sấm-sét, búa-rìu cũng cam.
« Trót vì tay đã nhúng chàm,
« Đại rồi còn biết khôn làm sao đây!
« Cùng nhau vả tiếng một ngày,
« Ôm cầm ai nữ điết dây cho đành?*

what had happened during his absence? Anxious about the consequence of his son's behavior, he meditated the separation of the lovers, and immediately communicated this resolution to the young man. He ordered the latter to send the powdered-cheeked girl back to her green house.

At this categorical and explicit order, Thúc plucked up his courage and tried to beseech his father.

« Dear Father, » Thúc said entreatingly, « I know that I am guilty. I am ready to submit to any kind of punishment that you think I deserve. Now, with my hands already stained with indigo, how can I become wise again after behaving so foolishly? We have been living together, and had

*« Lượng trên quyết chẳng thương tình,
« Bạc đen, thôi có tiếc mình làm chi! »
Thấy lời sắt đá tri-tri,
Sốt gan, ông mới cáo quì cửa công.
Đất bằng nổi sóng ùng-ùng,
Phủ-đường sai lá phiếu-hồng thôi tra.
Cùng nhau theo gót sai-nha,
Song-song vào trước sân hoa, lay quì.*

it only been for one day, how could I be cruel enough to break the chord of the guitar which I have held in my hands? Even your indulgence has no pity for us, well, make up your mind! Black or white, I'll have no regret for my life! »

In the face of his son's stubbornness, the old man became impatient, and went to the authorities to lodge a complaint.

The prefect boomed into a rage of fury when he learned of this. Immediately, he sent out a red-sealed paper, summoning the lovers to come for interrogation. The couple followed the satellites to the yamen and prostrated themselves in the flowery courtyard.

*Trông lên mặt sắt đen sì,
Lập nghiêm trước đã, ra uy nặng lời :
« Gã kia đại nét chơi-bời,
« Mà con người thế là người đơng-đưa.
« Tuồng gì hoa thãi, hương thừa,
« Mượn màu son phấn đánh lừa con đen!
« Suy trong tình-trạng bên nguyên,
« Bề nào thì cũng chưa yén bề nào.*

Lifting up their heads, they saw, in front of them, the face of the judge as black as iron (140).

« You over there ! » the mandarin addressed Thúc imperatively, after a few demonstrations of his authority. « You are quite a vicious reveler ! As for you, young girl ! You are but a rascal, a withered flower, a wasted perfume ! How can you think you are worthy when you use make-up to deceive a naïve person. Now, according to the plaintiff's bill of indictment, the situation still remains very

(140) An expression used to designate severe persons.

« *Phép công chiếu án luận vào,*
 « *Có hai đường ấy, tính sao mặc mình:*
 « *Một là cứ phép gia hình,*
 « *Một là lại cứ lầu-xanh phó về ! »*
 Nàng rằng : « *Đã quyết một bề,*
 « *Nhện này vương lấy tơ kia mấy lần !*
 « *Đục trong thân cũng là thân,*
 « *Yếu thơ, vâng chịu trước sân loi-đình »*

complex because of you. In fairness as well as in equity, after studying the case, I have decided upon two solutions, either of which you may choose: the first is to undergo the punishment dictated by law; the second is to return to the green house. »

« I have already made up my mind, » replied Kiều. « How many more times must I allow myself to be caught in my own cobweb (141)? A body, no matter how pure or stained it is, always remains a body. Weak and young as I am, I consent to submit myself to your severe punishment. »

(141) This sentence means, « To how many more men must I give up my body ? »

Dạy rằng : « Cú phép gia hình ! »
 Ba cây cháp lại một cành mẫu-đơn.
 Phán đành chi dám kêu oan,
 Đào hoe-quyển má, liễu tan-tác mày.
 Một sân lấm cát đã đầy,
 Gương lò nước thủy, mai gãy vóc sương.
 Nghĩ tình chàng Thúc mà thương,
 Nẻo xa trông thấy lòng càng xót-xa.

« Apply the chastisement according to law ! » ordered the mandarin.

As an instrument of castigation, they used three sticks bound together to whip this frail peony-branch (142). Kiều resigned herself to her fate, uttering not the slightest word to protest against this injustice. But one saw her peachy cheeks grow pale, and her fine eyebrows lose their natural curve. In the dusty yard, Kiều lay sprawling like a tarnished mirror, and her slender body seemed to become visibly much thinner.

In the distance, young Thúc could not help feeling a deep pity for his beloved.

(142) A metaphor used to designate a young and beautiful girl.

*Khóc rằng « Oan-khóc vì ta !
« Có nghe lời trước, chớ đà lụy sau.
« Cạn lòng, chẳng biết nghĩ sâu,
« Để ai trăng tủi, hoa sầu vì ai ? »
Phủ-đường nghe thoáng vào tai,
Động lòng lại gạn đến lời riêng tây.
Sụt-sùi chàng mới thưa ngay,
Đầu đuôi kể lại sự ngày cầu thần :
« Nàng đã tính trước xa gần,
« Từ xưa nàng đã biết thân có rày !*

« Oh, what a cruel injustice ! And especially all this has happened to her because of my fault ! » he lamented grievously. « Such a calamity could not have occurred if I had listened to her. But I was too infatuated then to think of this consequence. Oh, my love, my dear love ! It's I who have led your moonlit and flowery life into this painful and shameful situation ! »

His lamentations, faint as they seemed to be, reached the ears of the prefect. Deeply moved, the latter bade the young man to come near and tried to secure his confidences. Thúc sobbed out the story of his relations with the girl from beginning to end.

« She anticipated what would happen to her, » he confessed.

« *Tại tôi húng lấy một tay,
« Để nàng cho đến nỗi này vì tôi!* »
Nghe lời nói cũng thương lời,
Dẹp uy mới dạy mở bài giải vi.
Rằng: « *Như hẩn có thể thì,
~ Trăng hoa, song cũng thị-phi biết điều!* »
Sinh rằng: « *Chút phần bọt bèo,
« Theo đòi vả cũng ít nhiều bút-nghiên.* »

« At the very start, she knew that her fate would come to this. It's I, alone, who have taken this matter in my hands. All that has happened to her is my fault. »

Hearing these words, the prefect felt a sincere pity for the young couple. He seemed to be less severe, and advised Thúc how to get out of this entanglement.

« Let me see! » he whispered to him. « If what you have just told me is true, well. . . This young girl, despite her frivolous life, knows well how to distinguish truth from falsehood. »

« Though she is a humble duckweed (143), » said Thúc, « her brush is not without a merit. »

(143) « Despite her humble condition. . . »



Nàng vâng cất bút tay đề . .

Kiều obeyed, took a brush, and improvised a poem . .

*Cười rằng: « Đã thế thì nên!
 « Móc-già hãy thử một thiếp trình nghề. »
 Nàng vâng cất bút tay đề,
 Tiên-hoa trình trước án phê, xem tường.
 Khen rằng: « Giá lọt Thỉnh-Đường,
 « Tài này sắc ấy nghìn vàng chưa cân!
 « Thật là tài-tử giai-nhân,
 « Châu Trần còn có Châu Trần nào hơn ?*

« Really ! » said the prefect, laughing. « Let her then try to write a few verses on 'The Cangue' to prove her talent. »

Kiều obeyed, took a brush, and improvised a poem on a sheet of paper. Then she presented the flowery sheet to the mandarin for examination.

« These verses are more beautiful than those written during the period of the Tang ! » exclaimed the prefect, in praise. « What talent ! What grace ! With such talent and such grace, she is worth more than a thousand gold taels. She is truly an elite and beautiful girl. Even in Châu Trần (144), there cannot exist a more suitable couple ! Come now

(144) Name of a Chinese village (Tcheou-Tchen). It was told that the inhabitants of this village consented to get married only to those who lived in the same village, and who bore the forenames of Châu and Trần.

« *Thôi đừng rước dữ, cừu hờn,*
« *Làm chi lỡ nhịp cho đồn ngang cung?*
« *Đã đưa đến trước cửa công,*
« *Ngoài thì là lý, song trong là tình.*
« *Dâu con trong đạo gia-đình,*
« *Thôi thì đẹp nổi bất-bình là xong!»*
Kíp truyền sắm-sửa lễ công,
Kiểu hoa cất gió, đuốc hồng điểm sao.
Bày hàng cổ-xúy xôn-xao,
Song-song đưa tới trước đào sánh đôi.

old man ! Don't be so cruel and so angry ! Why trouble this harmony and thwart such a beautiful concert of guitars ? You have brought them up before the Justice : publicly, I am obliged to speak of law ; but, inwardly, I want to apply a just sentence as dictated by my sentiments. A daughter-in-law and a son are also the members of your family. Now, put aside the motives of disagreement, and let all be settled ! »

Then, he ordered an official ceremony to be prepared immediately for the couple. Soon a flowery palanquin appeared, dashing like wind in the direction of the yamen. Torches were lit, shining in the dark like constellations of red stars. Preceding the palanquin was a group of musicians making a lot of hubbub with their flutes and drums.

*Thương vì hạnh, trọng vì tài,
Thúc-ông thôi cũng đẹp lời phong-ba.
Huê lan sức-nước một nhà,
Tùng cay đáng lại mặn-mà hơn xưa.*

The married couple was accompanied as far as their rosy curtains to celebrate their union.

Influenced by her virtues and her talents, the old man did not resume his stormy speeches. Now, the subtle perfume of tuberose, mingling with that of orchidaceae, spread all about the house again. The young lovers, after days of affliction, loved each other even more than previously.

XIII

*Mãng vui rượu sớm, cờ trưa,
Đào đà phai thắm, xen vờn nảy xanh.
Trước hồ vắng-vẻ đêm thanh,
E tình, nàng mới bày tình riêng chung:
« Phận bỏ từ vẹn chữ tòng,
« Đổi thay nhận yến đã hồng đầy niên.*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Thúc's Departure

Both of them were so absorbed in the pleasures of wine in the morning, and of chess at noon that they did not notice the changes that were taking place. Red peach-flowers had fallen, and green lotus leaves had begun to sprout. During a serene night, Kiều felt a sudden anxiety when she was alone with her husband among the paper hangings.

« Since my poor liana has become entirely yours, » Kiều whispered confidentially, « swallows have gone and given way to wild geese. One

« Tin nhà ngày một vắng tin,
 « Mặn tình cát-lũy, lạt tình tao-khang.
 « Nghĩ ra thật cũng nên đường,
 « Tăm-hơi, ai kẻ giữ-giàng cho ta ?
 « Trộm nghe kẻ lớn trong nhà,
 « Ở vào khuôn-phép, nói ra mối-giường.
 « E thay những dạ phi-thường,
 « Dễ dò rốn biển, khôn lường đáy sông !

full year has passed. So far, it seems that news from your family has become rarer and rarer. Too enamoured with your concubine, you have neglected your wife of riceless days (145). Remember, my lord, that everything might bring a consequence. Who can protect us from possible indiscretions ? Furthermore, I have learned through hear-say that the spouse who governs your house behaves according to discipline, and speaks in accordance with the moral principles. I am afraid of those whose souls surpass the average. Sometimes, it seems easier to sound the

(145) An expression used to designate the legitimate wife. She is the only one who is ready to share the vicissitudes of her husband.

« *Mà ta suốt một năm ròng,*
 « *Thế nào cũng chẳng giấu xong được nào.*
 « *Bầy-chầy chưa tỏ tiêu-hao,*
 « *Hoặc là trong có làm sao chẳng là?*
 « *Xin chàng liệu kịp lại nhà,*
 « *Trước người đẹp ý, sau ta biết tình.*
 « *Đêm ngày giữ mực giấu quanh,*
 « *Rày lần, mai lửa, như hình chưa thông!* »
 Nghe lời khuyên nhủ thông-dong,
 Đành lòng sinh mới quyết lòng hồi trang.

bottom of a sea than to measure the depth of a river. And say that we have already been living together for one year ! I don't think that we can keep secret forever what we have done so far. Up to this date, no news has come from your wife. No doubt, she is plotting something. Oh, my young lord ! Think of going back home as soon as possible ! Not only will this please your wife, but it will also permit us to know what has been happening. Why continue to conceal our love so obliquely night and day ? Why put off such a necessary explanation as though we could not come to a definitive decision ? »

At this warmhearted and frank advice, Thúc finally made up his

*Rạng ra gửi đến xuân-đường,
 Thúc-ông cũng vội giục chàng ninh-gia.
 Tiễn đưa một chén quan-hà,
 Xuân-đình thoát đã dạo ra Cao-đình.
 Sông Tần một dải xanh-xanh,
 Lối-thôi bờ liễu mấy cành Dương-quan.*

mind and prepared to travel back to his native country. Very early next day, he intimated this decision to his father. The old man also urged him to hasten this voyage. Soon, a farewell dinner was organized in the honor of him who was crossing frontiers and rivers.

Not long ago they had still been drinking in the spring pavilion, and now, they found themselves at Cao-Dinh (146). In front of them, the Tsin river (147) was unrolling its bluish ribbon. On both sides of the waterway, willows mingled together in such a way that one could see

(146) A mountain of Chekiang, cited in Chinese poems as a parting place of travelers.

(147) A Chinese river cited in a Chinese poem of Ouyang-yun as a parting place.

*Cầm tay dài ngắn thở-than,
 Chia-phối ngừng chén, hợp-tan nhen lời.
 Nàng rằng: « Non nước xa khơi,
 « Sao cho trong ấm, thì ngoài mới êm.
 « Dễ lừa yếm thắm, trốn kim,
 « Làm chi bưng mắt bắt chim khó lòng!
 « Đói ta chút nghĩa đèo-bồng,
 « Đến nhà, trước liếu nói sòng cho mình.*

only a few poplars on the hill of Dương-Quan (148). Hand in hand, they looked at each other, and sighed dolefully. The grief of parting still remained so heavy in their hearts after the farewell cup of wine that now their words seemed as if strangled in their throats.

« Remote mountains and deep rivers are going to separate us, » Kiêu said. « My young lord, try to satisfy your legitimate wife! Only by this behavior may your concubine live in peace. Sometimes, it is easier to hide a scarlet brassière from an indifferent person than to conceal a needle hole from a needle-woman. Why engage in the game of catching a bird with closed eyes ? Our love is but a passing amour.

(148) A well-known hill in China, called « hill of poplars. »

« Dẫu khi sóng gió bất tình,
« Lớn ra uy lớn, tôi đành phận tôi.
« Hơn điều giấu ngược, giấu xuôi,
« Lại mang những việc tày trời đến sau.
« Thương nhau xin nhớ lời nhau,
« Năm chầy cũng chẳng đi đâu mà chầy!
« Chén đưa nhớ bữa hôm nay,
« Chén mừng xin đợi ngày này năm sau. »

Upon your arrival, please explain to your wife everything that has happened between us. If ever waves and winds trouble your conjugal understanding, let your legitimate wife have her own rank. I'll heartily submit myself to the fate that she will reserve for me. Isn't this better than concealing the game that we have been playing and that might risk provoking considerable troubles in the future? If you love me, remember all that we have said to each other. One year will be long, but not as long as it seems to be. Don't forget, my young lord, the farewell cup of wine which we drank together today. And next year, on the same day, we'll drink to welcome your happy return. »

*Người lên ngựa, kẻ chia bào,
Rừng phong, thu đã nhuộm màu quan-san.
Đậm hồng bụi cuốn chinh-an,
Trông người đã khuất mấy ngàn dâu xanh.
Người về chiếc bóng năm canh,
Kẻ đi muôn dặm một mình xa xôi.
Vầng trăng ai xẻ làm đôi?
Nửa in gối chiếc, nửa soi dặm trường.*

Thúc got onto the saddle, and Kiều left him, as if a collar were torn off its robe (149). Far away, bathed in the autumn sunlight, the forest of maple-trees seemed as though painted with a color of separation. On the road, the horseman faded away in a whirlwind of rosy dust, then disappeared completely behind several expanses of green mulberries.

Back home, Kiều found herself forlorn through the long night once again. Maybe, at this moment, Thúc was riding alone on an endless road.

And far above, in the sky, who had divided the moon asunder so that it cast now half of its beams over the lonesome pillow, and the rest over the long roads?

(149) A husband and his wife are often compared to a collar and a robe knitted together.

XIV

*Kể chi những nỗi dọc đường,
Buồng trong, này nỗi chủ-trương ở nhà :
Vốn dòng họ Hoạn danh-gia,
Con quan Lại-bộ tên là Hoạn-Thư.
Duyên Đàng thuận nẻo gió đưa,
Cùng chàng kết tóc, xe tơ những ngày.*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Wicked Spouse

What is the use of relating here the perils that the young man was undergoing during his long voyage ? Let us speak rather of his legitimate wife, the woman who was ruling his home.

Born into a great family, Hoạn-Thư was a daughter of a Home Minister. Driven by favorable winds, just like those which had blown into

Ở ăn thì nét cũng hay,
 Nói điều ràng buộc, thì tay cũng già.
 Từ nghe vườn mới thêm hoa,
 Miếng người đã lắm, tin nhà thì không.

King Ten's palace (150), she had tied her hair with that of the young man, and had been linked with him by a hymen thread (151) for many a year. There existed nothing to criticize about her behavior and manners, but one should state that her arguments were truly peerless.

Since she was first apprised of the fact that another flower had just bloomed in the conjugal garden, many persons had also come to inform her of this. But so far, she had received no news from her husband.

(150) Reference is made to King Ten's palace, toward which a wind drove the barge of a poet called Ouang-Pou. The latter, on the occasion of a great ceremony organized in the palace, took part in a poetry competition and won the prize. After this poetry competition, he was so well appreciated by the king that the latter gave him his daughter in marriage.

(151) « To have one's hair tied with someone's » or « to be linked with someone by a hymen thread » is to get married to him. (See footnote 52).

*Lửa tâm càng giấp, càng nùng,
 Trách người đen-bạc ra lòng trắng-hoa.
 « Ví bằng thú thật cùng ta,
 « Cũng dong kẻ dưới mới là lượng trên.
 « Đại chi chẳng giữ lấy nền,
 « Tốt chi mà rước tiếng ghen vào mình ?
 « Lại còn bưng-bít giấu quanh,
 « Làm chi những thói trẻ-ranh nực cười !
 « Tính rằng cách mặt, khuất lời,
 « Giấu ta, ta cũng liệu bài giấu cho.*

Strange indeed ! The more she tried to smother her fire of jealousy the more it blazed anew.

« What an inconstant and fickle person ! » she muttered, angrily.
 « If he had confessed what he had done to me, I should have permitted him to take in that inferior being in order to show my magnanimity. I am not so stupid as to infringe upon a good tradition. What's the use of risking my reputation in saddling myself with jealousy ? But he continues to try to conceal and cover up his misdeeds ! What absurd childishness ! Surely they think that no communications can reach me since I live so far from them ! They try to hide it from me ! Well, I

« Lo gì việc ấy mà lo,
 « Kiến trong miệng chén có bò đi đâu ?
 « Làm cho nhìn chẳng được nhau,
 « Làm cho đầy-đọa cái đầu chẳng lên !
 « Làm cho trông thấy nhỡn tiền,
 « Cho người thăm ván, bán thuyền, biết tay ! »
 Nỗi lòng kín chẳng ai hay,
 Ngoài tai để mặc gió bay mái ngoài.

also have my own plan of mysterious ways ! Anxious ? Me ? Oh, no, not because of such a trifle ! The ants are still inside the cup, and they won't go farther. I'll manage so that they won't dare look at each other. I'll condemn that girl to such a low station that she won't be able to raise her head. I'll place them face to face to make an exhibit of him who wants to sell his boat before selecting the planks (152) to show how capable I am. »

Her plan of retaliation was kept so secret that no one besides Hoan-Thư knew what she had in mind. She even turned a deaf ear to all

(152) The proverb « Don't sell your boat before selecting the planks » is equivalent to the proverb « Don't count your chickens before they are hatched. » Here, Hoan-Thư meant, « I'll place them face face to exhibit him who wants to take a concubine without my agreement. »

*Tuần sau bỗng thấy hai người,
Mách tin, ý cũng liệu bài tâng công.
Tiểu-thư nổi giận ùng-ùng:
« Gớm tay thêu-dệt ra lòng treu ngơoi!
« Chồng tao nào phải như ai,
« Điều này hản miệng những người thị-phi! »
Vội-vàng xuống lệnh ra uy,
Đưa thì vả miệng, đưa thì bẻ răng.
Trong ngoài kín-mít như bung,
Nào ai còn dám nói-năng một lời!*

gossip which could be heard outside. A week later, two women came to whisper news about her husband, hoping that this would bring them some favor.

« I abhor those who make up stories so as to provoke me ! » the lady boomed into a rage of fury. « My husband is not like any other man ! I am sure that this gossip came from those who didn't know what they were saying ! »

Then, she haughtily ordered her domestics to box the ears of one gossip and to break a few teeth of the other.

After this severe punishment, in her family as well as outside, no one dared utter one slight word concerning Thúc's furtive love affair.

*Buồng đào khuya sớm thành-thời,
Ra vào một mực nói cười như không.
Đêm ngày lòng những giận lòng,
Sinh đà về đến lầu hồng, xuống yên.
Lời tan-hợp, nỗi hàn-huyên,
Chữ tình càng mặn, chữ duyên càng nồng.
Tẩy-trần vui chén thông-dong,
Nỗi lòng, ai ở trong lòng mà ra ?*

Within her rosy-curtained room, she walked to and fro, talking and laughing as though nothing had happened. But, inwardly, her heart was raging night and day.

Finally young Thúc reached home. He dismounted right in front of the rosy room. How could one describe the sentiments of the husband and his wife after so long an absence and before such a happy return? Words were exchanged about how they had endured the cold and heat (153). Their fondness for each other seemed more passionate, and their love more ardent. They feasted gleefully together to welcome this happy return. But their hearts, ah ! No one knew what was going on inside !

(153) See footnote 56.

*Chàng về xem ý-tứ nhà,
Sự mình cũng rắp lán-la giải-bầy.
Mấy phen cười nói tình say,
Tóc tơ bất động mây-may sự tình.
Nghĩ : « Đà bung kín miệng bình,
« Nào ai có khảo mà mình lại xưng ? »
Nhưng là e-ấp dùm-dàng,
Rút dây sợ nữa động rùng, lại thôi.
Có khi vui chuyện mua cười,
Tiểu-thư lại giở những lời đáu-đáu.*

After trying to sound out his wife's inmost thoughts, the man prepared to expose his affairs. But many a time, during their talk, she always cut in by laughing and speaking at random. Not the slightest hint of his love affair was implied in her words. « This proves that the vase has been well bunged, » Thúc rejoiced inwardly. « Why make a confession without being examined ? » And he continued to weigh the pros and the cons, and to keep silent lest all the forest might be shaken if he pulled at a liana.

Sometimes, during their joyful conversations and jokes, the young

*Rằng : « Trong ngọc đá vàng thau,
 « Mười phần ta đã tin nhau cả mười.
 « Khen cho những miệng rổng-dài,
 « Bướm ong lại đặt những lời nọ kia.
 « Thiếp dầu vụng, chẳng hay suy,
 « Đã dơ bụng nghĩ, lại bìa miệng cười ! »
 Thấy lời thủng-thỉnh như chơi,
 Thuận lời, chàng cũng nói xuôi đỡ đòn.*

woman tried to insert a few vague words. « We have known how to distinguish jade from stone, and gold from copper, » she said. « Furthermore, we have absolute confidence in each other. I should acknowledge that many people are praiseworthy for talking at random about bees and butterflies (154). Had I been a stupid woman and used to acting thoughtlessly, I should have conceived ridiculous suspicions, and should have been the laughing-stock of everyone. »

Hearing these dispassionate words, Thúc pretended to take the joke and replied in the same tone, engaging in small talk so as to

(154) See footnote 11.

Những là cười phấn, cợt son,
 Đèn khuya chung bóng, trăng tròn sánh vai,
 Thú quê thuần hức bén mùi,
 Giếng vàng đã rụng một vài lá ngô.
 Chạnh niềm nhớ cảnh giang-hồ,
 Một niềm quan-tái, mấy mùa gió trắng.
 Tình riêng chưa dám rỉ răng,
 Tiếu-thư trước đã liêu chường nhủ qua :

avoid other complications. And he continued to woo his wife playfully. They spent hours together, mingling their shadows beside a late lamp, or walking side by side in the full moonlight.

The young man soon took a liking to the sweet rural life, to its common vegetables and its breams (155). But golden plane-leaves had already started falling down into the well. This view reminded him of pleasant scenery on the other side of the lakes and rivers. The picture of that forlorn country constantly obsessed his thoughts, a country where he had spent happy seasons enjoying the fresh breezes and the sweet moonlight. But he dared not communicate this intimate thought to his wife.

(155) Freshwater fish of the genus *Abramis*.

*« Cách năm, mấy bạc xa xa,
« Lâm-Chuy cũng phải tỉnh mà thần-hôn. »
Được lời như cời tắc son,
Vó câu thẳng ruổi nước non quê người.
Long-lanh đầy nước in trời,
Thành xây khối biếc, non phơi bóng vàng.
Roi câu vừa giống dặm trường,
Xe-hương nàng cũng thuận đường qui-ninh.*

The young woman, however, understood too well what was going on in her husband's heart. « My dear, » she implied negligently, « one year has passed since you left your cloudlike white-haired father in that forlorn country. You must prepare to return to Ihsien, where he is badly in need of your care night and day. »

Hearing these words, Thúc seemed as if relieved of a heavy burden which was weighing on his naïve heart. He hastened to prepare his departure, and off he rode across mountains and rivers toward that strange country. Along the road, the waters appeared so clear that their bottoms shone like a reflection of the firmament. Far ahead, the ramparts spread endlessly like a trail of blue smoke. Farther still was a chain of mountains showing their yellow flanks in the sunlight.

*Thưa nhà-huýn hết mọi tình,
Nỗi chàng ở bạc, nỗi mình chịu đen.
Nghĩ rằng: « Ngứa ghẻ, hờn ghen,
« Xấu chàng mà có ai khen chi mình!
« Váy nén ngánh mặt làm thình,
« Mưu cao vốn đã rấp-ranh những ngày.
« Lâm-Chuy đường bộ tháng chầy,
« Mà đường hải-đạo sang ngay thì gần.*

No sooner had her husband raised his riding-whip and ridden away than the lady got into her perfumed coach, and drove in the same direction to her parents' house. She told everything to her mother: how ungratefully her husband behaved, and how very unhappy she was feeling. « I thought,» she lamented, « that yielding to an outburst of jealousy that has consumed my heart like itch on the skin, would bring dishonor to my husband and that no one would praise my act either. So, I have so far turned my eyes away and feigned indifference. But, for a long time, I have had a good trick ready to serve both of them. To go to Ihsien by land, it must take at least one month ;

« *Dọn thuyền lựa mặt gia-nhân,*
 « *Hãy đem dây xích buộc chân nàng về.*
 « *Làm cho, cho mệt, cho mê,*
 « *Làm cho đau-đớn, é-chề, cho coi!*
 « *Trước cho bỏ ghét những người,*
 « *Sau cho để một trò cười về sau!* »
Phu-nhân khen chúc rất mầu,
Chiều con, mới dạy mặc dầu ra tay.

but to sail directly over there by sea (156), the journey will be much shorter. I'll equip a junk and select a few domestics from my house. I'll send them over there to bring home the girl with her feet well chained. I desire that she be quite exhausted and lose complete consciousness. I desire that she suffer martyrdom and be reduced to a miserable condition. I want to gratify my hatred upon both of them first, and then let them be the laughing-stock of everyone. »

The noble old lady applauded her daughter for such a clever stratagem, and complaisantly told her to do as she wished.

(156) From Wuhsi to Ihsien, the expression « by sea » undoubtedly designates the Grand Canal which flows as far as Tsinan, then across the channels and lakes of Tsinan to Ihsien.

*Sửa-sang buồm gió, lèo máy,
Khuyển, Ưng lại lựa một bầy côn-quang.
Dẫn-dò hết các mọi đường,
Thuận phong một lá, vượt sang bên Tề.*

They started preparing sails and halyards so as to make the junk move like a howling wind or a fast traveling cloud. Two servants, named Khuyển and Ưng, were appointed to organize a group of ruffians. They were given complete and precise instructions on what they would have to do. Soon, like a light leaf, the boat sailed before the wind in the direction of the waters of Tsi (157).

(157) An ancient Chinese kingdom, which included a part of Shantung.

XV

*Nàng từ chiếc bóng song the,
Đường kia nổi nọ như chia mới sầu.
« Bóng dẫu đã xế ngang đầu,
« Biết đâu ấm lạnh, biết đâu ngọt bùi.
« Tóc thề đã chấm ngang vai,
« Nào lời non-nước, nào lời sắt-son.*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Kidnapped

Since the departure of Thúc, Kiều lived like a lonesome shadow among her veil curtains. Successive cares seemed to add to her sorrow. « My parents are now like mulberries only the heads of which are bathed in twilight, » she murmured dolefully. « How to find whether they are feeling warm or cold ? How can I determine whether they still enjoy all the sweetness of life ? My hair, once cut for Kim, now reaches my shoulders again. Alas ! After so many oaths exchanged

*« Sấn-bìm chút phận côn con,
 « Khuôn duyên biết có vuông tròn cho chăng?
 « Thân sao nhiều nỗi bất-bằng,
 « Liều như cung Quảng ở Hằng, nghĩ nau ! »*
*Đêm thu gió lọt song đào,
 Nửa vầng trăng khuyết, ba sao giữa trời.
 Nén hương đến trước thiên-đài,
 Nỗi lòng khấn chúa càn lời ván-ván. . .*

before mountains and rivers and so many promises as ardent as red iron, I have now become a concubine whose fate seems as frail as that of a creeping plant ! And this hymen frame ! Will it always remain perfect like a square or a circle ? Why is there so much injustice in my life ? Oh ! How pitiful I am ! When I think of this, I would rather live the life of the beautiful Hằng-Nga in her cold palace on the moon (158).»

A fresh breeze blew gently through the rosy curtains. Far above, in the sky, the quarter moon shone brilliantly in line with the three stars of Orion near the zenith. Kiều burnt a few sticks of incense, and set out for a small temple in the middle of the garden to say her prayers.

(158) In Chinese legends, it is told that, on the moon, there exists a vast and cold palace where lives alone a beautiful fairy called Hằng-Nga.

*Dưới hoa dây lữ ác-nhân,
Ầm-ầm khóc quỷ, kinh thần, mọc ra.
Đầy sân gươm tuốt sáng lòe,
Thất kinh nàng chưa biết là làm sao.
Thuốc mê đầu đã tước vào,
Mơ-màng như giấc chiêm-bao biết gì !
Vực ngay lên ngựa tức thì,
Phòng đào, viện sách, bốn bề lửa dong ;
Săn thấy vô chủ bên sông,
Đem vào để đó lặn-sông ai hay.*

But she had not finished pouring out the last inmost wishes of her poor heart when a group of cruel-looking men suddenly rushed out from under the flowers, yelling and howling deafening screams which would frighten even demons and genii. In the dark, the courtyard glittered with unsheathed swords. Kiều was still standing aghast, not knowing what was happening. Suddenly, she smelled a narcotic odor, and was plunged immediately into a sleep full of dreams. The men hastened to carry the unconscious girl outside and placed her on a horse. Inside, a fire started flaring up about the rosy room and the study.

Just at that moment, the kidnappers came across a human corpse abandoned on the beach of the river. They carried it to the ransacked

*Tôi-đòi phách lạc, hồn bay,
Pha càn bụi cỏ, gốc cây, ẩn mình.
Thúc-ông nhà cũng gần quanh,
Chợt trông ngọn lửa, thất-kinh rung-rời.
Tớ thầy chạy thẳng đến nơi,
Tơ-bời tưới lửa tìm người lao-xao.
Gió cao, ngọn lửa càng cao,
Tôi-đòi tìm đủ, nàng nào thấy đâu !*

house and threw it into the flaming room to outwit other people. Who could suspect that this was not the corpse of the unhappy girl ?

How could one describe the fright of the servants during this kidnapping ? Completely losing their wits, they were so frightened that they ran helter-skelter into bushes and behind trees for shelter. Living not far from his son's house, Mr. Thúc was seized with dismay when he saw the flames of the fire. He and his domestics dashed straight for the place. While some tried to put out the flames with water, others searched for victims. Everywhere there were indescribable hubbub and disorder. The more the wind blew, the higher rose the flames. The servants searched and searched, but with no avail : the young woman

*Hốt-hơ, hốt-hãi, nhìn nhau,
Giếng sâu, bụi rậm, trước sau tìm quàng;
Chạy vào chốn cũ phòng hương,
Trong tro, thấy một đống xương cháy tàn.
Ngay tình, ai biết mưu gian,
Hắn nàng, thôi lại còn bàn rằng ai!
Thúc-ông sùi-sụt ngắn dài,
Nghĩ con vắng-vẻ, thương người nét-na.
Di-hài nhất sắp về nhà,
Nào là khám-liệm, nào là tang-trai.*

had disappeared. They looked at one another, completely bewildered. Then they started searching again, rummaging in the deep well, bushes, and at the front and the back of the house. Finally, they ran back to the place which had been used as the perfumed room. There, among the burnt wrecks, they found a heap of calcined bones. How could honest people think of this as a nefarious trick? Beyond a doubt, these bones were those of Kiều! Who could suppose that they belonged to another person?

The old man sobbed and sobbed, thinking of his absent son and commiserating on the fate of this virtuous woman. He had the remains of the so-called dead reverently gathered together and carried to his home. Soon, they proceeded to shroud the bones of the dead, put them in a

*Lễ thường đã đủ một hai,
 Lục-trình chàng cũng đến nơi bấy giờ.
 Bước vào chốn cũ lâu thư,
 Tro than một đống, nắng mưa bốn tường.
 Sang nhà cha, tới trung-đường,
 Linh-sàng, bài-vị, thờ nàng ở trên.
 Hỡi ôi ! nói hết sự duyên,
 Tơ tình đứt ruột, lửa phiền cháy gan.*

coffin, and then organized a Buddhist ceremony for the final rites.

The customary rites were almost finished when young Thúc reached home after a long voyage by land. He walked into the place which had been used once as his study room : in front of him, nothing was left but a heap of ashes and charcoals. Around stood the roofless walls, corroded by the sun and rains. He then set out for his father's home. There, in the middle of the central room, he saw a mortuary bed (159). Above laid a tablet with Kiêu's name written on it. Oh, poor lover ! He poured out before the altar all his sentiments and all the love he had conceived

(159) In China and in Vietnam, in Buddhist families, when a person passes away, one sets up for him a small altar called the mortuary bed behind the main funeral altar. Incense on the mortuary bed must be kept ablaze for at least 49 days according to the customary rites and formalities.

Gieo mình vật-vã, khóc than :
« Con người thế ấy, thác oan thế này !
« Chắc rằng mai trúc lại vầy,
« Ai hay vĩnh-quyết là ngày đưa nhau ! »
Thương càng nghĩ, nghĩ càng đau,
Dễ ai rắp thăm, quạt sầu cho khuây.
Gần miền nghe có một thầy,
Phi phù trị quỷ, cao tay thông huyền.

for her. It seemed as if the hymen thread were twisting his bowels, and the fire of grief were burning his liver.

« Oh, how did such a woman have to die so unjustly ? » he threw himself down on the floor, sobbing and lamenting. « We were so sure to be united again, like a bamboo and an apricot-tree ! Who could believe that the day when she saw me off would be an eternal farewell ? » The more he mourned her death, the more dear remembrances came back to his mind. The more he thought of her, the deeper became his grief. Alas ! It was not easy to suppress such sufferings and to alleviate such sorrows as were torturing his heart !

Finally, Thúc learned that there existed, in a neighboring region, a very clever sorcerer who, by burning votive talismans, could evoke

*Trên tam đảo, dưới cửu tuyền,
 Tìm đâu thì cũng biết tin rõ-ràng.
 Sấm-sanh lễ-vật rước sang,
 Xin tìm cho thấy mặt nàng hồi-hàn.
 Đạo-nhân phục trước tình-bàn,
 Xuất thần giây phút chưa tàn nén hương.*

demons to discover what was going on in the next world. It was rumored that he could obtain precise information from anywhere, even from the Three Peaks of the Paradise and the Nine Springs of the Hell (160).

Immediately, Thúc secured a few gifts and went out to call for the mystic. He asked the latter to go to meet and question the deceased girl.

The religious man prostrated himself before the Altar of Purity (161), and soon his soul left his body (162). A few minutes went by, and before the sticks of incense burnt themselves out, the man recovered consciousness.

(160) The next world. (See footnote 18)

(161) An altar set up in the open air, in a desert place.

(162) This condition is called trance, in which a spiritualist medium allegedly loses consciousness and passes under the control of some external force, as for the supposed transmission of communications from the dead during a seance.

Trở về minh-bạch nói tường:

« *Mặt nàng chẳng thấy, việc nàng đã tra:*

« *Người này nặng kiếp oan-gia,*

« *Còn nhiều nợ lắm, sao đã thác cho!*

« *Mệnh-cung đang mắc nạn to,*

« *Một năm nữa mới thăm dò được tin.*

« *Hai bên giáp mặt chiến-chiến,*

« *Muốn nhìn mà chẳng được nhìn lạ thay!* »

Nghe lời nói, lạ đường này!

Sự nàng đã thế, lời thầy dám tin?

« I could not see her face, » he stated in clear and precise revelations,
« but I was informed about her fate. This person still has to carry the weight of an unfortunate life. How could she die when her debt is still very heavy? According to her horoscope, actually she is victim of a great misfortune. You will be able to hear from her only one year from this day. Both of you will meet again, face to face. Both of you will long to look at each other, but strange to say, you will dare not. »

How absurd these words sounded to him! After what had happened to her, how could he believe in the sorcerer's words? Nonsense! What the

*Chẳng qua đồng-cốt quàng-xiên,
Người đáu mà lại thấy trên cỏi trần ?
Tiếc hoa, những ngậm-ngùi xuân,
Thân này để lại mấy lần gặp tiên !
Nước trôi hoa rụng đã yên,
Hay đáu địa-ngục ở miền nhân-gian !*

medium told him was pure nonsense ! How could he find the dead again in this dusty world ? Thúc mourned for the lost flower and lamented his wasted spring days.

« I have not enough merit to meet again such a fairy, » he murmured regretfully. « Falling into a current, surely this flower has found now a quiet place to rest eternally. How could she think that Hell is, in reality, this world of human beings ? »

XVI

*Khuyển, Ưng đã đặt mưu gian,
Vực nàng đưa xuống để an dưới thuyền.
Buồm cao, lèo thẳng cánh sườn,
Đè chèo huyện Tích, băng miền vượt sang.
Dỡ đò, lên trước sảnh-đường,
Khuyển, Ưng, hai đứa nộp nàng dâng công.*

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Slavery

After their successful nefarious plot, Khuyển and Ưng carried the young unconscious woman aboard their junk. The boat, all sails set and halyards tight, was steered straight in the direction of Wushi.

As soon as they arrived, the ruffians unloaded the junk, and immediately reported to the courtroom. Khuyển and Ưng brought in

*Vực nàng tạm xuống môn-phòng,
 Hãy còn thêm-thiếp giấc nồng chưa phai.
 Hoàng-lương chợt tỉnh hôn mai,
 Cửa nhà đau mắt, lâu-đài nào đây?
 Bàng-hoàng giờ tỉnh, giờ say,
 Sảnh-đường mắng tiếng đòi ngay lên hầu.*

the kidnapped girl as a token of their zeal. Kiều, still immersed in a sound sleep, was then carried away and temporarily lodged in a servant's room.

Suddenly, she woke up from her dream of millet (163), but her soul seemed to be still floating among apricot-trees (164). « But, I am not in my house ! » she looked around, surprisingly. « What's this castle ? »

She had not got over her confusion and was only half-conscious when

(163) A sound sleep. Reference is made to a legend of a man named Lou-Sen who dreamt of becoming a mandarin. One day, Lou-Sen paid a visit to a pagoda of Lu-Sien, and spent a night there. The bonze, who was cooking millet, loaned him a pillow. Lou-Sen soon plunged into a sound sleep, during which he dreamt that he became a mandarin, and then was imprisoned for extortion in the collection of taxes. Upon waking up from his dream, he noticed that the millet had not been well cooked. Since then, he became disgusted forever with the mandarin.

(164) Reference is made to a legend concerning a man named Tchao-se-Hiung, who, after drinking a cup of wine offered by an immortal, fell asleep on a mountain, and awoke at the foot of an apricot-tree.

*Á-hoàn liền xuống giục mau,
 Hài-hùng nàng mới theo sau một người.
 Ngược trông tòa rộng, dãy dài,
 « Thiên-quang Chủng-tể » có bài treo trên.
 Ban ngày, sáp thắp hai bên,
 Giữa giường thất-bảo, ngồi trên một bà.
 Gạn-gùng ngọn hời, ngành tra,
 Sự mình, nàng đã cứ mà gửi thưa.*

a voice echoed from the courtroom, calling her to present herself right away for service. Right then, a few maids dashed down to urge her to appear. Quite frightened, the poor girl followed one of the servants.

Looking up, Kiều saw a suite of very large rooms with the inscription « Prime Minister, Imperial Mandarin » on the front. Though it was full daylight, the room was lit with candles on both sides. In the middle of the room, she saw an old lady sitting on a bed inlaid all over with seven precious materials (165). The latter began to ask her many questions concerning innumerable subjects. Kiều related her

(165) These seven precious materials consist of coral, amber, mother-of-pearl, agate, gold or silver, pearl, and crystal.

*Bất tình nổi trận mây mưa,
 Dức rằng: « Những giống bờ-thờ quen thân!
 « Con này chẳng phải thiện nhân,
 « Chẳng màu trốn chúa, thì quán lộn chồng.
 « Ra tuồng mèo mả, gà đồng,
 « Ra tuồng lúng-túng chẳng xong bề nào.
 « Đã đem mình bán cửa tao,
 « Lại còn khùng-khỉnh làm cao thế này!
 « Nào là gia-pháp nọ bay!
 « Hãy cho ba chục, biết tay một lần!»*

story with sincerity. But, contrary to her expectation, the lady flew into a sudden rage.

« How vicious professional adventuresses are ! » she cried furiously.
 « This girl is certainly not a honest one ! If she is not an escaping servant, surely she is an unfaithful wife ! All her appearances are those of a prairie-hen and of a cat who lives by the tombs. In addition, her recent awkward answers are enough to prove that she has not got along well with anybody. Now, girl ! How did you dare answer me scornfully and haughtily after selling yourself to my house as a servant ? Do you think there is no discipline here ? Come on, you over there ! Give this girl thirty blows of the stick to show her once for all how severe I am ! »

*A-hoàn trên dưới dạ rân,
Dẫu rằng trăm miệng khôn phân lẽ nào!
Trúc-cón ra sức đập vào,
Thịt nào chẳng nát, gan nào chẳng kinh!
Xót thay đào lý một cành,
Một phen mưa gió tan-tành một phen!
Hoa-nô, truyền dạy đổi tên,
Buồng the, dạy ép vào phiên thị-tì.
Ra vào theo lũ thanh-y,
Dãi-dầu tóc rối, da chì quần bao!*

« Yes, Madam ! » all the servants replied in one voice. In this moment, even if Kiều had one hundred mouths, she would not have been able to put in one word of explanation. With a bamboo cudgel, one began to cane the poor girl with all his might. Oh ! What flesh could stand such a treatment, what courage could face it without fear ? How pitiful she was ! She looked now like a frail peach-branch or a frail plum-bough after a ravaging storm.

The cruel woman ordered Kiều's name to be changed into Hoa-nô (Slave-flower), and ordered her to work in the veiled rooms as a servant. From then on, Kiều was clad in blue like the other domestics, and lived their lives. Hard labor completely changed this beautiful girl into a ruffled-

*Quân-gia có một mụ nào,
Thấy người, thấy nét, ra vào mà thương.
Khi chè chén, khi thuốc thang,
Đem lời phương-tiện mở đường hiếu sinh.
Day rằng: « May rủi đã đành,
« Liều-bỏ mình giữ lấy mình cho hay.
« Cũng là oan-nghiệp chi đây,
« Sa cơ mới đến thế này, chẳng dung.*

haired and leadlike complexioned creature. But what did this matter to her?

During this unfortunate existence, Kiều was noticed by the governess of the palace. The latter, impressed by her good manners and gestures, began to feel a deep pity for this poor girl. Sometimes she offered her a cup of tea, occasionally some medicine, trying her best with her wise advice to give Kiều an interest for life. « I think, » she said, « whether happiness or misfortune, it is fixed in advance. My child! You are weak and frail like a reed or a willow. Take care of yourself for better days. Probably your present sufferings are the result of a crime committed in one of your precedent lives, for the misfortune you have been undergoing does not occur

« Ở đây tai vách, mạch rừng,
 « Thấy ai người cũ cũng đừng nhìn chi.
 « Kẻo khi sấm-sét bất-kỳ,
 « Con ong, cái kiến, kêu gì được oan !
 Nàng càng giọt ngọc như chan,
 Nỗi lòng luống những bàn-hoàn niềm tấy.
 « Phong-trần, kiếp đã chịu đầy,
 « Lành-than, lại có thứ này bằng hai !
 « Phận sao bạc chẳng vừa thôi ?
 « Khăng-khăng buộc mãi lấy người hồng-nhan !

without reason. Here, in this house, all the walls have ears like small springs in a forest. If ever you meet one of your old friends, pretend not to be acquainted with her. Unexpected storms might break out, and at that moment, as a weak bee or a frail ant, how can you prove your innocence ? »

At these words, Kiều burst into abundant tears, which flowed down her cheeks like pearls. Secret thoughts constantly filled her heart. « I had already been banished to a dusty and windy world, » she thought, « but this present calamity is twice as bad as any previous one. Why is fate so cruel to me ? Why does this ill-luck continue to pursue relentlessly the

« Đã đành túc-trái tiền-oan,
 « Cũng liều ngọc nát, hoa tàn, mà chi ! »
 Những là nường-náu qua thì,
 Tiểu-thư phải buổi mới về ninh-gia.
 Mẹ con trò-chuyện lân-la,
 Phu-nhân mới gọi nàng ra dạy lời :
 « Tiểu-thư, dưới trướng thiếu người,
 « Cho về bên ấy, theo đòi lầu-trang. »
 Lính lời, nàng mới theo sang,
 Biết đâu địa-ngục, thiên-đường là đâu ?

rosy-checked girls ? Oh ! If it is written that I have to redeem my antecedent debts and crimes, I am ready to risk my life for it. What does it matter to me if my beauty is now like a broken jade or a withered flower ? »

So, she tried her best to resign herself to her fate, hoping for a better day. One morning, the young wife of Thúc dropped in to see her parents. It seemed that the mother and her daughter had talked about a lot of things, for the old lady sent for Kiều and told her : « Your young lady is in need of one more servant. You are allowed to go over there and serve her as a chambermaid. »

Kiều complied with the order given, and followed her new mistress,

*Sớm khuya khăn mặt, lược đầu,
Phán con hầu, giữ con hầu, đảm sai !
Phải đêm ém-à chiều trời,
Trúc tơ, hỏi đến nghề chơi mọi ngày.
Lĩnh lời, nàng mới lựa dây,
Ni-non, thánh-thót, dễ say lòng người.
Tiểu-thư xem cũng thương tài,
Khuôn uy dường cũng bớt vài bốn phần.*

without knowing whether she was going to Hell or to Paradise. Mornings and evenings were spent in preparing towels and combs for the young lady. How could she do otherwise ? She was a servant, and she had to fulfill the duties reserved for a servant.

One calm and serene night, the young wife of Thúc inquired about her talent of playing string and bamboo musical instruments. Submissively, Kiều took a guitar, adjusted its chords, and started playing. First, the notes began like wails, then danced like dripping water, so penetrating that they could inebriate the heart of any listener. The young lady seemed to be moved by such a talent, and from then on, her severity appeared to abate a little.

*Cửa người, đầy-đọa chút thân,
Sớm năn-nỉ bóng, đêm ngơ-ngẩn lòng.
Lâm-Chuy chút nghĩa. đèo-bồng,
Nước non để chữ tương-phùng kiếp sau!
Bốn phương mây trắng một màu,
Trông vời cố-quốc, biết đâu là nhà?
Lần-lần tháng trọn ngày qua,
Nỗi gần nào biết đường xa thế này.*

Since her entrance into this strange house, like a frail banished creature, Kiều had only her shadow to share her sufferings by day, and only her heart to share her grievous hours by night. Sometimes, the picture of Ihsien and that of the man, with whom she still had a slight relationship, came back to her mind. But, with this barrier of rivers and mountains, a reunion could be expected only in a future life !

Far above, the sky was entirely covered with a uniform veil of white clouds. Kiều looked in the direction of her forlorn native land, and wondered where she could locate her dear home.

Days and months went by. So far, nothing important had changed around her, and she did not know either what was happening in the other country.

XVII

*Lâm-Chuy từ thuở yên bay,
Buồng không, thương kẻ thảng ngày chiếc thán.
Mây xanh, trăng mới in ngần,
Phấn thừa, hương cũ, bội phần xót-xa.
Sen tàn, cúc lại nở hoa,
Sầu dài, ngày ngắn, đông đà sang xuân.*

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Face to Face

Since the so-called death of his sweetheart, like a wild duck abandoned by his jenny, Thúc had spent days and months confining himself mournfully in his empty room in Ihsien. Far above, the new crescent recalled to him the beautiful eyebrows of his beloved. The sight of the remainder of her make-up and the perfume which still scented the room seemed to increase his sorrow tenfold. The lotus had withered, and the chrysanthemum had started blooming. How long melancholy was, and how short the days

*Tìm đâu cho thấy cố-nhân?
Lấy câu vận-mệnh khuấy dần nhớ thương.
Tranh niềm nhớ cảnh gia-hương,
Nhớ quê, chàng lại tìm đường thăm quê.
Tiểu-thư đón cửa dā-dề,
Hàn-huyền vừa cạn mọi bề gần xa.
Nhà hương cao cuốn bức là,
Buồng trong, truyền gọi nàng ra lay mằng.*

appeared to him! Winter was passing to give place to spring. Where could he find again his old true-love? « Thus is fatality! » Thúc murmured, trying to calm his poignant remembrances and regrets. The dear picture of his native land returned to mind. Tortured by nostalgia, Thúc decided to return to his country.

This time, upon his arrival, he saw his wife already standing at the front door with her effusive greetings. Hardly had they finished exchanging questions about how they had endured the cold and heat (166), and how they had felt for each other during their long separation, when the young lady rolled up the curtain of the

(166) See footnote 56.

*Bước ra một bước, một ngừng,
 Trống xa, nàng đã tỏ chừng nẻo xa :*
*« Phải rằng nắng quáng, đèn lòe,
 « Rõ-ràng ngồi đó chẳng là Thúc-sinh ?
 « Bây giờ, tình mới tỏ tình,
 « Thôi thôi đã mắc vào vành, chẳng sai !
 « Chúc đầu, có chúc lạ đời !
 « Người đầu mà lại có người tình-ma !
 « Rõ-ràng thật lừa dối ta,
 « Làm cho con ở, chúa nhà, dối nơi !*

perfumed room and ordered Kiều to come out to pay her respects to her new master.

Kiều inched forward, step by step, confusedly. Suddenly, she stopped, quite dumbfounded. In the distance, she seemed to distinguish. . . « Oh, no ! » Kiều murmured. « Am I dazzled by the sun or by lamplight ? Isn't Thúc seated there ? Ah ! I comprehend all now. It's all finished with me ! Without a doubt, I have let myself be caught in the trap. What a strange ruse ! What a woman ! Who can be more devilish than this one ? It is all clear and true : she has succeeded in separating both of us by transforming me into a servant, and him into the master of the

*« Bề ngoài thơn-thớt nói cười,
 « Mà trong nham-hiểm, giết người không dao.
 « Bảy giờ đất thấp, trời cao,
 « Ăn làm sao, nói làm sao bảy giờ ? »
 Càng trông mặt, càng ngẩn-ngơ,
 Ruột tâm đòi-đoạn như tơ rối bời.
 Sợ uy dám chẳng vâng lời,
 Cái đầu nép xuống sát mai một chiều.*

house. And so far, she has feigned to talk and laugh with me with all the appearances of gaiety. But inwardly, this sly woman has been plotting my death without resorting to a dagger. And now, what can I do and say when my position has become so low, and hers, so high, like the earth and the sky ? »

The more she looked at Thúc, the more bewildered she became. Kiều felt most grievous like a silkworm with twisted bowels (167), and her thoughts seemed like a skein of entangled silk threads. But in front of her severe mistress, how could she dare disobey orders ? The poor girl bowed her head, and prostrated herself on the floor of the yard planted with apricot-trees.

(167) An expression used to designate deep grief.

Sinh đà phách lạc, hồn xiêu :

« Thương ôi ! chẳng phải nàng Kiều ở đây ?

« Nhân làm sao đến thế này ?

« Thôi thôi ta đã mắc tay ai rồi ! »

Sợ quen, dám hở ra lời,

Khôn ngăn giọt ngọc, sụt-sùi nhỏ sa.

Tiểu-thư trông mặt hỏi tra :

« Mới về có việc chi mà động dong ? »

The young man appeared to be bewildered and lose all his senses. « Oh, mercy upon me ! Isn't this my dear Kiều there ? » he murmured dolefully. « How could she fall so low ? Ah ! I understand now who has set this trap ! »

He was afraid of acknowledging her as one of his acquaintances, and dared not utter a word. But, how could he keep his tears from flowing like pearls down his cheeks ?

« Oh, my dear ! » the young lady looked straight at him, pretending to inquire about his sorrow. « What's the matter with you ? Why are you so upset right after you come back home ? »

*Sinh rằng : « Hiếu phục vừa xong,
 « Suy lòng trắc-dĩ, đau lòng chung-thiên ! »
 Khen rằng : « Hiếu-tử đã nên !
 « Tẩy-trần, mượn chén giải phiền đêm thu. »
 Vợ chồng chén tạc, chén thù,
 Bất nằng đứng chực trì-hờ hai nơi.
 Bất khoan, bất nhất, đến lời,
 Bất quì tận mắt, bất mời tận tay.*

« It is because of the mourning for my mother which has just ended, »
 Thúc replied. « When I think of her, who is living now on the Kia
 mountain (168), I cannot help feeling a deep suffering that will take
 its place forever in my heart (169). »

« You have become really a very pious son, my dear ! » Hoạn-Thư
 praised. « But now, let's wash away the dust of the journey, and may
 these cups of wine melt away the sorrow of this autumn night ! »

Both wife and husband drank together. Kiều was compelled to stand
 nearby to serve them with wine, fast or slow, depending upon the orders
 of her mistress. The latter also obliged her to kneel down right in front

(168) An abode of immortals.

(169) Through these words, Thúc would imply indirectly to Kiều that he
 would never forget the wretched condition into which she had fallen
 because of him.

*Sinh càng như đại, như ngáy,
Giọt dài, giọt ngắn, chén đầy, chén vơi.
Ngảnh đi, chợt nói, chợt cười,
Cáo say, chàng đã giam bài lẳng ra.
Tiểu-thư vội thét : « Con Hoa !
« Khuyển chàng chẳng cạn thì ta có đôn ! »
Sinh càng nát ruột, tan hồn,
Chén mời, phải ngậm bồ-hồn, ráo ngay !
Tiểu-thư cười nói tỉnh say,
Chừa xong cuộc rượu, lại bày trò chơi.*

of the drinker and hand him the cup of wine herself. The young man felt more and more grieved and confused. His tears flowed down abundantly every time he received a cup full or half-full of wine offered by his beloved. Many times he tried to turn his eyes away and insert a word or a laugh at random. Finally, simulating drunkenness, Thúc skillfully announced that he could not drink any more.

« Hoa-nô ! » the young lady cried furiously. « If you turn Monsieur away from emptying his cup, I'll whip you myself ! »

This time, feeling extremely out of countenance, Thúc emptied at a gulp the offered cup of bitter wine.

Pretending drunkenness, the young lady laughed and talked



Sinh càng như đại, như ngày.

The young man felt more and more grieved and confused.

*Rằng : « Hoa-nô đủ mọi tài,
« Bắn đàn thử giao một bài chàng nghe ! »
Nàng đà tán-hoán, té-mé,
Váng lời, ra trước bình the, vắn đàn.
Bốn dây như khóc, như than,
Khiến người trên tiệc cũng tan-nát lòng!
Cũng trong một tiếng tơ đồng,
Người ngoài cười nụ, người trong khóc thầm.*

unceasingly. Then, not waiting for the toast to come to an end, she invented another entertainment.

« Our slave Hoa-nô is endowed with many talents, » she said as she turned in the direction of the poor girl. « Hoa, play some guitar music for Monsieur to enjoy ! »

Dumbfounded and paralysed, Kiêu complied with the order ; she went and sat down in front of the veil screen to tune her guitar. From the four vibrating chords, notes flowed out like sobs and wails, plunging the one who feasted into poignant sorrow. At the same sounds produced by the chords of the wooden musical instrument, the spectator smiled with pleasure while the actors of the drama wept to themselves.

*Giọt châu lã-chã khôn cầm,
 Cúi đầu, chàng nhúng gạt thắm giọt sương.
 Tiểu-thư lại thét lấy nàng:
 « Cuộc vui, gảy khúc đoạn-tràng ấy chi?
 « Sao chẳng biết ý-tứ gì?
 « Cho chàng buồn-bã, tội thì tại ngươi! »
 Sinh càng thâm-thiết bồi-hối,
 Vội vàng gương nói, gương cười cho qua.
 Giọt rồng canh đã điểm ba,
 Tiểu-thư nhìn mặt, đường đà cam-tám.*

Tears, like pearls, flowed down the young man's cheeks in spite of himself. He bowed his head, and dried them furtively.

The young lady flew once more into a rage. « Why play such a mournful piece for our entertainment? » she cried out. « How could you act so heedlessly? If Monsieur becomes afflicted by your music, you will be at fault for this! »

Thúc felt much more grievous. Immediately, he hastened to adopt reluctantly a playful air in order to smooth out the incident.

Drops of water dripping from a water clock adorned with a dragon

*Lòng riêng tấp-tĩnh mừng thầm :
« Vui này đã bỏ đau ngấm xưa nay ! »
Sinh thì gan héo, ruột đầy,
Nỗi lòng, càng nghĩ càng cay đắng lòng,
Người vào chung gối loan-phòng,
Nàng ra tựa bóng đèn giòng canh dài.*

head had already announced time for the third watch (170). From her face, one could see that the young lady had been quite satisfied with her trick. And it was true indeed, for she leapt for joy inwardly. « How happy I am now ! » she said to herself. « This is enough to make up for all that I had to suffer secretly »

But Thúc felt as though his liver were withering and his bowels were swelling. The more he thought of his love, the more bitterness filled his heart.

The spouses withdrew to share their pillow in the phoenix room. Left alone, Kiều went out and stayed musing in the light

(170) Around 1 : 00 A. M. In the Vietnamese and Chinese countryside, the patrol was organized and divided into five shifts called watches. A watch covered two hours. The first one started from 7 : 00 P. M. , and the last one ended by 5 : 00 A. M. the next day.

Bảy giờ mới rõ tăm-hơi,
« Máu ghen, đâu có lạ đời nhà ghen !
« Chúc đâu rẽ thúy, chia duyên !
« Ai ra đường nấy, ai nhìn được ai.
« Bảy giờ một vực, một trời,
« Hết điều khinh-trọng, hết lời thị-phi.
« Nhẹ như bạc, nặng như chì,
« Gỡ cho ra nữa, còn gì là duyên !

of a nightlamp. Now, everything appeared remarkably clear to her, as visible as air bubbles on the surface of the water. « What a jealous woman ! » she murmured thoughtfully, « the most strangely jealous creature in this world ! How artful her ruses are in separating kingfishers and wild ducks (171) ! She is really very clever in putting the lovers on two separate planes and keeping them from looking at each other ! Now, since my position has become so low and his, so high, like a chasm compared to the sky, how can I expect to exchange with him our sweet or serious sentiments, or our intimate words ?

« Surely I'll have to hear her mortifying and afflicting addresses.

(171) These birds are well known for always living in pairs.

*« Lỡ-làng chút phận thuyền-quyển,
« Bể sâu, sóng cả, có tuyến được vay ? »
Một mình âm-ỷ đêm chầy,
Đĩa dầu vơi, nước mắt đầy năm canh.*

If ever I succeed in getting out of this situation, what destiny will be still reserved for me ? As a graceful young woman whose fate seems so precarious, how can I hope for a safe escape from this deep and tempestuous ocean ? »

Lonesome, Kiều mused over her misfortune until very late at night. The oil had already ebbed in the dish, but her tears continued to flow down until the last watch went by.

XVIII

*Sớm khuya hầu-hạ đài-doanh,
Tiểu-thư chạm mặt, dè tình hỏi tra.
Lựa lời, nàng mới thưa qua :
« Phải khi mình lại xót-xa nỗi mình. »
Tiểu-thư hỏi lại Thúc-sinh :
« Cây chàng tra lấy thực tình cho nao ! »*

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Kiều Becomes a Nun

Kiều continued to work in the palace day and night as a servant. One day, coming across the poor girl, the young lady observed her face, and pressed her with questions about the reason of her presence. Kiêu, weighing her words, replied briefly that, sometimes, she suffered deeply when she thought of her own situation.

« I entrust you with this matter, my dear, » Hoạn-Thư addressed

*Sinh đà rất ruột như bào,
Nói ra chẳng tiện, trông vào chẳng đang!
Nhưng e lại lụy đến nàng,
Đánh liều mới sẽ lựa đường hỏi tra.
Cúi đầu quì trước sân hoa,
Thán-cung nàng mới dặng qua một tờ.
Điện-tiền trình với tiểu-thư,
Thoát xem đường có ngăn-ngờ chút tình.*

her husband. « Please question her and get to the bottom of what she desires. »

The young man felt struck with pain as though his bowels had been pierced. Speaking to her was improper, and looking at her seemed beyond his courage. But, afraid that his attitude might bring some other calamity to his beloved, Thúc plucked up his courage and, weighing his words, kindly asked her a few questions. Kiều bowed her head and prostrated herself on the floor of the flowery yard. She respectfully presented to him a written sheet of paper, which the young man handed forthwith over to his wife.

Hoạn-Thư looked very surprised and seemed a little affected after

Liền tay trao lại Thúc-sinh,
 Rằng: « Tài nên trọng, mà tình nên thương !
 « Ví chẳng có số giàu sang,
 « Giá này dẫu đúc nhà vàng cũng nên !
 « Bể trần, chìm nổi thuyền-quyển,
 « Hữu tài, thương nổi vô-duyên, lạ đời ! »
 Sinh rằng: « Thật có như lời,
 « Hồng-nhan bạc-mệnh, một người nào vay !
 « Nghìn xưa âu cũng thế này,
 « Từ-bi âu liệu bớt tay mới vừa. »

reading the paper. She handed it back at once to her husband.

« Her talent is worthy of respect, and her fate deserves pity ! »
 she said. « If this girl were born for riches and honors, she would
 have deserved to live in a castle made of gold for her merit. Alas ! On
 this dusty ocean, she has met so many vicissitudes during her life. What
 talent she has, and how pitiful she is ! Her misfortune is extraordinary
 indeed ! »

« It's quite true as you have just said, » implored Thúc. « Among
 rosy-cheeked girls, she is not the only victim of cruel fate. It has always
 been so for millenniums. Be merciful and treat her more kindly. »

Tiểu-thư rằng: « Ý trong tờ,
« Ráp đem mệnh bạc, xin nhờ cửa Không.
« Thôi thì thôi, cũng chiều lòng,
« Cũng cho nghĩ-nghĩ trong vòng bước ra.
« Săn Quan-âm-các vườn ta,
« Có cây trăm thước, có hoa bốn mùa.
« Có cỏ-thụ, có sơn hồ,
« Cho nàng ra đó giữ chùa tụng kinh. »
Tảng-tảng, trời mới bình-minh,
Hương hoa, ngũ cúng, sám-sanh lễ thường.

« She says in this paper that she accepts her cruel fate and asks for permission to live under the protection of Buddha, » replied the young lady. « Well ! Be it so. I am ready to grant her this favor and let her prepare to get out of this situation. In our garden, there exists a temple dedicated to Kouan-In (172) with trees hundreds of cubits high, flowers throughout the year, a centennial tree, and a pond adorned with rock-works. Let her go over there to keep the temple and say her prayers ! »

Next day, no sooner had the early brilliant sunbeams shone

(172) A merciful goddess, one of the many incarnations of Buddha.

Đưa nàng đến trước Phật-đường,
 Tam qui, ngũ giới, cho nàng xuất-gia.
 Áo xanh đổi lấy cà-sa,
 Pháp-danh lại đổi tên ra Trạc-Tuyền.
 Sớm khuya tính đủ dầu đèn,
 Xuân, Thu, cắt sẵn hai tên hương trà.

in the clear and peaceful sky than one already saw the five offerings (173) ready for the customary rites. Kiều was led before the altar of Buddha. After a ritual ceremony of the three submissions (174) and five prohibitions (175), Kiều was acknowledged as a religious person from then on. She exchanged her blue clothes for a cloak, and her name was changed into Trạc-Tuyền (Purified Source). One reserved a certain sum of money enough to secure oil for her worship day and night. Two servants, named Xuân and Thu, were assigned to help her light incense and prepare tea for the offerings.

(173) The five offerings consist of : incense, candles, flowers, tea, and fruit.

(174) The three submissions consist of : converting oneself into Buddhism, complying with Buddhist laws, and taking the Buddhist holy orders.

(175) The five prohibitions consist of : prohibition of killing, robbing, living luxuriously, lying, and drinking alcohol.

*Nàng từ lánh gót vườn hoa,
 Đường gần rừng tía, đường xa bụi hồng.
 Nhân-duyên đâu lại còn mong?
 Khỏi điều then phận, tui hồng thì thôi.
 Phật tiền thăm lớp sầu vùi,
 Ngày phò thủ-tự, đêm nhồi tâm-hương.
 Cho hay giọt nước cành dương,
 Lửa lòng tưới tắt mọi đường trần-duyên.*

Since she took asylum in this flowery garden, Kiều felt as if she had been approaching more and more the forest of purple bamboos of Kouan-In (176), and going farther and farther from this rosy-dusted world. What love could she hope for in this place? That was enough for her, and she felt now quite satisfied with this existence that had freed her from bearing the shame of her dishonored beauty.

Under the protection of Buddha, she tried to bury her sufferings and cover her sorrow by spending all day long in copying manuscripts and all the night in keeping the votive incense from dying out. How

(176) According to the Buddhist holy books, Kouan-In lived in a forest of purple bamboo-trees.

*Nâu sông từ trở màu thuyền,
 Sân thu trăng đã vãi phen đứng đầu.
 Quan-phòng, then nhắt, lưới mau,
 Nói lời trước mặt, rơi châu vắng người.
 Góc kinh, viện sách, đôi nơi,
 Trong gang-tấc, lại gặp mười quan-san.*

miraculous the water from the poplar-bough was (177)! With a few drops, it seemed that the ardor of her passion had been appeased and her link with this dusty world had been broken.

From the time she was clad in dark brown and lived this religious life, the moon, high above in the sky, had cast many times its brilliant light over the autumnal garden. All around, she had found nothing but a constant watch, well-bolted doors, as if she were confined in a narrow-meshed net.

Kiêu tried to talk gaily in the presence of others, but as soon as she was left alone, her tears flowed down dolefully. She lived so close to her beloved — not even one span from her prayer tower to the young man's study room — and yet it seemed as if there existed an obstacle ten times more difficult to surmount than a frontier gate or a high mountain.

(177) Kouan-In brought a dead child to life again by sprinkling the holy water over him with a poplar-bough.

*Những là ngậm thở, nuốt than,
Tiểu-thư phải buổi vắng-an về nhà.
Thừa cơ, Sinh mới lên ra,
Xăm-xăm đến mé vườn hoa với nàng.
Sụt-sùi, dờ nổi đoạn-tràng,
Giọt châu tầm-tã dẫm tràng áo xanh.
« Đã cam chịu bạc với tình,
« Chúa xuân để tội một mình cho hoa.
« Thấp cơ, thua trí đàn-bà,
« Trông vào đau ruột, nói ra ngại lời.*

On the other hand, Thúc had been trying to conceal his sorrow and refrain from his complaints. One morning, profiting from the absence of his wife, who went to pay a visit to her parents, the young man stole out in the direction of the garden to meet his sweetheart. The poor lover sobbed out all his unhappiness. His tears flowed down upon his blue dress like abundant pearls.

« Ah ! How much injustice I have committed toward you ! » he lamented dolefully. « The queen of spring wanted to punish only the flower ! We were not clever enough to stand against the ruse of that woman, I felt most grieved every time I looked at you, and

« Vì ta cho lụy đến người,
 « Cát làm ngọc trắng, thiết đời xuân-xanh !
 « Quân chi lên thác, xuống ghềnh,
 « Cũng toan sống thác với tình cho xong.
 « Tông-đường, chút chứa cam lòng,
 « Nghiến răng bẻ một chữ đồng làm hai.
 « Thẹn mình đá nát, vàng phai,
 « Trăm thân, dễ chuộc một lời được sao ? »

the words seemed as though choked in my throat. It is because of me that you are now so unhappy. The mud has stained your pure jade, involving the loss of the prime of your spring. No matter how many dangers and difficulties I should have had to face, I should have decided to live and die for my love. But still having a duty to fulfil toward my ancestors (178), I was obliged to repress my sorrow and break asunder the bond of our liaison. Oh ! How ashamed I have been for breaking the stone and tarnishing the gold of our oaths ! Now, in view of what has happened to you, even if I gave my life one hundred times, how could I redeem my pledged word ? »

(178) This duty consisted of living maritally with his first wife so as to have a son for the family cult.

Nàng rằng : « Chiếc bách sóng dào,
 « Nổi chìm, cũng mặc lúc nào rủi may.
 « Chút thân quần-quai vũng lầy,
 « Sống thừa, còn trông đến rày nữa sao ?
 « Cũng liệu một giọt mưa dào,
 « Mà cho thiên-hạ trông vào cũng hay !
 « Xót vì cầm đã bén dây,
 « Chẳng trăm năm, cũng một ngày duyên ta.

« I am like a cypress-wood junk pitching and tossing on raging waves and billows, » replied Kiều. « It will float or sink depending upon ill or good luck. How could I believe that, in the struggle to save my poor life out of these marshes, I should still have the happiness of meeting you again during the rest of my days ? Thinking that my life was but a drop of water from a shower, I had sacrificed it, hoping this would serve as a good example for the people of this world. But how much I suffered when I thought of the vibration of the chords of our love guitar (179) ! No matter how long it had lasted, one hundred years or

(179) Communion of souls between two living beings ; shared love.

*« Liệu bài mở cửa cho ra,
 « Ấy là tình nặng, ấy là ân sâu ! »
 Sinh rằng : « Riêng tương bấy lâu,
 « Lòng người nham-hiểm, biết đâu mà lường.
 « Nữa khi giống-tổ phũ-phàng,
 « Thiệt riêng đây, cũng lại càng cực đây.
 « Liệu mà xa chạy cao bay,
 « Ái-ân ta có ngần này mà thôi !
 « Bấy giờ kẻ ngược, người xuôi,
 « Biết bao giờ lại nối lời nước non ?*

one day, it did link us together. Please find a means to get me out of this place. This will be a token of your great love which I'll never forget. »

« I have thought of this many times, » Thúc said, « but the heart of my wife is truly a bottomless chasm. How could I imagine what she was plotting ? And if she pushed her brutality further, not only would it be a great calamity for you, but it would also condemn me into a much more grievous life. So, take all your dispositions to flee far from here. Our love cannot last any longer ! Now, since we are compelled to go our separate ways, I don't know when we may exchange our

*« Dẫu rằng sông cạn, đá mòn,
 « Con tằm đến thác cũng còn vương tơ ! »
 Cùng nhau kẻ-lẻ sau xưa,
 Nói rồi lại nói, lời chưa hết lời.
 Mặt trông, tay chẳng nở rời,
 Hoa-tì đã động tiếng người nỏ xa.
 Nhận ngừng, nuốt tủi, đứng ra,
 Tiểu-thư đầu đã rẽ hoa bước vào.*

oaths again before mountains and rivers. One can see rivers dry up or stones wear away, but never can one see a silkworm die separated from his cocoon (180). »

Together, they talked about the past and the future. The same words were repeated and repeated again as though they could not pour out all their inmost sentiments. Hand in hand, they looked at each other, unable to decide to part.

Suddenly, a servant appeared and warned them that someone was approaching. Dumbfounded, they stood apart from each other, trying to conceal their embarrassment. Right then, the young lady, coming apparently

(180) Here Thúc meant that he would never forget the person whom he loved.

*Cười cười, nói nói ngọt-ngào,
 Hỏi chàng mới ở chốn nào lại chơi ?
 Đối quanh, sinh mới liệu lời :
 « Tìm hoa quá bước, xem người viết kình. »
 Khen rằng: « Bút-pháp đã tinh,
 « So vào với thiếp Lan-đình nào thua !
 « Tiếc thay lưu-lạc giang-hồ,
 « Nghìn vàng thật cũng nên mua lấy tài ! »*

from nowhere, stepped out from among the flowers.

« Hello ! » exclaimed the newcomer gleefully. « Where did you come from, my young lord ? Are you taking a walk ? »

« I went out to pick some flowers, » Thúc weighed his words and replied evasively, « and pushed on as far as this place to see her write the verses. »

« What a marvellous brush ! » Hoạn-Thư exclaimed as though entranced with admiration. « Compared to the writing of Lanting (181), this needs not yield to it in anything. It's regretful that such a person has to live the life of an exile and of an adventuress. Her talent is truly worth one thousand gold taels ! »

(181) Lanting was the literary name of the famous calligrapher Ouang-hi-Tche, whose inscriptions made on stones were used later as a model writing.

*Thuyền trà cạn nước hồng-mai,
 Thong-dong nổi gót thư-trại cùng về.
 Nàng càng e-lệ ủ-ê,
 Rỉ tai, hỏi lại Hoa-tì trước sau.
 Hoa rằng: « Bà đến đã lâu,
 « Dón chừng đứng nấp độ đầu nửa giờ.
 « Rành-rành kê tóc chân tơ,
 « Mấy lời nghe hết, đã dư tỏ-tường.
 « Bao nhiêu đoạn khổ, tình thương:
 « Nỗi ông vất-vả, nỗi nàng thờ-than.*

Together, they drank a few cups of an infusion of red apricot-leaves (182), which was used to replace tea for the ascetics. Then, one after another, the spouses leisurely returned to their study room.

Kiều felt much more confused and sorrowful. She bade the servant to come near and, in a low whisper, questioned her about what had happened.

« Madame ? Oh, she was here for a long time ! » replied the servant.
 « She had come here noiselessly, and had stood hidden for about half an hour. She didn't miss a single word of what you said to each other — your calamities, your love, and the grief of Monsieur, and your complaints,

(182) A kind of shrubby tree planted in India.

*« Dẫn tôi đứng lại một bên,
 « Chán tai rồi mới bước lên trên lầu. »
 Nghe thói kinh-hãi xiết đâu,
 « Đàn-bà thế ấy, thấy âu một người!
 « Ấy mới gan! ấy mới tài!
 « Nghĩ càng thêm nổi sồn gai rụng-rời!
 « Người đâu sáu-sắc nước đời,
 « Mà chàng Thúc phải ra người bó tay!
 « Thực tang, bắt được đường này,
 « Máu ghen, ai cũng chau mày nghiêng răng.*

everything concerning both of you. She ordered me to stay in a corner, and stepped up onto this pavilion only after she had listened to all your talk. »

How could one depict Kiều's terror at this report? « What a woman ! » she murmured. « Where can one find another like her ? What audacity ! What cleverness ! The more I think of her, the more it makes my flesh creep. She is really the slickest woman in this world ! And lord Thúc stood there with folded arms doing nothing ! Any other jealous woman, if catching her husband in such a very act, would have knit her

« Thế mà im chẳng đái-dăng,
 « Chào mời vui-vẻ, nói-năng diu-dàng!
 « Giận dầu ra dạ thế-thường,
 « Cười dầu mới thực khôn lường hiểm-sầu.
 « Thân ta, ta phải lo âu,
 « Miếng hùm, nọc rắn, ở đâu chốn này!
 « Ví chẳng chấp cánh cao bay,
 « Trèo cây lâu cũng có ngày bẻ hoa.
 « Phận bèo, bao quản nước sa,
 « Lênh-đênh đâu nữa cũng là lênh-đênh.

brows or gnashed her teeth. But this one is quite different ! She stood there, silent, uttering not the slightest angry word, and still tried to greet her husband cheerfully and talk to him sweetly. Getting angry ? Oh, no ! This is for common people ! But laughing . . . Ah ! This one has really a clever way of making it most difficult to tell what is in her heart ! Now, it's up to me to take care of my own person. There seems always to be the mouth of a tiger or the venom of a snake lying in wait for me somewhere in this place. If I don't hasten to run away from here, this woman, by dint of climbing the tree, will surely pick its flowers some day. As a duckweed, what does it matter to me if I am to fall down into the water

*« Chín e quê khách một mình,
 « Tay không chưa dễ tìm vành đũa no ! »
 Nghĩ đi, nghĩ lại quanh-co,
 Phát-tiền, sẵn có mọi đồ kim-ngân.
 Bền mình giắt để hộ thân,
 Lần nghe canh đã một phần trống ba.
 Cất mình qua ngọn tường hoa,
 Lần đường theo bóng trắng tà về tây.*

once more? To drift here or elsewhere, it will make no difference to me. But I am afraid, however, that it won't be easy for me alone in this strange country to find shelter and food with empty hands. »

Her thoughts went round and round for a solution. In the temple, there existed diverse gold and silver objects. Kiều took them so as to assure her subsistence. Then, she stood there, waiting and listening : the drum finally sounded to announce the third watch. Kiều rushed out, climbed over the top of a flowery wall, and walked gropingly along the road in the direction of the setting moon.



Cất mình qua ngọn tường hoa...

She climbed over the top of a flowery wall...

XIX

*Mịt-mù dăm cát đồi cây,
Tiếng gà điểm nguyệt, dấu giày cầu sương.
Canh khuya thân gái dậm trường,
Phần e đường-sá, phần thương dãi-dầu!*

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Giác - Duyên

Far away was an expanse of sand spreading as far as a little wooded hill. Cocks' crows started echoing from beyond a guard post. Kiều crossed a bridge, leaving prints of her shoes clearly imprinted on the dewy ground. The night was already on the wane. The wretched girl continued to follow the long road, partly afraid of the dangers and the fatigues of the voyage, and partly pitying herself at the thought of the inclemency of the weather.

*Trời đông vừa rạng ngàn dâu,
Bơ-vơ nào đã biết đâu là nhà.
Chùa đâu trông thấy nẻo xa,
Rành-rành « Chiêu-Ấn Am » ba chữ bài.
Xăm-xăm gõ mái cửa ngoài,
Trụ-trì nghe tiếng rước mời vào trong.
Thấy màu ăn-mặc nâu-sống,
Giác-Duyên sư-trưởng lành lòng liền thương.
Gạn-gùng ngành-ngon cho tường,
Lạ-lùng, nàng hãy tìm đường nói quanh :*

In the East, dawn began to shine over the faraway expanse of mulberries. Kiêu walked at random, not knowing where to find shelter. Suddenly a pagoda appeared in the distance, with a large and clear inscription, « Seclusion Appeal Temple. » She went straight on and knocked at the outer door. A bonzess ran out, opened it, and invited her to come in.

At sight of Kiêu clad in dark brown, the good-hearted superioress Giác-Duyên felt immediately a sincere pity for the poor girl. She pressed her with questions and inquired about her origin.

Still feeling quite embarrassed, Kiêu tried to invent a story.

*« Tiểu-thiền quê ở Bắc-kinh,
 Qui sư, qui Phật, tu-hành bấy lâu.
 « Bản-sư rồi cũng đến sau,
 Dạy đưa pháp-bảo sang hầu sư-huỳnh. »
 Rày vàng diện hiển rành-rành.
 Chuông vàng khánh bạc bên mình giở ra.
 Xem qua sư mới dạy qua :
 « Phải nơi Hằng-Thủy là ta hậu-tình.
 « Chín e đường-sá một mình,
 Ở đây chờ đợi sư-huỳnh ít ngày. »*

« I am a humble professed nun coming from Peking, » she said. « I have converted myself into Buddhism and complied with Buddhist laws for a certain time. My Superioress will come here later. She charged me to bring first some precious objects to you, my Reverend One. So, according to her orders, I am very honored to present you these gifts. » Then, as though to comply really with these orders, Kiều took a little gold bell and a silver gong out of her cloak, and displayed them before the superioress.

« No doubt all this came from the monastery of my virtuous friend Hằng-Thủy, » said the religious woman after looking at the presents. « I am apprehensive for you on the way back alone, my daughter. Stay

*Gửi thân, được chốn am mây,
Muối dưa đắp-đổi tháng ngày thông-dong.
Kệ kinh câu cũ thuộc lòng,
Hương đèn việc cũ, trai phòng quen tay.
Sớm khuya lá bối phướn mây,
Ngọn đèn kêu nguyệt, tiếng chày nện sương.
Thấy nàng thông-tuệ khác thường,
Sư càng nể mặt, nàng càng vững chân.*

here for a few days awaiting the arrival of your superioress. »

With cooked rice and salted vegetables as her daily food, Kiều lived peaceful days and months in this calm and serene asylum. Everything seemed so familiar to her, from the psalmody of the memorized verses to the cares of the incense and lamps. Observing the fasts and prohibitions were things to which she was well accustomed. Mornings and evenings were spent in looking after the manuscripts and the banderoles, turning up or down the lamp wicks according to the light of the moon, and beating the gong to announce dew time.

Before her above-average intelligence and knowledge, all the bonzesses in the pagoda treated her with more respect and consideration. And Kiều, on her part, also felt more reassured.

XX

*Cửa thuyền vừa cũ cuối xuân,
Bóng hoa đầy đất, vẽ ngân ngang trời.
Gió quang, mây tạnh, thanh-thời,
Có người đàn-việt lên chơi cửa Già.
Giờ đờ chuông khánh xem qua,
Khen rằng: « Khéo giống của nhà Hoạn-nương! »*

CHAPTER TWENTY

New Misfortunes

Spring was on the wane. Vernal flowers were scattered all about the ground and around the holy place. Far above, the Milky Way spread across the sky. Not the slightest wind, not the smallest sign of a cloud was seen in the sky : the night seemed quite serene.

Just then, a pious donor dropped in to visit the monastery. « How curious it is, indeed ! » exclaimed the woman admiringly as she

*Giác-Duyên thực ý lo-lường,
 Đêm khuya mới hỏi lại nàng trước sau.
 Nghĩ rằng khôn nổi giấu màu,
 Sự mình nàng mới gót đầu bày ngay:
 « Bây giờ sự đã đường này,
 « Phận hèn dầu rủi, dầu may, tại người. »
 Giác-Duyên nghe nói rung-rời,
 Nửa thương, nửa sợ, bồi-hồi chẳng xong.
 Rủi tai mới kể sự lòng:
 « Ở đây của Phật là không hẹp gì.*

examined the small bell and the gong. « These objects look exactly like those of Mrs. Hoan ! »

Superioress Giác-Duyên candidly felt quite troubled. Very late in that night, she questioned Kiều again on the details of her coming. Thinking that it was difficult to hide the truth, the poor girl immediately unfolded the whole story from beginning to end. « And now, since this affair has been cleared up, » she concluded, « what will be my poor fate depends upon you, my Reverend One. »

The bonzess was seized with dismay at these words. Wavering between pity and fear, she didn't know what decision to make.

« Here, in this House of Buddha, » the religious woman finally

« E chẳng những sự bất kỳ,
 « Để nàng cho đến thế thì cũng thương !
 « Lánh xa, trước liệu tìm đường,
 « Ngồi chờ nước đến, nên đường còn quê ! »
 Có nhà họ Bạc bên kia,
 Am mây quen lối đi về dầu hương.
 Nhấn sang, dẫn hết mọi đường,
 Dọn nhà hãy tạm cho nàng trú chân.

whispered to her confidentially, « we are not without indulgence, my daughter ; but I am afraid that an unexpected calamity might happen to you. And at that moment, it would be painful to me to see you exposed to it ! Take all your belongings and run away far from here immediately. It would be imprudent to stay here awaiting the coming of the flood. »

Not very far from the monastery there was a house belonging to an old woman named Bạc-Bà. As a well-known frequenter of this serene place, the latter had often come to the pagoda to offer oil and incense. The superioress sent for her and gave her all possible recommendations concerning Kiều. Then she asked her to shelter the poor girl temporarily

Những mường được chốn an thân,
 Vội-vàng, nào kịp tính gần, tính xa.
 Nào ngờ cũng tổ bọm già,
 Bạc-Bà học với Tú-Bà đồng môn!
 Thấy nàng mặt phấn, tươi son,
 Mường thăm được buổi bán buôn có lời,
 Hur-không đặt-để nên lời,
 Nàng đà lớn sự rung-rời lắm phen.
 Mụ càng xua-đuổi cho liền,
 Lấy lời hung-hiêm, ép duyên Châu Trần.

for a certain time. Kiều, inwardly, had already enjoyed being in the new house as an asylum. In her precipitation, how could she foresee what might happen in the future ?

How could she suspect that this house was, in reality, the nest of an old panderess ? Bạc-Bà, alas ! had been with Tú-Bà in the same school. At sight of this beauty whose complexion seemed brighter than if she had applied make-up and rouge, the old woman felt a secret delight for happening upon so profitable a business.

How much great fuss had been made over nothing since Kiều's entrance into the house ! Kiều, fearful by nature, felt quite struck with dismay. After successful menaces of expulsion, the old hag resorted to awful threats in

*Rằng : « Nàng muốn dạm một thân,
 « Lại mang lấy tiếng dữ gần, lành xa.
 « Khéo oan-gia, của phá-gia!
 « Còn ai dám chứa vào nhà nữa đây?
 « Kịp toan kiếm chốn xe dầy,
 « Không-dưng chưa dễ mà bay đằng trời!
 « Nơi gần, thì chẳng tiện nơi,
 « Nơi xa, thì chẳng có người nào xa.
 « Nay chàng Bạc-Hạnh cháu nhà,
 « Cùng trong thân-thích ruột-rà, chẳng ai.*

order to urge her to get married.

« You are now alone, » she told the poor girl ruthlessly, « and at least ten thousand miles away from your home. I don't know where you gained your good reputation, but as far as I know, you have always been pursued by the evil one. How unlucky I am to be now a victim of a plague like you ! Who else would be stupid enough to shelter you in his house ? Hasten then to look for a man, girl ! If not, it would not be easy for you to find a way out of this dilemma. A match for you around here ? No, it would not be convenient. A match for you far from here ? Oh, no one could be found far from here for you ! Hark ! I have

*« Cửa nhà buôn-bán châu Thai,
 « Thực-thà có một, đôn-sai chẳng hề.
 « Thế nào nàng cũng phải nghe,
 « Thành thân rồi sẽ liệu về châu Thai.
 « Bấy giờ ai lại biết ai,
 « Dầu lòng bể rộng, sóng dài, thênh-thênh.
 « Nàng dầu quyết chẳng thuận tình,
 « Trái lời nẻo trước, lụy mình đến sau! »*

found a man for you at last! It's Bạc-Hạnh, a nephew and close kin of mine. He owns a mercantile shop in Taitchou (183). About honesty, oh! No one can be compared to him! Not the slightest trace of treachery! Come now, young girl, whatever it may be, you must listen to me. After the wedding, you may take all your belongings and move to Taitchou. Once there, who could recognize you? A free life will be reserved for you there, as free as that on a vast ocean or on an immense river. But, if you don't want to listen to me, if you oppose my orders, look out, girl! Calamity will strike you immediately! »

(183) A port, on the coast of Chekiang.

Nàng càng mặt ủ, mày chau,
Càng nghe mẹ nói, càng đau như rần.
Nghĩ mình túng đất, sẩy chân.
Thế cùng, nàng mới xa gần thờ-thần :
« Thiếp như con én lạc đàn,
« Phải cung, rày đã sợ làn cây cong.
« Cùng đường dầu tính chữ tòng,
« Biết người, biết mặt, biết lòng làm sao ?
« Nữa khi muốn một thế nào,
« Bán hùm, buôn sói, chắc vào lưng đầu ?

At this menace, Kiều looked more gloomy and could not help knitting her brows. The more she listened to the old woman, the more deeply she suffered, as if one had just beaten her with the back of a chopper. Being in need of shelter, she had let herself fall into this chasm. What could she do now to get out of this distressed situation ?

« Your servant, » Kiều replied, sighing dolefully, « is like a lost swallow : hurt once by an arrow from a bow, she is now frightful at the least sight of the shadow of a curved branch. If, driven to extremities, I had to accept this marriage, how could I know the heart of the man whom I haven't even known by sight ? In case something might happen, what could

« Dẫu ai lòng có sờ-cầu,
 « Tâm-minh, xin quyết với nhau một lời.
 « Chứng-minh có đất, có trời,
 « Bấy giờ vượt bể, ra khơi quản gì ! »
 Được lời mụ mới ra đi,
 Mách tin họ Bạc tức thì sắm-sanh.
 Một nhà dọn-dịp linh-đình,
 Quét sân, đặt trác, rửa bình, thắp nhang.

reassure me in this trade of tigers and bears (184) ? If someone desires to marry me, please ask him to come and exchange sincere oaths with me. Let the wedding be organized under the witness of Heaven and the Earth. After this, it matters little to me whether I'll have to cross the ocean or sail off into the open sea. »

At this statement of consent, the old woman went to communicate the good news to young Bạc, and urged him to prepare for the wedding immediately.

Soon, the house was crowded with people. They bustled all about

(184) Getting married to a stranger is equivalent to trading in wild animals. In this trade, it is hard to find a purchaser. Here, Kiều would imply that, in this marriage, she was not very sure of obtaining happiness as outlined by the old panderess.

*Bạc-sinh quì xuống vôi-vàng,
Quá lời nguyện hết Thành-hoàng, Thổ-công.
Trước sân, lòng đã giải lòng,
Trong màn làm lễ tơ-hồng kết duyên.
Thành-thân, mới rước xuống thuyền,
Thuận buồm một lá, xuôi miền châu Thai.
Thuyền vừa đỗ bến thành-thời,
Bạc-sinh lên trước tìm nơi mọi ngày.*

for the ceremony : sweeping the yard, setting up the altar, cleaning the vases. . . .

No sooner had the incense been burned than young Bạc hastened to kneel down before the altar, swearing confusedly in invoking all the village and earth spirits. After exchanging solemn oaths in the yard, the couple went into their curtained room to celebrate the final rite of the hymen rosy threads.

The wedding was thus considered well accomplished. They all walked in procession, accompanying the newly married couple as far as their junk. Soon, like a light leaf, the boat sailed before the wind in the direction of Taitchou.

As soon as the junk had come alongside the quay, Mr. Bac arranged

*Cũng nhà hành-viện xưa nay,
 Cũng phường bán thịt, cũng tay buôn người.
 Xem người, định giá, vừa rồi,
 Mỗi hàng một, đã ra mười thì buông.
 Mời người, thuê kiệu, rước nàng,
 Bạc đem mặt bạc, kiếm đường cho xa.
 Kiệu hoa đặt trước thềm hoa,
 Bên trong thấy một mụ ra vôi-vàng.*

to get ashore alone, and set out for a place well known to him. This was one of the eternal shops of traffickers of human flesh — professionals of slave-trade. They went together to see the girl offered for sale. A good price was offered and much haggling ensued. Finally, the tradesman consented to release his merchandise only when he found that his profit had surpassed ten times the sum he had paid. He went to hire a sedan chair and two men to carry the beautiful girl to her purchaser. Then, Mr. Bạc, as disloyal as the meaning of his name (185), slipped away.

The flowery palanquin had hardly been laid down in front of a monumental perron adorned with flowers when an old woman rushed

(185) This is a pun. The homonym of « Bạc, » the name of this infamous husband, is « Bạc, » which means disloyal, ungrateful, unfaithful.

Đưa nàng vào lạy gia-đường,
 Cũng thần mây trắng, cũng phượng lầu xanh!
 Thoát trông nàng đã biết tình,
 Chim lồng khôn lẽ cất mình bay cao.
 « Chém cha cái số hoa-đào,
 « Gỡ ra, rồi lại huộc vào như chơi!
 « Nghĩ đời mà ngán cho đời!
 « Tài-tình chi lắm cho trời đất ghen!

out of the house to welcome the newcomer. She showed Kiều to the main room and asked her to prostrate herself before the family altar. Why, this was still the white-browed genie! And, this house must be a green one without a doubt! At the first glance, Kiều immediately understood the situation. But, what could she do then? How could she fly away out of this cage?

« The devil take the fate of those girls who were born under the sign of the peach-flower star (186)! » Kiều murmured swearing to herself. « Just recently freed from this life, I am now tied to it

(186) Name of a star or a constellation, the influence of which is considered unlucky for any woman. According to Chinese astrology, this star stands for gallantry, frivolous life.

« *Tiểu thay nước đã đánh phèn,*
 « *Mà cho hùn lại vẫn lên mấy lần !*
 « *Hồng-quân với khách hồng-quân,*
 « *Đã xoay đến thế còn vẫn chưa tha.*
 « *Lỡ từ lạc bước, bước ra,*
 « *Cái thân liệu những từ nhà liệu đi.*
 « *Đầu xanh đã tội tình gì,*
 « *Má hồng đến quá nửa thì chưa thôi ?*

again as if I were a game of Destiny ! The more I think of my life, the more tired I am of it ! What's the use of having so many talents so as to kindle the jealousy of Heaven and the Earth ? How regretful it is for this alum-cleared water ! After so many pains, the mud still continues to rise again on its surface. Oh, Creator ! Why are you so cruel toward those who wear red trousers (187) ? Why persist in adding to my life further misfortunes after inflicting on me so much ill treatment ? Since the unexpected event which compelled me to leave my family, I had already accepted my fate even when I was still at home. So young in age, what crime did I commit to have to suffer anew after sacrificing more than a half of my life as a rosy-

(187) See footnote 9.

*« Biết thân chạy chẳng khỏi trời,
« Cũng liều mất phần cho rồi ngày xanh. »*

cheeked girl ? Oh ! Destiny ! I have known very well that I cannot escape from it ! Surely, this time, I'll have to sacrifice my beauty for the rest of my spring days. »

XXI

*Lần thâu gió mát trăng thanh,
Bồng đầu có khách biên-đình sang chơi.
Râu hăm, hàm én, mày ngài,
Vai năm tấc rộng, thân mười thước cao.
Đường-đường một đấng anh-hào,
Còn quyền hơn sức, lược-thao gồm tài.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Kiêu and Từ-Hải

Many entire nights had been spent amid fresh winds and in the clear moonlight since Kiêu's entrance into this house. One day, a customer from a frontier region dropped in for pleasure. How imposing the man looked ! A tiger moustache, a strong jaw, a pair of eyebrows like two silkworms, broad shoulders, and a high stature. He was well known as a hero, peerless in cudgel-fighting, in boxing, very skilled in strategy, and fearless of danger.

*Đội trời, đạp đất, ở đời,
Họ Từ, tên Hải, vốn người Việt-Đông.
Giang-hồ, quen thói vẫy-vùng,
Gươm đàn nửa gánh, non sông một chèo.
Qua chơi thấy tiếng nàng Kiều,
Tấm lòng nhi-nữ cũng xiêu anh-hùng.
Thiếp-danh đưa đến lầu hồng,
Hai bên cùng liếc, hai lòng cùng ưa.*

Từ-Hải was his name. Born in Kwangtung, the young man had so far lived the life of an adventurer, considering all lands and rivers as his own realm, and always traveling alone, across mountains and rivers, with no belongings other than a sword and a guitar slung around his shoulder.

The reputation of Kiều reached him immediately after he came to the entertainment quarter. How could one imagine that such a hero could become enamoured so quickly with this young girl? He had his visiting-card delivered to the rosy-curtained room. No sooner had they glanced at each other than their hearts seemed as if they were melting into one.

*Từ rằng: « Tâm-phúc tương-cờ,
 « Phải người trắng gió vật-vờ hay sao?
 « Bảy lâu nghe tiếng má đào,
 « Mắt xanh chẳng để ai vào, có không?
 « Một đời được mấy anh-kùng,
 « Bơ chi cá chậu, chim lồng mà chơi? »*

« Through our hearts and our souls, » Từ-Hải said, « we have become now acquainted with each other. I am not a man who came here for frivolous love. For a long time I was told about the reputation of your beauty. Is it true that your eyes have so far never become blue (188) for anyone ? I myself also acknowledge that very few really noble hearts can be encountered in the course of a lifetime. As for common men, those fishes raised in aquariums, those birds confined in cages (189), how can you have enjoyment in playing with them ? »

(188) Reference is made to Yuan-Ti, a lord in the period of the Tsins. It was told that his eyes always became blue when he received a sympathetic guest.

(189) An expression used to designate common rich men who prefer comfort to liberty.

Nàng rằng: « Người dạy quá lời,
 « Thân này còn dám coi ai làm thường!
 « Chút riêng chọn đá thử vàng,
 « Biết đâu mà gửi can-tràng vào đâu?
 « Còn như vào trước, ra sau,
 « Ai cho kén chọn vàng thau tại mình? »
 Từ rằng: « Lời nói hữu-tình!
 « Khiến người lại nhớ câu Bình-nguyên-quán.

« My lord, your words are too complimentary, » replied Kiều modestly. « As a wretched girl, how dare I treat other persons as vulgar. If, inwardly, my humble heart desired to choose a stone to test my gold, how could I know what person I could entrust with all my soul? As for those who come here by the front door and leave by the back one, do I have a right to choose one of them like I choose gold or copper? »

« How meaningful your words are! » Từ-Hải exclaimed admiringly.
 « They make me remember a story about lord Ping-Yuan (190). Come

(190) A powerful lord and son of King Tchao. He always had thousands of guests in his castle, but he often stated, « I don't know anyone to whom I can open my heart. »

« *Lại đây xem lại cho gần,*
 « *Phòng tin được một vài phần hay không?* »
Thưa rằng: « Lượng cả bao-dung,
 « *Tấn-dương được thấy mây rồng có phen.*
« Rộng thương cỏ nội, hoa hèn,
 « *Chút thân bèo bọt dám phiền mai sau. »*
Nghe lời vừa ý, gật đầu,
Cười rằng: « Tri-kỷ trước sau mấy người?

near, my dear, so that I may look at you more closely. I wonder whether I can repose some confidence in you. »

« How magnanimous you are ! » replied Kiêu. « Surely I may have a chance to see the cloud of the dragon at Hsinyuang (191). At that moment, please have pity for this weed and humble flower of the field. One day, as a duckweed and light foam, I'll dare ask for your assistance. »

Hearing these submissive words, Từ-Hải nodded and smiled. « There exist, in fact, few people who can understand me, » he said.

(191) « Surely I may have a chance to see you enthroned in Hsinyuang. »

*« Khen cho con mắt tinh đời,
 « Anh-hùng, đoán giữa trần-ai mới già !
 « Một lời đã biết đến ta,
 « Muốn chung, nghìn tấc, cũng là có nhau ! »
 Hai bên ý hợp, tâm đầu,
 Khi thân, chẳng lựa là cầu mới thân !
 Ngỏ lời nói với băng-nhân,
 Tiền trăm lại cứ nguyên ngân phát hoàn.*

« I sincerely praise you for your perspicacity. It is very clever indeed to be able to discern a great man when he is still drowned in the dust ! Just one word of yours was enough to prove that you have understood me. From now on, even when I have ten thousand gallons of rice (192) and one thousand war chariots, we'll live together forever.»

Both fell at once into perfect harmony after this brief exchange of ideas. When two persons are destined for each other, one doesn't need ask the other for his love. Từ-Hải asked a matchmaker to make arrangements for their union. Hundreds of taels were reimbursed

(192) Ten thousand gallons of rice represented the revenue of the lord of a large territory. This sentence means, « One day, even when I become rich and powerful, I'll live with you forever. »

*Buồng riêng sửa chốn thanh-nhàn,
 Đặt giường thất-bảo, vây màn bát-tiên.
 Trai anh-hùng, gái thuyền-quyên,
 Phi-nguyên sánh phượng, đẹp duyên cưỡi rồng.
 Nửa năm hương lửa đương nồng,
 Trọng-phu thoát đã động lòng bốn phương.*

to the owner of the house for what she had paid previously for the girl. Then, they proceeded to prepare for the couple a private apartment in a peaceful quarter, a bed inlaid with seven precious materials (193), and a surrounding curtain embroidered with pictures of the eight immortals (194). The brave man and the gracious girl were thus united, forming a well-matched pair of phoenixes riding on the same love dragon (195).

Half a year went by in ardent love. Suddenly, the old life of

(193) See footnote 165.

(194) The gods of a Chinese pantheon, often figured on paintings or embroideries.

(195) A consecrated expression borrowed from a Han's poem. The male phoenix and his jenny stand for a happy marriage. «Riding on a love dragon» is also an expression used to designate great conjugal happiness.

*Trống vờn trời bể mệnh-mang,
Thanh gươm, yên ngựa, lên đường thẳng rong.
Nàng rằng: « Phận gái chữ tòng,
Chàng đi, thiếp cũng một lòng xin đi. »
Tù rằng: « Tầm-phúc tương tri,
« Sao không thoát khỏi nữ-nhi thường tình?
« Bao giờ mười vạn tinh-binh,
« Tiếng chiêng dấy đất, bóng tinh rợp đường ;*

adventure seemed to revive in the heart of our hero. He retraced forlorn skies, boundless oceans, then pictured himself with his sword, riding a steed at a trot right ahead along the road.

« A wife has the duty to follow her husband anywhere he goes, » Kiêu said when she knew what was going on in the young man's mind. « If you depart, my lord, your servant asks you the favor to go with you. »

« We are now united to each other by the same sentiment of our hearts, » replied Tù-Hải. « Why can't you overcome such sentiments which exist only in common women ? When I come back at the head of one hundred thousand warriors, making the ground vibrate at the sounds of the gongs and darkening the roads with the shades of my standards,

« *Làm cho rõ mặt phi-thường,*
 « *Bấy giờ ta sẽ rước nàng nghi-gia.*
 « *Bằng nay bốn bể không nhà,*
 « *Theo càng thêm bận, biết là đi đâu ?*
 « *Đành lòng chờ đón ít lâu,*
 « *Chầy chẵng là một năm sau vội gì ? »*
Quyết lời dứt áo ra đi,
Gió đưa bằng tiện đến kỳ dặm khơi.
Nàng thì chiếc bóng song mai,
Đém thâu đằng-đẵng, nhất cài then mây.

and when I finally can show everyone my exceptional value, only at that moment shall I send for you to make you my wife. But, at present, surrounded by the four oceans, I have not the humblest place to live in as my own home. If you followed me, you would give me a lot of trouble. And where could I take you along then ? Stay here and wait for me for some time, my dear ! In one year at the latest, I'll come back for you. So, why be so much in a hurry ? »

Từ-Hải made up his mind and left for new adventures, like an eagle departing for long voyages when the time of favorable winds came.

Behind the spring-roller blind with the picture of an apricot-tree painted on it, Kiều spent long nights forlornly in her well-



Đành lòng chờ đón ít lâu. . .

Stay here and wait for me for some time, my dear!

Sân rêu chẳng vè dấu giày,
Cỏ cao hơn thước, liễu gầy vài phân.
Đoái thương muôn dặm tử-phần,
Hồn quê theo ngọn mây Tần xa-xa.
Xót thay huyền cỗi, xuân già,
Tấm lòng thương nhớ biết là có người?
Chốc là mười mấy năm trôi,
Còn ra khi đã da mồi, tóc sương.

bolted room. Footprints were seen no more in the yard covered with moss. Grass had grown around, more than one foot high. The willows seemed to become a little thinner. Kiều sorrowfully thought of the catalpaes and the elms of her native village. How very far from her they were now! Homesickness seemed to carry her soul toward the forlorn Tsin clouds (196). She felt deeply grieved at the thought of her old father and mother. Had their sorrow caused by her departure subsided any as time went on? How fast it was! It was almost ten years since then! If they still lived, maybe their skin had been wrinkled, and their hair had become gray like hoar-frost.

(196) See footnote 124.

*Tiếc thay chút nghĩa cũ-càng,
Dẫu là ngó ý, còn vương tơ lòng.
Duyên em dẫu nối chỉ hồng,
May ra khi đã tay bằng tay mang.
Tắc lòng cố-quốc, tha-hương,
Đường kia, nỗi nợ, ngổn-ngang bời-bời.
Cánh hồng bay bổng tuyết vời,
Đã mòn con mắt, phương trời đăm-đăm.*

And how much to be regretted her short puppy love was ! Like the lotus torn off from its stem, though their scheme had been broken, the love she had conceived for him still remained in her heart. « If my young sister, » Kiều murmured, thoughtfully, « had stuck the two ends of the rosy hymen threads together (197), surely she might have already had many children. »

Nostalgia, her present situation as an exile, her adventures, her misfortunes . . . seemed intermixed into thousands of entangled thoughts. And her hero still ! Maybe, in this hour, the big bird had flown very high in the sky. Since his departure, no news had come from him from the yonder horizon.

(197) « If my young sister had married Kim as she promised to me . . . »

Đêm ngày luống những âm-thầm,
Lửa binh đâu đã ầm-ầm một phương.
Ngất trời, sát-khí mờ-màng,
Đầy sông kinh-ngạc, chát đường giáp-binh.
Người quen thuộc, kẻ chung-quanh,
Nhủ nàng hãy tạm lánh mình một nơi.
Nàng rằng: « Trước đã hẹn lời,
Dẫu trong nguy-hiểm, dám rời ước xưa. »
Còn đương dưng-dặng, ngẩn-ngờ,
Mái ngoài đã thấy bóng cờ, tiếng loa.

Kiều continued to live days and nights in profound sorrow. Suddenly, the fire of war broke out in the region. The odors of massacres rose in the sky, spreading like a nightmare. How many pirates were seen along the rivers ! All the roads were crowded with soldiers clad in armor. Some of her acquaintances and a few persons living around her house came and urged Kiêu to take refuge in a safer place for the time being.

« I have promised to wait for him here, » she replied. « No matter how the dangers may be, I'll not fail him. »

Kiều was still standing uncertain and confused, not knowing what to do, when suddenly she saw the silhouettes of many banners appear on

*Giáp-binh kéo đến quanh nhà,
 Đồng-thanh cùng gửi : « Nào là phu-nhân ? »
 Hai bên mười vị tướng-quân,
 Đặt gươm, cỡi giáp, trước sân khấu đầu.
 Cung-nga, thế-nữ nối sau,
 Rằng : « Vâng lệnh-chỉ rước chầu vu-qui. »
 Săn-sàng phượng-liễn, loan-nghi,
 Hoa-quan giấp-giới, hà-y rờ-ràng.*

the outside. Then she heard clamors rise aloud from a loudspeaker. A group of soldiers clad in armor came swarming around the house. Many voices asked in unison, « Where's Madame ? » Then ten generals stepped in. They fell into two lines, laid down their swords, took off their armor, and prostrated themselves in the yard. Next to appear were the maids of honor and the ladies of the bedchambers. They also prostrated themselves before her and said, « By the order of our Master, we respectfully invite Your Highness to her August Husband. »

The imperial coach was already there, with pictures of many phoenixes carved on both sides, and sumptuously covered with beautiful curtains adorned with pictures of embroidered jenny phoenixes. Sitting on the front seat was a coachman wearing a hat adorned with a bunch

*Dựng cờ, nổi trống, lên đường,
 Trúc-tơ nổi trước, đào vàng kéo sau.
 Hỏa-bài tiền-lộ ruổi mau,
 Nam-đình, nghe động trống châu đại-doanh.
 Kéo cờ lữ, phát súng thành,
 Từ-công ra ngựa, thân nghênh cửa ngoài.*

of fluttering feathers, and a bright rose-colored dress.

The drums started rolling, and the procession left the place, following the unfurled banners. A group of musicians led the way. Bringing up the rear was the golden coach. Far ahead rode a herald bearing a fire-colored tablet (198).

In the distance, Kiều seemed to hear the rolling sound of drums echoing from the headquarters of the Court of the Emperor of the South (199). Right afterwards, a banner was hoisted up above the rampart and a cannonade roared from the citadel. There, coming out from behind the front gate was lord Từ himself, riding in her direction

(198) A kind of insignia borne by envoys entrusted with an important mission, to whom one had to give precedence and offer assistance.

(199) Từ-Hải proclaimed himself emperor of South China, in rebellion against Peking.

*Lũa mình là vẻ cán-đai,
Hãy còn hàm én, mày ngài như xưa.
Cười rằng : « Cá nước duyên ra,
« Nhớ lời nói những bao giờ hay không ?
« Anh-hùng mới biết anh-hùng,
« Rày xem phỏng đã cam lòng ấy chưa ? »
Nàng rằng : « Chút phận ngáy thơ,
« Cũng may dây cát được nhờ bóng cây.
« Đến bấy giờ mới thấy đây,
« Mà lòng đã chắc những ngày một hai. »*

so as to welcome her. Though wearing with ease a cap and a ceremonial belt this time, he always looked the same, with the same strong jaw and the same pair of eyebrows like two silkworms as in the olden days.

« Like fish and water, » Từ-Hải said, smiling, « we are really made to live together. Do you remember the words I told you previously ? It's really a great soul met by another great soul. Come on, my dear, and tell whether you are well satisfied now ? »

« I am but a young and inexperienced woman, » replied Kiều. « As a weak liana, how lucky I am to take refuge under a strong tree. I have waited until this day to contemplate the spectacle of your triumph, but my heart has already been confident since the first days of our union. »

*Cùng nhau trông mắt cả cười,
Đan tay về chốn trường-mai tự-tình.
Tiệc bày thưởng tướng khao binh,
Om-thòm trống trận, rập-rình nhạc quân.
Vinh-hoa hồ lúc phong-trần,
Chữ tình ngày lại thêm xuân một ngày.*

They looked at each other and laughed happily. Hand in hand, they entered the flowery tent so as to continue to pour out their inmost sentiments. A grandiose banquet was then organized to reward the officers and to entertain the troops. All about, the sounds of battle drums rose in harmony with the rhythmic military band. Ah ! It must be said that Kiều was deserving of all these honors after so much misery.

Day succeeded day, and each new day seemed to bring more freshness to their flame.

XXII

*Trong quân có lúc vui-vầy,
Thong-dong mới kể sự ngày hàn-vi :
Khi Vô-tích, khi Lâm-chuy,
Nơi thì lừa-đảo, nơi thì xót-thương.
« Tấm thân rày đã nhẹ-nhàng,
« Chút còn ân oán, đôi đường chưa xong.»*

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Justice of Kiêu

In the course of life in the barracks, during hours of ease, Kiêu little by little related to her husband all the misery and misfortunes she had undergone before she met him : sometimes those of Wuhsi, occasionally those of Ihsien, how she had been deceived, and also how some had taken pity on her. « Now, my poor soul has found some peace, » she continued ; « but there still exist two things that I have not accomplished : namely gratitude and vengeance. »

*Từ-công nghe nói thủy-chung,
 Bất-bình nổi trận ðùng-ðùng sấm vang.
 Nghiêm quân, tuyển tướng sấn-sàng,
 Dưới cờ một lệnh vôi-vàng ruổi sao.
 Ba quân chỉ ngọn cờ ðào,
 Ðạo ra Vô-tích, đạo vào Lâm-chuỵ.
 Mấy người phụ-bạc xưa kia,
 Chiếu danh tầm-nã, bắt về hỏi tra.
 Lại sai lệnh-tiến truyền qua,
 Giữ-giàng họ Thúc một nhà cho yên.*

Từ-Hải boomed into a rage of fury after listening to the story of Kieu's misfortunes. He assembled his troops, designated a few officers, and, under the flags, ordered them to take to the field immediately. Soon, the expeditionary corps left the camp, with a red banner leading the way. Then they divided into two detachments : one riding to Wuhsi, and the other to Ihsien, with orders to track down and arrest all those whose names were on the list by reason of their previous treacherous acts. Immediately after the departure of the expeditionary cavalry, Từ-Hải sent off a herald to carry his order to the local authorities,

*Mụ quân-gia, vãi Giác-Duyên,
Cũng sai lệnh-tiến đem tin rước mời.
Thê-sur kể hết mọi lời,
Lòng lòng cùng giận, người người chấp uy.
Đạo trời báo-phục chín ghê,
Khéo thay! một mẻ tóm về đây nơi.
Quân-trung, gươm lớn, giáo dài,
Vệ trong thị-lập, cơ ngoài song-phi.*

entrusting them with the protection of the Thúc family. Another herald was dispatched to invite the governess of the Hoạn family and bonzess Giác-Duyên to report to the headquarters. Then, our hero made a proclamation of what had taken place to his troops. They all boiled with indignation and seemed very impatient to await the coming of the castigation hour.

How terrible Heaven's law of vengeance is! It was wonderful indeed to see all the culprits captured and gathered together in one net. All the garrisoned troops were present, well armed with long swords and long spears. In the middle was the guard body, standing at attention. A regiment of infantry formed two rings on both sides.

*Săn-sàng tề-chỉnh uy-nghi,
Bác-đồng chập đất, tinh-kỳ rợp sân.
Trướng-hùm mở giữa trung-quán,
Tù-công sánh với phu-nhân cùng ngồi.
Tiền-nghiêm, trống chưa dứt hồi,
Điểm danh trước dẫn chục ngoài cửa viên.
Tù rằng: « Ân oán hai bên,
« Mặc nàng xử quyết, báo đền cho mình. »*

They all stood ready, impeccable and imposing. Bronze cannons were to be seen all about. The yard seemed as if darkened by the shades of standards and banners. An open tent adorned with the skin of a tiger occupied the center of the headquarters. Inside, sitting side by side were lord Tù-Hải and his wife.

The drum-roll had not even died out when one announced that the prisoners had arrived and were waiting for orders outside the camp gate.

« Gratitude or vengeance, » Tù-Hải declared, « I give you, Madame, full powers in passing equitable judgment on your prisoners. »

Nàng rằng: « Nhờ cây uy-linh,
« Hãy xin báo đáp ân-tình cho phu.
« Báo ân rồi sẽ trả thù. »
Từ rằng: « Việc ấy để cho mặc nàng. »
Cho gươm mời đến Thúc-lang,
Mặt như chàm đỏ, mình dường giẽ-giun.
Nàng rằng: « Nghĩa trọng nghìn non,
« Lâm-chuỵ người cũ, chàng còn nhớ không?
« Sám, Thương chẳng vẹn chữ tòng,
« Tại ai, há dám phụ lòng cố-nhân?

« With permission from your high authority, » replied Kiều, « I ask you the favor to pay my gratitude to my benefactors first. After this, I'll see about my vengeance. »

« You have full powers to settle this affair, » said Từ-Hải.

Kiều ordered a guard armed with a sword to invite Thúc-kỳ-Tâm to come in. With a face as pale as indigo, the young man shivered into the yard like a frightened snipe.

« All that I owe you is heavier than one thousand mountains, » Kiều said. « Do you still remember your girl friend of olden days in Ihsien? Like the morning and evening stars, we couldn't accomplish our

*« Gấm trăm cuốn, bạc nghìn cân,
 « Tạ lòng dễ xéng báo ân gọi là.
 « Vợ chàng quỉ-quái, tinh-ma,
 « Phen này kẻ cắp, bà già gặp nhau.
 « Kiến bò miệng chén chưa lâu,
 « Mưu sâu cũng trả nghĩa sâu cho vừa ! »
 Thúc-sinh trông mặt bấy giờ,
 Mồ-hôi chàng đã như mưa ướt đầm.*

union. Surely you have known who is at fault for this ; but on my part, how dare I misjudge the heart of my old friend ? Please accept these hundred rolls of brocade and these thousand pounds of silver as a small token of my sincere thanks for what you did for me. As for your wife, who was so mischievous and devilish, this time, she will see how the old woman is going to meet her thief (200). An ant which runs around the edge of a cup cannot go far. I'll apply a very fair chastisement for her cruel ruse. »

In looking at the face of young Thúc at that moment, one would take the sweat running down his face for the water from a shower. He

(200) Hoạn-Thư was compared to a thief, who, after robbing an old woman was caught by the latter, and was waiting for her reprisals.

Lòng riêng mừng sợ khôn cầm,
 Sợ thay, mà lại mừng thầm cho ai.
 Mụ già, sư-trưởng, thứ hai,
 Thoắt đưa đến trước, vội mời lên trên.
 Dắt tay, mở mắt cho nhìn :
 « Hoa-nô kia, với Trạc-tuyền, cũng tôi.
 « Nhớ khi lỡ bước, sẩy vời,
 « Non vàng chưa dễ đền bồi tấm thương.
 « Nghìn vàng gọi chút lễ thường,
 « Mà lòng Xiếu-mẫu mấy vàng cho cân ! »

could hardly repress an inward joy and apprehension — an awful apprehension for his wife, and a secret joy for Kiêu.

Next appeared the old governess and the superiress. Upon their introduction, Kiêu invited them to be seated on two honor chairs. Then she held their hands, and took off the veil covering her face (201). « Hoa-Nô or Trạc-Tuyền am I, » she said. « I cannot forget my days of downfall and misfortunes. Mountains of gold could not pay for the pity you conceived for me. Please accept these thousand ounces

(201) This part shows that Kiêu's face was veiled during her judgment.

*Hai người trông mặt tắn-ngắn,
 Nửa phần khiếp-sợ, nửa phần mừng vui.
 Nàng rằng: « Xin hãy rón gối,
 « Xem cho rõ mặt, biết tôi báo-thù! »
 Kiếp truyền chur tướng hiển-phù,
 Lại đem các tích phạm-đồ hậu-tra.
 Dưới cò, gương tuốt nắp ra,
 Chính danh thủ-phạm tên là Hoạn-thư.*

of gold as a small token of my gratitude. Both of you are like mother Xiêu (202), and no gold can balance your good heart.»

Completely dumbfounded, the two women looked at the young lady, half frightened and half happy.

« Please keep your seats a little longer, » Kiêu continued, « and see how I am revenging myself. »

No sooner said than done, Kiêu ordered a few officers to bring in the prisoners, and have their crimes examined forthwith. Under the flag, the executioner had drawn his sword out of the sheath.

(202) Under the Han dynasty, Hàn-Tin, when he was still poor, had taken refuge in the house of a laundress named Xiêu. When he became prime minister, he sent for the latter, and gave her one thousand gold taels.

Thoát trông, nàng đã chào thưa :
« Tiểu-thư cũng có bấy giờ đến đây !
« Đàn-bà dễ có mấy tay,
« Đời xưa mấy mặt, đời này mấy gan !
« Dễ-dàng là thói hồng-nhan,
« Càng cay-nghiệt lắm, càng oan-trái nhiều ! »
Hoạn-thư hồn lạc phách xiêu,
Khẩu đầu dưới trướng, lựa điều kêu ca.
Rằng : « Tôi chút dạ đàn-bà,
« Ghen-tuông, thì cũng người ta thường tình !

« Hoạn-Thư ! » one called out the name of the main culprit.

« Madame, » Kiêu greeted her as soon as the latter appeared. « How does it happen that you also have to come here today ? Among women, very few are your equal. Formerly, there could not exist many faces, and nowadays, there cannot be many hearts like yours. And kindness is however the quality of rosy-cheeked women. So, you can see : the more perverse one is, the heavier is one's debt. »

Hoạn-Thư seemed as though she were passing out with fright. « My heart is but that of a woman, » she prostrated herself before the tent, imploring entreatingly, « and jealousy is a common quality

« Nghĩ cho khi các viết kinh,
 « Với khi khỏi cửa, dứt tình chẳng theo.
 « Lòng riêng, riêng cũng kính yếu,
 « Chồng chung, chưa dễ ai chiều cho ai !
 « Trót lòng gây việc chồng gai,
 « Còn nhờ lượng bể thương bài nào chẳng.»
 Khen cho : « Thật đã nên rằng :
 « Khôn-ngoan đến mực, nói-năng phải lời.
 « Tha ra thì cũng may đời,
 « Làm ra thì cũng ra người nhỏ-nhen.

of everybody. Oh ! Please consider my case ! When you wrote the holy verses in the tower of the temple, when you were fleeing from my house, if I decided not to pursue you, it was because that, in myself, I had conceived some respect, some esteem for you. But, when two women have the same husband, who would consent to give her man away to the other ? I feel sincerely sorry and humbly implore Your Highness to pardon me for involving you in so many thorny affairs. »

« You really deserve what people said of you : a woman of superior intelligence and reasoning, » praised Kiều. « If I forgave you, it would be a really happy circumstance in your life. But, if I punished you, one

« Đã lòng tri-quả thì nên ! »

Truyền quân-lệnh xuống trước-tiền tha ngay.

Tạ lòng, lay trước sân mây.

Cửa viên lại dặt một dây dẫn vào.

Nàng rằng : « Lòng-lộng trời cao !

« Hai nhân, nhân hai, sự nào tại ta ? »

Trước là Bạc-Hạnh, Bạc-bà,

Bén là Ưng, Khuyển, bén là Sở-Khanh.

would regard me as a shabby person. Since you have sincerely acknowledged your wrongdoings, well, let's not speak of them any more. »

She then ordered a service guard to release the prisoner immediately right in front of the tent. Hoạn-Thư gratefully prostrated herself before the cloudy yard (203).

Next appeared another group of chained prisoners, filing in from outside the headquarters gate.

« How immense the high sky is ! » said Kiều. « It's not because of me that those who injured other people would have their days ! »

Kneeling on the first line were Bạc-Hạnh and Bạc-Bà. On their

(203) The yard seemed as though covered with clouds under the shades of the standards and banners.

Tú-bà cùng Mã-Giám-sinh,
Các tên tội ấy đáng tình còn sao ?
Lệnh-quân truyền xuống nội-đao,
Thề sao, thì lại cú sao ra hình.
Máu rơi, thịt nát, tan-tành,
Ai ai trông thấy hồn kinh, phách rờn.
Cho hay muốn sự tại trời,
Phụ người chẳng bỏ khi người phụ ta !
Mấy người bạc-ác, tình-ma,
Mình làm, mình chịu, kêu mà ai thương !

left were Ưng and Khuyển ; and on their right were the trio Sở-Khanh, Tú-Bà, and Mã-Giám-Sinh. There was nothing to say about these criminals for they well deserved what was to be reserved for them. Orders were given to the executioner to apply the castigation according to their previous oaths. All the spectators looked terrified : in front of them, the prisoners' blood flowed, and their corpses collapsed like masses of bruised flesh. They all understood now that everything had been decided by Heaven. Those who sought to deceive others often forgot that one day they also would be deceived. Ah ! Those knavish and perverse persons ! They had sowed the wind, so

*Ba quân đông mặt pháp-trường,
Thanh-thiên, bạch-nhật, rõ-ràng cho coi.
Việc nàng báo-phục vừa rồi,
Giác-Duyên vội đã gửi lời từ qui.
Nàng rằng: « Thiên-tải nhất thì,
« Cố-nhân đã dễ mấy khi bàn-hoàn.
« Rồi đây bèo hợp mây tan,
Biết đâu hạc nội, mây ngàn là đâu ? »
Sur rằng : « Cũng chẳng mấy lâu,
« Trong năm năm lại gặp nhau đó mà.*

they should reap the whirlwind. No one would have pity for them ! All the garrison were present at the place of execution, and they all witnessed in full daylight the judgment and castigation of the culprits.

Awaiting until Kiều had accomplished her gratitude and vengeance, Superioress Giác-Duyên hastened to take leave of her obligee.

« Such a unique occasion in which old friends meet and feel reluctant to part cannot often come in one thousand years, » Kiều said. « As duckweeds after a moment of reunion, we'll have to go our own way like dispersing clouds. Then, where can I find again the crane in this vast plain, or the cloud on the high mountains ? »

« We won't have to wait for a long time, » replied the religious

« Nhớ ngày hành-cước phương xa,
 « Gặp sư Tam-hợp, vốn là tiên-tri.
 « Báo cho hội-hợp chi kỳ :
 « Năm nay là một, nữa thì năm năm.
 « Mới hay tiên-định chẳng lầm,
 « Đã tin điều trước, ắt nhằm điều sau.
 « Còn nhiều ân-ái với nhau,
 « Cơ-duyên nào đã hết đâu với gì ? »
 Nàng rằng : « Tiên-định tiên-tri,
 « Lời sư đã dạy, ắt thì chẳng sai.

woman. « We'll meet again in five years. I remember one day, when I was making a long travel on foot in a forlorn country, I met a bonzess and prophetess named Tam-Hợp. She predicted to me the days of our reunions : the first reunion should take place in this year, and the second one would come in five years. Now, I see that there's no mistake in her prophecy. Since we have believed in the first prediction, we also must believe in the second one. We still have a lot of affection for each other, and our relationship determined by destiny hasn't come to an end. So, why be in such a hurry ? »

« Prediction and prophecy. » murmured Kiêu, musingly ; « I also

*« Họa bao giờ có gặp người,
 « Vì tôi cậy hỏi một lời chung thân. »*
*Giác-Duyên vâng dặn ân-cần,
 Tạ từ, thoát đã dõng chân cỏi ngoài.*
*Nàng từ ân-oán rạch-ròi,
 Bể oan đường đã vơi-vơi cạnh lòng.*
Tạ ân, lay trước Từ-công :
« Chút thân bồ-liễu nào mong có rày.
« Trộm nhờ sấm sét ra tay,
« Tấc riềng như cắt gánh đầy đổ đi.

believe that there is surely no mistake in the words of that bonzess. If ever you have a chance to meet her again, please, for my sake, ask her to say a few words concerning the rest of my life. »

Superioress Giác-Duyên took a note of this requested recommendation ; then she bade adieu to the young lady and went away.

After fairly paying her debt of gratitude and taking her vengeance, Kiều seemed to be relieved of all the injustices that she had suffered previously. « Oh, my august lord ! » she gratefully prostrated herself before Từ-Hải. « As weak as a reed and as frail as a willow, how could I ever dream of such a day ? Thanks to your powerful protection, I have

*« Khắc xương ghi dạ xiết chi,
 « Để đem gan óc đền nghì trời mây ! »
 Từ rằng: « Quốc-sĩ xưa nay,
 « Chọn người tri-kỷ một ngày được chăng ?
 « Anh-hùng tiếng đã gọi rằng,
 « Giữa đường dấu thấy bất-bằng mà tha !
 « Huống-chi việc cũng việc nhà,
 « Lựa là thâm tạ, mới là tri ân !
 « Xót nàng còn chút song thân,
 « Bấy nay kẻ Việt, người Tần cách xa.*

succeeded in relieving my heart of a heavy burden. All your innumerable favors will be carved in my bones and inscribed forever in my heart. Even if I had to sacrifice my whole life, this sacrifice would not be enough to pay my debt of gratitude for your kindness, which is higher than the sky and the clouds.»

« So far, » said Từ-Hải, « not many great men could find in one day a friend who understood them. Besides, as a hero well deserving of his title, how can one shut his eyes before an injustice committed on his path ? All the more, these affairs also concern me. So, why thank me so deeply for what I could do. I sincerely pity you, Madame, when I think

*« Sao cho muốn dăm một nhà,
« Cho người thấy mặt, là ta cam lòng. »
Vội truyền sửa tiệc quân trung,
Muôn binh, nghìn tướng hội-đồng tấy-oan.*

of your parents. You have been so long separated from one another by a great distance between Yueh and Tsing (204). I am trying to help you overcome this obstacle, and only when you meet your parents again shall I find some satisfaction in myself. »

Then, he gave orders to prepare immediately a banquet right inside the headquarters. Thousands of soldiers and officers grouped and feasted together so as to wash out all the unjust misfortunes that had happened to their beloved queen.

(204) Two regions of China, nowadays well known as Kwantung and Shansi.

XXIII

*Thừa cơ trúc chẻ, ngôi tan,
Binh-uy từ đấy sấm ran trong ngoài.
Triều-đình riêng một góc trời,
Gồm hai văn võ, rạch đôi sơn-hà.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Death of Từ-Hải

Từ-Hải successively won many more battles as easily as though he split a bamboo cane (205) or broke a row of tiles. After this, the power of his army spread over all, inside as well as outside the country. Soon after, proclaiming himself emperor, and considering this corner of sky his own realm, he organized his government, grouping civil and military power, and occupied entirely half of the national

(205) When one has succeeded in splitting a bamboo cane, splitting the next steps would be an easy thing.

Đòi cơn gió quét mưa sa,
 Huyện thành đập đổ năm tòa cõi nam.
 Phong-trần, mài một lưỡi gươm,
 Những loài giá áo, túi cơm sá gì !
 Nghênh-ngang một cõi biển-thù,
 Thiếu gì cô-quả, thiếu gì bá-vương.
 Trước cớ ai dám tranh cường,
 Năm năm hùng-cứ một phương hải-tân.

territory (206). Like a strong wind sweeping away the falling rain, five times he marched off for conquest, and five sub-prefectures in the South fell under his feet. With his swords well-sharpened through the winds and dust of adventures, what did his vulgar enemies, those poor mannequins and sacks of rice, mean to him ? Từ-Hải became finally the absolute master of this frontier region, in which there was no lack of great lords, powerful counts and princes. But, before his banners, who dared rival his power ?

Five years went by, during which Từ-Hải occupied entirely all the

(206) Từ-Hải set up a territory independent from the emperor of Peking.

*Có quan Tổng-đốc trọng-thần,
 Là Hồ-Tôn-Hiến, kinh-luân gồm tài.
 Đẩy xe vàng chỉ đặc-sai,
 Tiệm-nghi bát-tiểu, việc ngoài đồng-nhung.
 Biết Từ là đấng anh-hùng,
 Biết nàng cũng dự quân-trung luận bàn.
 Đóng quân, làm chước chiêu-an,
 Ngọc, vàng, gấm vóc, sai quan thuyết hàng.*

maritime provinces until the coming of a governor of province named Hồ-tôn-Hiến. Endowed with all the talents of a statesman, this great imperial dignitary, whose chariot had received a push from the emperor himself (207), was entrusted with a mission extraordinary. As the commander in chief of the expeditionary armed forces, he was fully empowered to deal with his enemy. He knew that Từ-Hải was a brave and valiant warrior. He also knew that Kiều had a vote in military deliberations.

Hồ-tôn-Hiến encamped his troops and pretended to sue for peace. He appointed an envoy plenipotentiary to offer Từ-Hải a rich gift composed of jade, gold, and beautiful silks, and to convince the latter to

(207) A ceremony during which the emperor gave a symbolical push to the chariot of an envoy so as to mark the importance of the mission with which he entrusted him.

Lại riêng một lễ với nàng :
Hai tên thể-nữ, ngọc vàng nghìn cân.
Tin vào gửi trước trung-quân,
Từ-công riêng hãy mời phân hồ-đề.
« Một tay gây-dựng cơ-đỡ,
« Bảy lâu bề Sở, sông Ngô tung-hoành!
« Bó thán về với triều-đình,
« Hàng-thần lơ-láo, phận mình ra đâu?
« Áo xiêm buộc trời lấy nhau,
« Vào luồn ra cúi, công-hầu mà chi!

submit. In addition, he sent a special gift to Kiều, consisting of two ladies of the bedchamber and one thousand pounds of gold and jade.

The message soon reached the headquarters. Từ-Hải, inwardly, considered the matter quite distrustfully. « I have built this heritage alone, » he said to himself, thoughtfully. « For a long time I have been ruling over all the seas of Tsou (208) and all the rivers of Ou. If I surrender to the imperial court, as a submissive and bewildered rebel, what will become of my fate? Over there, they

(208) Actually, Tsou is the province of Hypeh. Ou was a region previously located on the West of Kiangsi.

« Sao bằng riêng một biển-thù,
« Sức này đã dễ làm gì được nhau.
« Chọc trời, khuấy nước, mặc dầu,
« Dọc ngang, nào biết trên đầu có ai.»
Nàng thì thật dạ tin người,
Lẽ nhiều, nói ngọt, nghe lời dễ xiêu.
« Nghĩ mình mặt nước, cánh bèo,
« Đã nhiều lưu-lạc, lại nhiều gian-truân.
« Bằng nay chịu tiếng vương-thần,
« Thénh-thénh đường cái thanh-vân hẹp gì.

all are tied up with one another by their robes and skirts! Crawling in and getting out with one's head bent down! Ah! It's not worthwhile being a duke or a marquis! That life isn't worth my frontier region. What could they do, together, against my forces? Here, I can stir the sky and the earth in my own way. I am free on all parts of my land, and no one is superior to me. »

But Kiều, who was so loyal, always believed in other people. So, she let herself be persuaded easily by the rich gifts and the prepossessing words of the imperial envoy. « After all, » Kiều thought, « I am but a duckweed floating on the surface of the water. So far, my life has been full of adventures and misfortunes. Accepting now to be the vassal of

« Công, tư, vẹn cả hai bề,
 « Dấn-dà rồi sẽ liệu về số-hương.
 « Cũng ngồi mệnh-phu đường-đường,
 « Nở-nang mày mặt, rõ-ràng mẹ cha.
 « Trên vì nước, dưới vì nhà,
 « Một là đặc hiếu, hai là đặc trung.
 « Chẳng hơn chiếc bách giữa dòng,
 « E-dè gió dập, hãi-hùng sóng va. »

the sovereign would mean a free life — free to travel on the middle of the road and under the blue sky. It would also mean an achievement for both the public interest and ours. And some time later, I could see about returning to my native land. On that day, officially recognized as the wife of a high-ranking dignitary, how much honor I could do to myself and to my parents ! I would work first for the interest of my country, and then for that of my family. By so doing, I could fulfill my two main duties : my filial piety toward my parents, and my devotion toward the sovereign (209). Isn't it worthier than this hazardous life of a barge in the middle of a strong current, afraid of any assault of winds and frightened at the least shock of a wave ? »

(209) Two great obligations of Confucian morality.

Nhân khi bàn-bạc gần xa,
 Thừa cơ, nàng mới bàn ra nói vào.
 Rằng: « Ông Thánh-đế dãi-dào,
 « Trời ra đã khắp, thấm vào đã sâu.
 « Bình-thành công-đức bấy lâu,
 « Ai ai cũng đội trên đầu biết bao.
 « Ngấm từ đây việc binh-đạo,
 « Đổng xương vô-định đã cao bằng đầu.
 « Làm chi để tiếng về sau,
 « Nghìn năm ai có khen đầu Hoàng-Sào.

So, during a deliberation of the possible consequences of the submission, Kiều availed herself of this occasion to express her views. « The emperor's kindness has been spreading everywhere like rains and has gone deeply into the hearts of his people, » she said. « For a long time he has been working for the pacification and re-organization of the country. Everyone seems to owe a debt of gratitude to him. Think a little : since war broke out, the bones of unknown dead soldiers have piled up as high as our heads. Why leave, therefore, a bad souvenir to posterity ? Who has ever praised Hoang-Tchao (210) during these thousand years ?

(210) A legendary bandit in the Tang period.

*« Sao bằng lộc trọng, quyền cao,
 « Công-danh ai dứt lối nào cho qua ? »
 Nghe lời nàng nói mặn-mà,
 Thế công, Từ mới đổi ra thế hàng.
 Chính nghi tiếp sứ vôi-vàng,
 Hẹn kỳ thúc giáp, quyết đường giải binh.
 Tin lời thành hạ yếu minh,
 Ngọn cờ ngo-ngác, trống canh trẽ-tràng.
 Việc binh bỏ chẳng giữ-giàng,
 Vương-sư dò đã tỏ tường thực hư.*

Nothing can be worthier than a good revenue with an important function !
 And honors ? Who would like to go off the road which leads to them ? »

Hearing her persuasive words, Từ-Hải abandoned all his bellicose sentiments, and decided to surrender. He hastened to have an official ceremony prepared in order to receive the imperial envoy. They fixed a date to disarm and made all necessary formalities for the disbanding of the troops.

Confident in the oaths of peace exchanged at the foot of the ramparts, the soldiers started neglecting their guard duties, and took no more care of their banners. Watch drums was heard sound later

*Hồ-công quyết kế thừa cơ,
Lễ tiên, binh hậu, khác-cờ tập-công.
Kéo cờ chiêu-phủ tiên-phong.
Lễ-nghi giàn trước, bác-đồng phục sau.
Từ-công hờ-hững biết đâu?
Đại-quan lễ-phục ra đầu cửa viên.
Hồ-công ám-hiện trấn tiền,
Ba bề phát súng, bốn bên kéo cờ.*

than usual. There seemed to be no more discipline and no supervision in all the services. The imperial army was kept well informed of the situation. Governor Hồ, who had decided to resort to ruse, hastened to profit from this circumstance. Along with the delivery of gifts, he had his troops ambush and ordered them to attack the enemy's camp at his word of command. The flag of truce was seen flying among the line of the advanced guard. Displayed in front of them were the ritual presents. But behind were hidden a lot of bronze cannons.

Từ-Hải, free from care, suspected nothing. In full dress, he went out of the camp to surrender.

Immediately, Hồ-tôn-Hiến gave a secret signal for the attack.

Đang khi bất ý chẳng ngờ,
Hùm thiêng khi đã sa-cơ cũng hèn !
Tử sinh, liều giữa trận tiền,
Dạn-dã cho biết gan liền tướng-quân !
Khí thiêng khi đã về thần,
Nhơn-nhơn còn đứng chón chân giữa vòng.
Trơ như đá, vững như đồng,
Ai lay chẳng chuyển, ai rung chẳng rời.
Quan quân truy-sát đuổi dài,
Ầm-ầm sát-khí, ngất trời ai đang.

Cannons roared from three directions, and banners shot up all around. Attacked by surprise, even the most redoubtable tiger would become innocuous when he was caught in the trap. Từ-Hải had, however, fought bravely in the heart of the battlefield, facing boldly the enemies so as to show them the courage of an army commander. When this great soul had already joined the divine abode, one still saw his body stand upright, his feet as though planted in the ground, in the heart of the battle, impassive like a block of stone, and as steady as a bronze statue. One tried to shake and push him, but with no avail : he kept on standing unmoved.

The officers and soldiers of the imperial army, in the ardor of massacre, dashed after their enemies so as to slay them all. The smell of death



Nhơn-nhơn còn đứng chón chân giữa vòng.

...his feet as though planted in the ground, in the heart of the battle.

*Trong hào, ngoài lũy, tan-hoang,
Loạn-quân vừa dất tay nàng đến nơi.
Trong vòng tên đá bời-bời,
Thấy Từ còn đứng giữa trời trơ-trơ.
Khóc rằng : « Trí, dưng có thừa,
« Bời nghe lời thiệp đến cơ-hội này!
« Mặt nào trông thấy nhau đây?
« Thà liều sống chết một ngày với nhau ! »
Dòng thu như xối cơn sầu,
Dứt lời, nàng cũng gieo đầu một bên.*

rose up in the sky. Complete destruction reigned everywhere, inside the moats as well as outside the ramparts.

Led by a few disbanded soldiers through a rain of arrows and stones, Kiều came to the place. She found Từ-Hải still there, impassive, standing out against the sky.

« Oh ! » Kiều melted into tears. « So wise and so brave, he came to this point because of the suggestions of his servant. How can I dare now look at him ? Oh, my lord ! It would be better for me to give away my life and die with you on the same day ! »

Tears continued to flow down and seemed to increase her sorrow.

Lạ thay oan-khí tương-triền !
Nàng vừa phục xuống, Từ liễn ngã ra.
Quan quân, kẻ lại người qua,
Xót nàng, sẽ lại vực ra dần-dần.
Đem vào đến trước trung-quân,
Hồ-công thấy mặt, ân-cần hỏi-han.
Rằng : « Nàng chút phận hồng-nhan,
« Gặp cơn binh-cách, nhiều nàn cũng thương !
« Đã hay thành toán miếu-đường,
« Chấp công cũng có lời nàng mới nên.

She stopped moaning, and dropped with her head foremost beside Từ-Hải. How strange it was ! The blow of injustice seemed as if unable to separate them : no sooner had she laid down than Từ-Hải's corpse fell down on the ground.

Among the officers and soldiers who were going to and fro, some took pity on her. They approached and gently helped her get far from the place, then took her into the headquarters.

« As a poor and weak rosy-cheeked woman, victim of these war troubles, you are really deserving of pity for your many misfortunes, » said lord HỒ with solicitude, as soon as he saw her. « Though the plans have been carried out successfully because of the decision of

« Bảy giờ sự đã vẹn-tuyền,
 « Mặc lòng nghĩ lấy, muốn xin bề nào ? »
 Nàng càng giọt ngọc tuôn dào,
 Ngập-ngừng mới gửi thấp cao sự lòng.
 . Rằng: « Từ là đáng anh-hùng,
 « Dọc ngang trời rộng, vẫy-vùng bể khơi.
 « Tin tôi, nên quá nghe lời,
 « Đem thân bách-chiến làm tôi Triều-đình.
 « Ngõ là phú quý, phụ vinh,
 « Ai ngờ một phút tan-tành thịt xương !

the Court, I should acknowledge that, if I succeeded, it was chiefly because of your intervention. Since the problem has been brought to a successful issue, I give you now the full right of determining yourself your own fate. »

Kiều's tears flowed down anew like a rain of pearls. « Từ-Hải was a brave man, » she poured out her inmost thoughts, after a moment of hesitation. « Under the vast sky, his free domain was like a boundless ocean. He listened to my suggestions because he was too confident in me. As a victor of one hundred combats, he wanted to become a vassal of the emperor, believing that, by so doing, he could obtain nobility for himself and honor for his wife. Who could believe

« Năm năm trời bế ngang-tàng,
 « Dẫn mình đi bỏ chiến-tràng như không.
 « Khéo khuyên kẻ lấy làm công,
 « Kẻ bao nhiêu lại đau lòng bấy nhiêu !
 « Xét mình công ít, tội nhiều,
 « Sống thừa, tôi đã nên liêu mình tôi !
 « Xin cho thiên-thổ một đôi,
 « Gọi là đáp-điểm lấy người tử-sinh. »
 Hồ-công nghe nói thương tình,
 Truyền cho kiêu-táng di hình bên sông.

that he would be brutally slain in an instant ? For five years he lived an independent life under the skies and on the seas, risking disdainfully his life on the battlefield. Ah ! You tried to console me skillfully by considering my unfortunate intervention a service rendered ! The more you speak of it, the more I suffer. I judge myself more guilty than meritorious. Why live still ? Isn't better for me to sacrifice my life ? Please grant me a shallow tomb, a poor barrow so that I may bury him whom I have loved, dead or alive. »

Hearing these words, lord Hồ felt a sincere pity for the poor woman. He had the remains of Từ-Hải buried temporarily on a side of the river.

XXIV

*Trong quán mở tiệc hạ-công,
Xôn-xao to trúc, hội-đồng quân quan.
Bắt nàng thị yến dưới màn,
Giờ say, lại ép vắn đàn nhật tân.
Một cung gió thổi, mưa sầu,
Bốn dây rõ máu năm đầu ngón tay.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Suicide

A grandiose banquet was organized in the camp to celebrate the victory. Music was heard everywhere ; officers and soldiers mingled with one another. The governor compelled Kiêu to serve in his tent and, pretending drunkenness, forced her to take a guitar and play one of her well-known pieces of music.

Kiêu started a tune in which one would think there was someone moaning dolefully in the winds and rains. Her five fingers seemed as

*Ve ngấm, vượn hót, nào tà,
Lọt tai Hồ cũng nhận mảy, rơi châu.
Hỏi rằng: « Đây khúc ở đâu ?
« Nghe ra muôn oán, nghìn sầu lắm thay ! »
Thưa rằng: « Bạc-mệnh khúc này,
« Phở vào đàn đy những ngày còn thơ,
« Cung cầm, lựa những ngày xưa,
« Mà gương bạc-mệnh bây giờ là đây ! »*

though bleeding over the four chords of the guitar. Neither the sad buzz of a cicada nor the sharp whistling of a gibbon could produce such a poignant effect.

The governor looked deeply affected. He knitted his brows, and one saw tears come to his eyes.

« What's this piece of music ? » he asked. « In listening to it, one would think there existed thousands of lamentations and sorrows ! »

« This piece of music is entitled 'The Cruel Fate,' » replied Kiều. « I played it with the same guitar when I was still a little girl. And this tune, chosen as my favorite one a long time ago, interprets now the cruel fate I am undergoing. »

*Nghe càng đắm, đắm càng say,
 Lạ cho mặt sắt cũng ngây vì tình !
 Dạy rằng : « Hương-hỏa ba-sinh,
 « Dây loan xin nối cầm lành cho ai. »
 Thừa rằng : « Chút phận lạc-loài,
 « Trong mình, nghĩ đã có người thác oan.
 « Còn chi nữa, cánh hoa tàn,
 « Tor lòng đã đứt dây đàn Tiểu-lân.*

The more he listened, the more fascinated he became, and the more he became fascinated, the more enamoured he was with the beautiful woman. How strange it was ! How could one believe that such an iron face also became bewildered by love ? « This must be an inheritance destined to me since three existences ago, » he said finally. « Let the phoenix glue mend for me the broken chords of your guitar (211) ! »

« I am but a humble creature who has lost her social position, » replied Kiều. « It was because of me that a man has died unjustly. What still remains in this faded flower ? As for the silk threads of my heart,

(211) See footnote 93.

*« Rong thương còn mảnh hồng-quần,
 « Hơi tàn được thấy gốc-phần là may! »
 Hạ-công chén đã quá say,
 Hồ-công đến lúc rạng ngày nhớ ra.
 Nghĩ mình phương diện quốc-gia,
 Quan trên nhấm xuống, người ta trông vào.*

they have already been broken like those of the guitar of Tsiao-Lien (212). Thanks to your great indulgence, I can still live now as a red-trouser woman (213). So, being able to see my native village again before I pass away would already be a good fortune for me. »

The governor had drunk a little too much during the banquet, and only when day was beginning to dawn did he remember what had happened last night. « As a high-ranking official, » he said to himself, musingly, « not only am I closely watched by the higher authorities, but the public also appraises me through my behavior.

(212) The name of a re-married widow, who expressed her regret for her former husband by two verses, in which she compared her broken heart to a guitar with broken chords.

(213) See footnote 9.

*Phải tường trăng gió hay sao ?
 Sự này, biết tính thế nào được đây ?
 Công-nha vừa buổi rạng ngày,
 Quyết tình, Hồ mới đoán ngay một bài.
 Lệnh quan ai dám cãi lời ?
 Ép tình mới gán cho người thổ-quan.
 Ông Tư thực nhé đa-đoan !
 Xe tơ sao khéo vợ quàng vợ xiên ?
 Kiều hoa áp thẳng xuống thuyền,
 Lá rèm rủ thấp, ngọn đèn khêu cao.*

Moreover, I am not a man who likes frivolous love at all. How can this matter be settled now ?»

Just then the public office opened for the morning work. Hồ-tôn-Hiến decided to find a solution for this problem. « When a mandarin gives an order, who dares protest ? » With such a thought in his mind, and without respect to Kiều's sentiments, he ordered her to be given away to a native mandarin. Oh ! Old man of silk threads (214) ! How capricious you were ! How could you come to tie the marriage knot at random in such a way ? A flowery palanquin carried

(214) See footnote 52.

*Nàng càng ủ liểu, phai đào,
Trăm phần, nào có phần nào phần tươi.
« Đành thân cát dập, sóng vùi,
« Cướp công cha mẹ, thiệt đời thông-minh!
« Chán trời, mặt bể, lénh-đénh,
« Năm xương biết gửi tử sinh chốn nào ?
« Duyên đâu, ai dứt tơ đào ?
« Nợ đâu, ai đã dặt vào tận tay ?*

Kiều directly to a junk with roller blinds drawn, but well lighted by a high-wicked lamp.

Left alone, Kiều looked more and more gloomy, like a mournful willow, or a faded peach-flower. In this present situation, she did not find the least thing that could make her happy. « Thus is my body, destined once more to be buried by sand and submerged by waves ! » she murmured dolefully. « And all this time, I am being robbed of all that my parents did for me, and renouncing all happiness that I may enjoy with my intelligence. In this corner of the horizon and on the water of this vast ocean, where may I find a place for my bones when I pass away ? Oh, what hymen ! Who then sought to break the rosy threads so as to make me undergo

« Thân sao, thân đến thế này ?
« Còn ngày nào cũng dư ngày ấy thôi !
« Đã không biết sống là vui,
« Tắm thân nào biết thiệt-thời là thương !
« Một mình cay-đắng trăm đường,
« Thôi thì nát ngọc, tan vàng, thì thôi ! »
Mảnh trăng đã gác non đoài,
Một mình luống những đứng ngồi chưa xong.
Triều đẩu nổi tiếng ùng-ùng,
Hỏi ra mới biết rằng sóng Tiền-đường.

this unexpected cruel destiny again? Why does fate continue to be so cruel to me? To live one more day would be one day too many. Since living is no longer a joy for me, why weep over my poor body at the thought of coming injuries? So far, I have had to suffer alone all the bitterness of life. Well, it's time now to destroy this gold and jade body. Yes, it's time now ! »

The setting moon was then but a fragment behind the West mountains. Lonesome in her cabin, Kiều grew more and more agitated. She stood up and sat down alternately, not knowing what to do.

Suddenly, Kiều heard noisy roars echoing from the waves of the rising tide. She inquired and one replied that the junk had just

*Nhớ lời thần mộng rõ-ràng,
« Đây thôi hết kiếp đoan-tràng là đây !
« Đạm-Tiên, nàng nhé, có hay ?
« Hẹn ta, thì đợi dưới này nước ta. »
Dưới đèn sẫm bức tiến-hoa,
Một thiên tuyết-bút, gọi là để sau.
Cửa bằng vội mở rèm châu.
Trời cao, sóng rộng, một màu bao-la.*

entered the Chientang river. The name of the river reminded her of the clear and precise words addressed to her in one of her previous dreams. « This is, » she murmured, « the place where my grievous life must come to an end. Oh, Đạm-Tiên ! Do you hear me ? Since you gave me a rendezvous in this place, please await and receive me at the bottom of these waters ! »

There, in the lamplight, laid a flowery sheet of paper as though it had been reserved intentionally for her. Kiều wrote her last verses on it as a vestige before her death, then drew aside the pearl curtain which closed the entrance of the cuddy. Outside and all around her, the high sky mingled with the large river into a boundless space of the same color.

Rằng: « *Từ-công hậu-đãi ta,
« Xót vì việc nước mà ra phụ lòng.
« Giết chồng mà lại lấy chồng,
« Mặt nào mà lại đứng trong cõi đời?
« Thôi thì một thác cho rồi,
« Tắm lòng phớ mặc trên trời, dưới sông!»
Trống vờ con nước mênh-mông,
Đem mình gieo xuống giữa dòng tràng-giang.
Thổ-quan theo vớt vôi-vàng,
Thì đà đắm ngọc, chìm hương cho rồi!*

« How great the kindness of lord Từ was to me ! » Kiều murmured dolefully. « And I deceived him for a State affair ! I killed my husband, and now I am going to live with another one ! How could I live in this world with this shameful face ? It's time for me to die, once for all. Oh, my poor heart ! I am confiding you now to the dark of the sky and the river ! » She looked at the surface of the waters which spread boundlessly, then leapt forward down into the current of the large river.

The native mandarin rushed after her, trying an immediate rescue, but the perfumed jade body had disappeared under the waters.

Thương thay! cũng một thân người!
Hại thay! mang lấy sắc tài làm chi?
Những là oan-khổ lưu-ly,
Chờ cho hết kiếp, còn gì là thân?
Mười lăm năm, bấy nhiêu lần,
Làm gương cho khách hồng-quần thử soi.
Đời người đến thế thì thôi!
Trong cơ âm cực, dương hồi, khôn hay.
Mấy người hiểu nghĩa xưa nay,
Trời làm chi đến lâu ngày càng thương.

What pitiful destiny ! She was like any other human beings, but why was she given so many talents and so much beauty to be condemned to so many unjust misfortunes and unhappy adventures in her life ? If she had to wait for the end of this mournful destiny, what would become of her spring and beauty ? During fifteen years, how many good examples she had set for those who wore red trousers to follow (215) ! In a human life, there existed no destiny that was more cruel ! And she did not even know that happiness often came after misfortune (216) ! In all times, after their lasting sacrifices, pious and dutiful people always obtain finally the pity of Heaven.

(215) See footnote 9.

(216) This proverb is equivalent to « Every cloud has a silver lining. »

XXV

*Giác-Duyên từ tiết già nàng,
Đeo bầu quấy níp, rộng đường vân-du.
Gặp bà Tam-hợp đạo-cô,
Thong-dong, hỏi hết nhỏ to sự nàng:
« Người sao hiểu nghĩa đủ đường,
« Kiếp sao, rặt những đoạn-trường thế thôi ? »*

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Rescued

After taking leave of Kiều, Superioress Giác-Duyên continued her long pilgrimage, with a gourd full of water and a small trunk rocking at the ends of a yoke laid on her shoulder. And one day, meeting bonzess Tam-Hợp again, she profited from a moment of ease to relate to the latter the whole story concerning her unhappy friend. « Why does such a pious and dutiful woman have to meet so many misfortunes in her life ? » she asked her, confidentially.

*Sư rằng: « Phúc họa đạo Trời,
 « Cõi nguồn, cũng ở lòng người mà ra.
 « Có Trời mà cũng tại ta,
 « Tu là cõi phúc, tình là dây oan.
 « Thúy-Kiều sắc-sảo, khôn-ngoa,
 « Vô-duyên là phận hồng-nhan đã đành ;
 « Lại mang lấy một chữ tình,
 « Khư-khư mình buộc lấy mình vào trong.
 « Vậy nên những chốn thông-dong,
 « Ở không yên-ổn, ngồi không vững-vàng.
 « Ma đưa lối, quỷ đưa đường,
 « Lại tìm những chốn đoạn-trường mà đi.*

« Happiness or misfortune, it is prescribed by the law of Heaven, » replied the bonzess; « but, its source comes from ourselves. Happiness can be found in renunciation, and passions lead only to sufferings. Thúy-Kiều is clever and wise, but misfortune has decreed that she be a rosy-checked girl. Moreover, full of passion, she has remained obstinately attached to it. This is why, when finding some leisurely shelter, she couldn't enjoy peace and live there for any long time. There always existed some demon or evil spirit in her

« Hết nạn đây, đến nạn kia,
 « Thanh-lâu hai lượt, thanh-y hai lần.
 « Trong vòng giáo dựng, gươm trần,
 « Kề lưng hùm-sói, gửi thân tôi-đời.
 « Giữa dòng nước dẫy, sóng giời,
 « Trước hàm rồng cá, gieo mồi vầng-tanh.
 « Oan kia theo mãi với tình,
 « Một mình mình biết, một mình mình hay.

way to lead her into places of misery. A misfortune ended was replaced by another one. She was twice to wear the blue clothes of a servant. Then, surrounded by warriors armed with uplifted spears and unsheathed swords, she will be living with bandits and hiding herself among domestics (217). Later, profiting from her loneliness, she will dive into a rapid current and swelling waves, like a fish offering herself to the jaws of a dragon (218). This will be an unjust misfortune, but will occur because of her passion. And, she is the only person who

(217) Bonzess Tam-Hợp predicted the fate of Kiều, among the soldiers and prisoners, in a banquet organized by governor Hồ-tôn-Hiến.

(218) Bonzess Tam-Hợp predicted the suicide of Kiều into the Chientang river.

« *Làm cho sống đọa, thác đầy,*
 « *Đoạn-trường cho hết kiếp này mới thôi !*
Giác-Duyên nghe nói rung-rời :
 « *Một đời nàng nhé ! thương ôi còn gì ?*
Sư rằng : « Song chẳng hề chi,
 « *Nghiệp duyên cân lại, nhắc đi còn nhiều.*
 « *Xét trong tội-nghiệp Thúy-Kiều,*
 « *Mắc điều tình-ái, khỏi điều tà-dâm.*
 « *Lấy tình thâm, trả nghĩa thâm,*
 « *Bán mình đã động hiếu-tâm đến Trời.*

knows what will happen to her. She will still be condemned to suffer martyrdom and die like an exile. Misery will cease to pursue her only after this existence. »

Superioress Giác-Duyên received an awful fright at the prediction of her co-religionist. « After this existence ! » she exclaimed dolefully. « Alas ! What would remain of her then ? »

« Bút, » said the bonzess, « she will get no injury from this accident. Sins and merits are often weighed and re-weighed many times. Examine the sins of our poor Thúy-Kiều : she was caught in the trap of love, but she kept herself from luxury. She sacrificed her deep

« Hai một người, cứu một người,
 « Biết đường khinh trọng, biết lời phải chăng.
 « Thực công-đức ấy ai bằng,
 « Tác-khiên đã rửa láng-láng sạch rồi.
 « Khi nên, Trời cũng chiều người,
 « Nhẹ-nhàng nợ trước, đền-bồi duyên sau.
 « Giác-Duyên dầu nhớ nghĩa nhau,
 « Tiền-đường thả một bè lau rước người.
 « Trước sau cho vẹn một lời,
 « Duyên ta mà cũng phúc Trời chi không? »

sentiment to pay a debt of deep gratitude. And her filial devotion stirred Heaven to pity her when she sold herself so as to save her father. Sometimes punishing a person, occasionally rescuing another, she knew how to discern a trivial matter from an essential one, and how to discriminate right from wrong. This merit is peerless, and her previous sins have been washed out. Sometimes, Heaven is also indulgent to the human beings: those who have paid off their previous debts, may expect compensation in their sentimental future. »

« Giác-Duyên, » continued the bonzess, « if you remember your friendship for that pitiful woman, please go to the Chientang river and launch a reed float to fish her out of the waters. Please do

*Giác-Duyên nghe nói mường lòng,
Lân-la tìm thú bên sông Tiền-đường.
Đánh tranh, chum nóc thảo-đường,
Một gian nước biếc, mấy vàng chia đôi.
Thuê năm, ngư-phủ hai người,
Đóng thuyền chực bến, kết chài giăng sông.
Một lòng chẳng quản mấy công,
Khéo thay! gặp-gỡ cũng trong chuyển-vân!*

what I have told you. In all destinies, isn't this a part of happiness granted by Heaven. ? »

Hearing these words, Superioress Giác-Duyên leapt with joy. She left her friend, and went to look for a shelter on a side of the Chientang river. With some gathered thatch, she erected a roof for her one-room chapel, then shared her wait with the blue waters and golden clouds. She hired two fishermen for one year, whose job consisted of mooring their barges at both banks, with their nets stretched across the river. The brave religious woman waited constantly, firm in her resolution. This should be a great miracle if their meeting was really predicted by destiny.

Kiêu từ gieo xuống dòng ngân,
 Nước xuôi bóng đã trôi dần tận nơi.
 Ngư-ông kéo lưới vớt người,
 Ngắm lời Tam-hợp rõ mười chẳng ngoa!
 Trên mũi lướt-thướt áo là,
 Tuy dầm hơi nước, chưa lòa bóng gương.
 Giác-Duyên nhận thật mặt nàng,
 Nàng còn thêm-thiếp giấc nồng chưa phai.
 Mơ-màng phách-quế, hồn-mai,
 Đạm-Tiên, thoát đã thấy người ngày xưa.

After jumping into the silvery waves, Kiêu was carried along by the current and drifted downstream as far as the waiting place. The fishermen drew their nets back and fished the drowning woman out of the waters.

Bonzess Tam-Hợp was not mistaken in her predictions. Kiêu lay spread on the larboard, in her dragging silk dress. Though completely soaked with water, the mirror of her face still kept its brightness, and Superioress Giác-Duyên recognized it at once.

Kiêu was still immersed in a deep lethargy full of beautiful dreams of millet (219). Suddenly, she saw Đạm-Tiên appear before her, exactly

(219) See footnote 163.

Rằng: « Tôi đã có lòng chờ,
 « Mất công mười mấy năm thừa ở đây.
 « Chị sao phân mỏng, đức dày?
 « Kiếp xưa đã vậy, lòng này dễ ai!
 « Tám thành đã thấu đến Trời,
 « Bán mình là hiếu, cứu người là nhân.
 « Một niềm vì nước, vì dân,
 « Âm-công cất một đồng cân đã già.
 « Đoạn-trường số, rút tên ra,
 « Đoạn-trường thơ, phải đưa mà trả nhau.

like she had been previously.

« I have waited for you, » said the apparition, « and I have wasted more than ten years staying on these waters. Oh, my sister ! How cruel your fate is for such great virtues ! Whatever your previous life might be, it isn't easy indeed to find another heart like yours. The perfume of your faith has reached Heaven. Selling yourself to save your father is an act of filial devotion, saving another person is an act of altruism ; you have served your country and your people faithfully. All these secret merits begin to weigh one ounce heavier than your fate. Your name has been checked off the list of torn-boweled girls. And it's time for me



Nàng còn thiêm-thiếp giấc vàng chưa phai.

Kiều was still Immersed In a deep lethargy full of beautiful dreams of millet.

*« Còn nhiều hưởng-thụ về sau,
 « Duyên xưa đầy-đặn, phúc sau dồi-dào. »
 Nàng còn ngơ-ngẩn biết sao,
 « Trạc-tuyền ! » nghe tiếng gọi vào bên tai.
 Giật mình thoát tỉnh giấc mai,
 Bâng-khuâng, nào đã biết ai mà nhìn.
 Trong thuyền, nào thấy Đạm-Tiên ?
 Bên mình chỉ thấy Giác-Duyên ngồi kề.*

to restore you the poems concerning the unhappy ones (220). You still have many long and happy days reserved for you, my sister, and your past great merits will guarantee your future abundant happiness. »

Kiều was still confused at these words when, suddenly, she heard someone call her by her religious name Trạc-Tuyền. She woke up with a start from her dream of apricot-trees (221). But, in her daze, how could she recognize what she saw ? Đạm-Tiên was seen nowhere on the barge, no one but Superioress Giác-Duyên sitting

(220) The poems which Đạm-Tiên asked Kiêu to compose for her, in one of the latter's previous dreams, in Chapter Four.

(221) See footnote 164.

*Thấy nhau mừng-rỡ trăm bề,
Dọn thuyền, mới rước nàng về thảo-lư.
Một nhà chung-chạ sớm trưa,
Gió trăng mát mặt, muối dưa chay lòng.
Bốn bề bát-ngát mệnh-mông,
Triều dâng hôm sớm, mây lồng trước sau.
Nạn xưa, trút sạch lâu-lầu,
Duyên xưa, chưa dễ biết đâu chốn này.*

beside her. It was, for both of them, an immense joy to meet again. The religious woman put the junk in order, then invited her friend to her thatched chapel.

Ever since then, they lived together under the same roof, and shared the same meals. Together, they enjoyed the fresh winds in the moonlight, and observed a vegetarian diet in order to maintain the purity of their hearts. All around them spread boundless immensity. They spent their days contemplating the rising tide in the evening, and the framing clouds in the morning.

Now, all past misfortunes were completely washed out. But when would she see her old true-love again ? Surely he could not find her in this place.

XXVI

*Nỗi nàng tai-nạn đã đầy,
Nỗi chàng Kim-Trọng bấy chầy mới thương!
Từ ngày muốn dẫm phù tang,
Nửa năm ở đất Liêu-dương lại nhà.
Vội sang vườn Thúy dò-la,
Nhìn xem phong-cảnh nay đã khác xưa.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Return of Kim-Trọng

Kiều was now at the height of misfortune. But Kim-Trọng was still deserving of pity because of the cruel separation from his beloved.

After his long voyage in order to take part in his uncle's obsequies, Kim had returned home after a six-month stay in Liaoyang. His first

Đầy đường cỏ mọc, lau thưa,
 Song trắng quanh-quê, vách mưa rã-rời.
 Trước sau nào thấy bóng người,
 Hoa đào năm ngoái còn cười gió đông.
 Xấp-xè én liệng lâu không,
 Cỏ lan mặt đất, rêu phong dấu giày.
 Cuối tường gai gốc mọc đầy,
 Đi về, này những lối này năm xưa.

action was to set out immediately for the ancient « Lãm-Thúy » garden (222) in order to inquire about his sweetheart.

To him, the scenery had completely changed. Grass, mingling with scattered reeds, had grown all about the garden. No one was in sight at the window, a place where his true-love used to stand and contemplate the rising of the moon. Rains had washed off all the layers of the exterior walls. Not a soul was to be seen in front as well as at the rear of the house. But the flowery boughs of the peach-tree of last year (223) were still there, smiling in the East wind. A few swallows flitted to and fro in the desolate rooms. Grass had covered the ground, and shoeprints had faded away under a layer of green moss. At the corner of the wall, the path

(222) See footnote 44.

(223) The peach-tree on which Kim-Trọng had found Kiều's gold hairpin (see Chapter Five).

*Chung-quanh lặng ngắt như tờ,
 Nỗi-niềm tâm-sự bấy giờ hỏi ai ?
 Láng-giềng có kẻ sang chơi,
 Lán-la sẽ hỏi một hai sự tình.
 Hỏi ông, ông mặc tung-đình,
 Hỏi nàng, nàng đã bán mình chuộc cha.
 Hỏi nhà, nhà đã dời xa,
 Hỏi chàng Vương với Vương-bà, Thúy-Vân.
 Đều là sa-sút, khó-khăn,
 Thuê may, bán viết, kiếm ăn lần hồi.*

he had used to meet his beloved, was now overrun by bushes of thorns. A frigid silence reigned everywhere. Whom could he now address to clarify all these events and to share his anxiety ?

Suddenly he saw a man coming toward him from a neighboring house. Kim-Trọng went to meet the newcomer and discreetly asked him a few questions. The latter related to him the whole story : how Mr. Vương had been involved in a lawsuit, and how Thúy-Kiều had sold herself to save her father. « After the event, » the man went on, « the family moved to another region very far from here. Mrs. Vương, Vương-Quan, and Thúy-Vân have fallen into penury, living from hand to mouth on needlework and copying manuscripts. »

*Điền châu sét đánh lưng trời,
Thoát nghe, chàng thoát rụng-rời xiết bao!
Vội hân di-trú nơi nào?
Đánh đường, chàng mới tìm vào tận nơi.
Nhà tranh, vách đất tả-tơi,
Lau treo rèm nát, trúc gài phen thưa.
Một sân đất cỏ dầm mưa,
Càng ngao-ngán nổi, càng ngo-ngẩn đường!*

What a crushing news ! Like thunder roaring in the very middle of the sky ! An inexpressible fear struck the young man as soon as he finished hearing the story. Quickly, he inquired about the location of the new dwelling of his beloved's family, then immediately made for it. Arriving at the place, Kim found a thatched house with daubed ramshackle walls surrounded by a badly-woven bamboo fence. A worn out reed curtain was hung at the front door. In the yard, the ground was covered with grass still bedewed with rain water.

How could one describe the young man's disappointment at this gloomy scene ? The more he looked at it, the more dumbfounded he became.

Đánh liều lên tiếng ngoài tường,
Chàng Vương nghe tiếng, vội-vàng chạy ra.
Dắt tay vội rước vào nhà,
Mái sau, Viên-ngoại ông bà ra ngay.
Khóc than kể hết niềm tày:
« Chàng ói ! biết nổi nước này cho chưa ?
« Kiêu-nhi phận mỏng như tờ,
« Một lời đã lỗi tóc-tơ với chàng !
« Gặp cơn gia-biến lạ đường,
« Bản mình nó đã tìm đường cứu cha,
« Dừng-dàng khi bước chân ra,
« Cực trăm nghìn nỗi, dặn ba bốn lần.

Finally, summoning up his courage, Kim called from the outside wall. Vương-Quan rushed out, held his friend's hand and showed him inside. The old notable and his wife stepped in from the back room right then. At sight of Kim-Trọng, they could not help bursting into bitter tears. « Oh, young man ! » the old man lamented dolefully. « Do you know how lowly we have fallen ? Our little Kiêu has undergone a most cruel fate. She had to break her solemn promise of becoming your wife. By reason of an unexpected calamity that struck our family, she sold herself in order to save her father. Oh ! How can

« Trót lời nặng với lang-quán,
 « Mượn con em nó Thúy-Vân thay lời.
 « Gọi là trả chút nghĩa người,
 « Sầu này dằng-dặc muôn đời chưa quên !
 « Kiếp này, duyên đã phụ duyên,
 « Dạ-đài còn biết, sẽ đến lai-sinh.
 « Mấy lời ký-chú định-ninh,
 « Ghi lòng để dạ, cất mình ra đi.

I describe now her hesitation at the moment of her departure ? Though beset with thousands of cares, she still tried to stress three or four times her grave pledges with you. She charged her younger sister Thúy-Vân to abide by her oaths in her place, so as to pay a part of the debt she owed you. Alas ! Thousands of existences couldn't erase this endless sorrow from her mind ! She said that, in this life, her love had deceived yours. She still wondered whether she could pay you her debt in some future existence when she reached the Night Palace (224). Such is what she recommended us to do

(224) The Next World.

« *Phận sao bạc bẽo, Kiều-nhì!*
« *Chàng Kim về đó, con thì đi đâu ?* »
 Ông bà càng nói càng đau,
Chàng càng nghe nói, càng đau như dũa.
 Vật mình, vấy gió, tuôn mưa,
Dầm-dề giọt ngọc, thấm-thờ hồn mai.
 Đau đòi-đoạn, ngắt đòi thôi,
Tình ra lại khóc, khóc rồi lại mê.

before her departure. We have noted them carefully and still keep them in the bottom of our hearts. Oh, Kiều, my dear daughter ! Why is destiny so cruel to you ? Mr. Kim is already back home, but you, my poor child, where are you now ? »

The old man and his wife seemed more and more grieved as they spoke. As for Kim-Trọng, the more he listened to their words, the more gloomy his features grew, like green vegetables soaked in brine. He threw himself down on the floor, beating the air with his arms and sobbing mournfully. Tears flowed down his cheeks like pearls. His face looked as sad and empty as an apricot-flower (225). After several outbursts of grief and fainting fits, he came to himself again and

(225) The apricot-flower stands for frail beauty.

*Thấy chàng đau nỗi biệt-ly,
Nhận ngừng, ông mới vỗ-về giải-khuyên :
« Bấy giờ ván đã đóng thuyền,
« Đã đành phận bạc, khôn đền tình chung !
« Quá thương chút nghĩa đèo-bồng,
« Nghìn vàng thân ấy, dễ hòng bỏ sao ? »
Dĩ-danh, khuyên-giải trăm chiều,
Lừa phiền càng dập, càng kêu mới phiền.*

continued to sob out his sorrow. Then, he ceased weeping only to faint once more.

In face of the young man's sufferings, the old man, refraining from emotion, tried to console him. « Now, » he told him sweetly, « the plank has been used to build another barge. Resigning herself to her cruel fate, my poor daughter has not been able to respond to your faithful love. You are really too good in overestimating her attachment for you. Oh, young man, how could you think of sacrificing your own life which is a thousand times more precious than gold ? »

He continued to use a hundred other ways to persuade and comfort the poor lover. But the more one tried to stifle the latter's grief, the deeper his sorrow grew. Finally, Mr. Vương showed him the pair

*Thề xưa, giờ đến kim-hoàn,
 Của xưa, lại giờ đến đàn với hương.
 Sinh càng trông thấy, càng thương,
 Gan càng tức-tối, ruột càng xót-xa.*
*Rằng: « Tôi trót quá chán ra,
 « Để cho đến nổi trôi hoa, dạt bèo.
 « Cùng nhau thề thốt đã nhiều,
 « Những điều vàng đá, phải điều nói không?
 « Chưa chẵn gối cũng vợ chồng,
 « Lòng nào mà nữ dứt lòng cho đang?*

of gold bracelets which Kim had given to Kiều as an engagement pledge, and the guitar and the incense of olden days. At sight of this old souvenir, the young man felt a deeper pity for his unhappy beloved. An inward revolt rose in his heart, and grief seemed as though it tortured him anew. « Alas ! » he lamented dolefully. « It was because of my departure that she has now to live the unfortunate life of a drifting flower and that of a floating duckweed at the mercy of the waves ! How many oaths we exchanged to each other ! Do you think that the words we carved on gold and stone have no value ? Though we did not share our blanket and our pillow, I have always regarded her as my wife. How could I break the flame that we had conceived

*« Bao nhiêu của, mấy ngày đàng,
« Còn tôi, tôi gặp mặt nàng mới thôi ! »
Nỗi thương nơi chẳng hết lời,
Tạ từ, sinh mới sụt-sùi trở ra.
Vội về sửa chốn vườn hoa,
Rước mời viên-ngoại ông bà cùng sang.
Thần-hồn, chăm-chút lễ thường,
Dưỡng thân, thay tấm lòng nàng ngày xưa.
Đinh-ninh mài lệ, chép thư,
Cất người tìm-tôi, đưa tờ nhắn-nhe*

for each other ? Oh ! No matter how much money I may have to spend, and how long the voyage may be, as long as I live, I'll search for her until I meet her again ! »

He repeated endlessly all his inmost sentiments that he had conceived for his poor love. Finally, taking leave of Mr. Vương's family, Kim went away, sobbing mournfully.

He hurried home and had a pavilion built in his flowery garden. Then, Kim invited Mr. and Mrs. Vương to come and live with him. Morning and night, he came to fulfill his ritual filial duties by taking care of them as Thúy-Kiều had done previously. With admirable constancy, he wrote many successive letters with black ink thinned with his tears.

*Biết bao công mướn, của thuê,
 Lâm-thanh mấy độ đi về dậm khơi.
 Người một nơi, hỏi một nơi,
 Mệnh-móng nào biết bể trời nơi nao?
 Sinh càng thâm-thiết, khát-khao,
 Như nung gan sắt, như bào lòng son.
 Ruột tằm ngày một héo mòn,
 Tuyết sương ngày một hao mòn mình ve.*

He sent men everywhere in search for his beloved, and tried many kinds of correspondence with the sole hope of securing information about her. How much money had been spent in hiring people for this commission! How many long voyages had been made to Weihsien (226)! Poor young man! How could he find her in a region when she was in the other, and especially in this vast country? His grief and impatience seemed to reach their paroxysm as though his liver had been burnt by a hot iron and something had pierced his tender heart. Like a silkworm emptied of its silk, Kim grew more and more etiolated day after day. Dew and snow had made his frail

(226) See footnotes 80 and 107. Mã-Giám-Sinh declared that he would take Kiều to Weihsien. So, the Vương family always ignored that Kiều, in reality, had been taken to Ihsien.

*Thần-thơ, lúc tỉnh, lúc mê,
 Máu theo nước mắt, hồn lìa chiêm-bao.
 Xuân-huýn lo sợ xiết bao,
 Quá ra, khi đến thế nào mà hay !
 Vội-vàng sắm-sửa chọn ngày,
 Duyên Ván sớm đã xe dây cho chàng.
 Người yếu-điều, kẻ văn-chương,
 Trai tài, gái sắc, xuân đương vừa thì.
 Tuy rằng vui chữ vu-qui,
 Vui này, đã cất sầu kia được nào !*

body dismally thin. Always absorbed in his thoughts, sometimes Kim did not even know whether he was awake or dreaming. By dint of weeping, his tears were now mixed with blood, and his soul seemed to leave his body and float in some dream.

How could one describe the anxiety of the old man and of his wife ? If this continued, unforeseeable calamity might happen to the poor young lover. They hastened to make necessary preparations, and chose a good day for the celebration of his marriage to Thúy-Vân. The rosy hymen thread thus linked the graceful beauty with the talented scholar into an ideal couple in the prime of their spring.

Though enjoying this marriage, Kim could not forget the deep

*Khi ăn ở, lúc ra vào,
Càng sâu duyên mới, càng dào tình xưa.
Nỗi nàng nhớ đến bao giờ,
Tuôn châu đôi trăn, vò tơ trăm vòng.
Có khi vắng-vẻ thư-phòng,
Đốt lò hương, giờ phím đồng ngày xưa.
Bè-bai, rủ-rủ tiếng tơ,
Trầm bay lạt khói, gió đưa lay rèm.
Dường như bên nóc, bên thềm,
Tiếng Kiều đồng-vọng, bóng xiêm mơ-màng.*

sorrow that had tortured his poor heart. During the co-habitation, and in all his acts, it seemed as though the deeper their new union was, the more overflowing grew his old love. Each time he retraced the misfortunes of Kiều, Kim burst into bitter tears, and looked so mournful as if his bowels had been twisted one hundred times. Occasionally, staying alone in his study room, he burned the incense and took out the guitar of the past happy days. He let his fingers dance on the chords, listening to the doleful murmuring of the silk. The aloe smoke curled up lightly. The curtains waved gently in the breeze. It seemed as if Kiều's voice were rising somewhere, from the veranda, singing for him, and that her silhouette appeared before his

Bời lòng tạc đá, ghi vàng,
 Tưởng nàng, nên lại thấy nàng về đây.
 Những là phiên-muộn đêm ngày,
 Xuân thu, biết đã đổi thay mấy lần.
 Chế-khoa gặp hội tràng-văn,
 Vương, Kim cùng chiếm bảng-xuân một ngày.
 Cửa trời rộng mở đường mây,
 Hoa chào ngô hạnh, hương bay dặm phần.

eyes like in a dream. His heart remained so faithful to their oaths carved on gold and on stone that, every time he dreamed of her, it appeared as if she came back to him in this place. Sorrow and melancholy invaded his heart night and day.

*
 * *

How many springs had been succeeded by autumns! At a literary competition organized in the capital, both Vương-Quan and Kim-Trọng received their doctorate on the same day of spring. This was like Heaven's door opened wide for them to a glory as high as the clouds. The almond-flowers of the imperial garden greeted

*Chàng Vương nhớ đến xa gần,
 Sang nhà Chung-lão tạ ân chu tuyền.
 Tình xưa, ân trả, nghĩa đền,
 Gia-thân bèn mới kết duyên Châu Trần.
 Kim từ nhẹ bước thanh-vân,
 Nỗi nàng, càng nghĩ xa gần, càng thương.
 Ấy ai dận ngọc, thề vàng,
 Bấy giờ kim-mã, ngọc-đường với ai.*

them on their passage (227), and their fame spread as far as the elm-trees of their native village.

Vương-Quan did not forget the past nor the present. He went to see Mr. Chung, so as to thank him for saving his family. In order to pay his debt to the old man, he married his daughter, thus drawing the bond of friendship closer between the two families, a union considered as perfect as that of the Châu and the Trần (228).

As for Kim-Trọng, since he reached the blue clouds of honors (229), he kept on feeling more and more pity for Kiều every time he thought of

(227) Under the Tang dynasty, the laureates of literary competitions were admitted to an imperial audience in a garden of almond-trees.

(228) See footnote 144.

(229) A consecrated expression used to designate a very high position in society.

*Rẽ bèo, chán sóng, lạc-loài,
 Nghĩ mình vinh-hiến, thương người lữ-ly.
 Vắng ra ngoại-nhậm Lâm-chuy,
 Quan-sơn nghìn dặm, thế-nhi một đoàn.
 Cầm-đường ngày tháng thanh-nhàn,
 Sớm khuya tiếng hạc, tiếng đàn tiêu-dao.*

her. « Oh, my love ! » he murmured to himself dolefully. « It was with you that I exchanged my promises of jade and my oaths of gold. With whom may I share my gold coach and my jade temple (230) ? You are now so far from home, lost like the root of a duckweed floating under the waves. In my triumph and honors, I never cease pitying your life full of adventures ! »



One day, Kim was appointed to a forlorn post, in Ihsien (231). He took all his small family along with him, covering thousands of miles of road through mountains and gates of cities. He spent peaceful

(230) An expression used to designate happiness reserved only for high-ranking mandarins.

(231) A providential chance that was going to permit Kim to find the trace of Kiều again. Ihsien, as we can remember, was the town where the green house of Tú-Bà was located.

Phòng xuân trướng rủ hoa đào,
 Nàng Vân nằm bổng chiêm-bao thấy nàng.
 Tỉnh ra mới rí cùng chàng,
 Nghe lời, chàng cũng hai đường tin nghi.
 Nọ Lâm-thanh với Lâm-chuy,
 Khác nhau một chữ, hoặc khi có lẫn.
 Trong cơ thành khí, tương-tầm,
 Ở đây hoặc có giai-âm chẳng là?

days and months in his lute palace (232), listening morning and night to the cries of cranes and to the sounds of his guitar.

One night, in their room, behind drawn curtains printed with pictures of peach-flowers, during her sleep, Thúy-Vân suddenly saw Kiều appear in her dream. When she woke up, Vân imparted it to her husband. Hearing this account, Kim was balanced between belief and doubt. « Let's see, » he said. « Weihsien is different from Ihsien only by one syllable. So, it's very possible that I have been confused in this. In some circumstances, two hearts look for each other through

(232) An expression used to designate a mandarin's palace. Allusion is made to a mandarin, named Pi-tse-Pien, who governed his district of Chanfoo by playing the lute.

*Thằng đường chàng mới hỏi tra,
 Họ Đó có kẻ lại già thừa lên :*
*« Sự này đã ngoài mười niên,
 « Tôi đã biết mặt, biết tên rành-rành.*
« Tú-bà cùng Mā-Giám-Sinh,
« Đi mua người ở Bắc-kinh đưa về.
« Thúy-Kiều tài sắc ai bì,
« Có nghề đàn, lại đủ nghề văn thơ.
« Kiên-trinh chẳng phải gan vừa,
« Liễu mình thế ấy, phải lừa thế kia.

sounds and souls. This seems to announce good news to us at any rate. »

The next day, when the courtroom opened, Kim questioned his personnel about Kiều.

« Excellency, » an old secretary named Đô replied politely, « this matter did take place more than ten years ago. I also know very well the names of the persons who were involved in this story. An old woman, named Tú-Bà, and her man, Mā-Giám-Sinh, bought a girl of

« *Phong-trần, chịu đã é-chề,*
 « *Dây duyên, sau lại gả về Thúc-lang.*
 « *Phải tay vợ cả phũ-phàng,*
 « *Bắt về Vô-lích, toan đường bẻ hoa.*

peerless talent and beauty from Peking (233). This girl, Thúy-Kiều was not only very clever in playing the guitar, but she was also versed in literature and poetry. The poor girl showed a rare courage in preserving her virtue. After failing in her suicide, she was deceived again, and had to suffer all the shame of this dusty and windy world. Then, she was given in marriage to a young man named Thúc-kỳ-Tâm. But the latter's legitimate

(233) An indication regarded as the most precise on the residence of the Vương family. Tú-Bà, by prudence, could have lied on Kiêu's origin place, like Mã-Giám-Sinh on his destination (Weihsien instead of Ihsien).

On the other hand. Kiêu might have told the story of her origin to diverse clients of the green house. Furthermore, it took one month to travel by coach from this town to Ihsien — a distance equal to that from Ihsien to Wuhsi. If the town were located to the south of Ihsien, she would have been inside the domain of Từ-Hải, who, as the absolute master of Wuhsi and Ihsien, would not have deplored that he could not get in touch with the Vương family. If she were to the west of Ihsien, the voyage across these mountainous regions could not be made entirely by coach. She was, accordingly, in the north, not very far from Peking. Moreover, Kiêu had also presented herself to Giác-Duyên as a native inhabitant of Peking, a point clear enough to specify the residence of the Vương family.

« Bực mình, nàng mới trốn ra,
 « Chẳng may lại gặp một nhà Bạc kia.
 « Thoát buồn về, thoát bán đi,
 « Máy trời bèo nổi, thiếu gì là nơi!
 « Bỗng đâu lại gặp một người,
 « Hơn người trí-dũng, nghiêng trời uy-linh.
 « Trong tay muôn vạn tinh-binh,
 « Kéo về đóng chặt một thành Lâm-chuy.

wife was a wicked woman : she had the young girl kidnapped and brought over to Wuhsi so as to break this frail flower. Desperate, the poor girl fled from the house. But, how unlucky she was ! She fell into the hands of the Bạc family. No sooner had she come in than they sold her again to another green house. She wandered from town to town like a drifting cloud or a floating duckweed. But, one day, she met again, by chance, a man surpassing other men in wisdom and courage, so powerful that he could stir up the sky. With thousands and thousands of well-trained soldiers under his command, he came and occupied entirely the citadel of Ihsien.

*« Tóc-tơ các tích mọi khi,
 « Oán thì trả oán, ân thì trả ân.
 « Đã nên có nghĩa, có nhân,
 « Trước sau trọn-vẹn, xa gần ngợi khen.
 « Chưa tường được họ được tên,
 « Sự này, hỏi Thúc-sinh viên mới tường. »
 Nghe lời Đỗ nói rõ-ràng,
 Tức thì đệ thiệp mời chàng Thúc-sinh.*

Kiều gave her hero a detailed account of all her story. Under the latter's protection, she succeeded in wreaking vengeance on her enemies and paying her debt of gratitude to her benefactors. This action won her the reputation as a just and good lady. After this full accomplishment of her obligations, one sang her praises everywhere. But I do not know the name of the brave warrior. For this, Excellency, please inquire of Mr. Thúc. »

After listening to the secretary Do's clear narration, Kim immediately had his card sent to Thúc-kỳ-Tâm (234), inviting him

(234) In this text, the author did not specify how Thúc, who had been in Wuhsi, was now in Ihsien. Maybe he had come back to manage his father's mercantile shop.

Nỗi nàng hỏi hết phân-minh,
Chồng con đâu tá, tính-danh là gì ?
Thúc rằng : « Gặp lúc lưu-ly,
« Trong quán, tôi hỏi thiếu gì tóc-tơ.
« Đại-vương tên Hải, họ Từ,
« Đánh quen trăm trận, sức dư muốn người.
« Gặp nàng thì ở châu Thai,
« Là gì quốc-sắc, thiên-tài phải duyên.
« Vẫy-vùng trong bấy nhiều niên,
« Làm nên động địa kinh thiên ðùng-ðùng.

to come to see him. He questioned him in detail about everything concerning Kiều, her husband, and the latter's name.

« Profiting from a moment of trouble in which the inhabitants were trying to look for refuge, » replied Thúc, « I went to meet a few soldiers and obtained from them many details concerning her hero. The name of that powerful lord was Từ-Hải. He had fought hundreds of battles, and his strength surpassed that of ten thousand men standing together. That lord met Kiều in Taitchou. No wonder that this queenly beauty was married to that heavenly endowment ! Lord Từ-Hải was free for many years, and had stirred up heaven and the earth with his

« Đại-quân đồn đóng côi đóng,
 « Về sau, chẳng biết vãn-mờng làm sao ? »
 Nghe tường ngành-ngọn tiêu-hao,
 Lòng riêng, chàng luống lao-đao thân-thờ.
 Xót thay chiếc lá bơ-vơ !
 Kiếp trần, biết dũ bao giờ cho xong ?
 Hoa theo nước chảy xuôi dòng,
 Xót thân chìm nổi, đau lòng hợp tan !
 Lời xưa đã lỗi muôn vàn,
 Mảnh hương còn đó, phím đàn còn đây.

exploits. His headquarters was set up in the Eastern region, but I do not know anything that happened to him from then on. »

After listening to this detailed account, Kim-Trọng looked more upset and mournful. « Oh, ! How pitiful this wandering leaf is ! » he murmured dolefully. « When can she rid herself for good of the dust of this life ? Poor drifting flower floating at the mercy of the current ! How much I suffer when I think of your life full of adventures and the many separations that you have undergone after brief unions ! Though you have violated our exchanged oaths many times, the remains of the incense are still here, and I still keep the guitar frets which you gave me !

*Đàn cầm khéo ngân-ngơ dầy,
Lửa hương biết có kiếp này nữa thôi ?
Bình-bồng còn chút xa-xôi,
Đình-chung sao nữa ăn ngồi cho an !
Rập mong treo ấn, từ quan,
Mấy sông cũng lội, mấy ngàn cũng qua.
Gián mình trong áng can-qua,
Vào sinh, ra tử, họa là thấy nhau.*

Oh, my love ! How long will these guitar chords still have to remain silent ? May I know only whether the flame of the incense will be kindled again or it will die out forever ? As long as you still have to continue this wandering life, how can I live happy in affluence and honors without you ? »

Kim envisaged himself resigning his post of mandarin, ready to cross rivers and mountains in search for his beloved. If need be, he would also plunge himself into the heart of the battlefields, risking his life and facing death with the only hope of having a chance to see her again. « But, » he said to himself, « where can I find the trace of a bird in this vast sky, or that of a fish

Nghĩ điều trời thẳm vực sâu,
 Bóng chim, tăm cá, biết đâu mà nhìn?
 Những là nấn-ná đợi tin,
 Nắng mưa đã biết mấy phen đổi dời!
 Năm mây, bỗng thấy chiếu Trời,
 Khám ban sắc-chỉ đến nơi rành-rành:
 Kim thì cải-nhậm Nam-bình,
 Chàng Vương, cũng cải-nhậm thành Phú-dương.
 Sấm-sanh xe ngựa vội-vàng,
 Hai nhà cùng thuận một đường phó quan.
 Xảy nghe thế giặc đã tan,
 Sóng êm Phúc-kiến, lửa tàn Tích-giang.

in the fathomless chasm ? » He then continued to extend out his period of waiting, constantly hoping for news from her, while sunny and rainy days kept succeeding one another alternately.

One day, Kim received an imperial edict written on a sheet of paper adorned with five-colored clouds. The edict bore clear orders transferring him to Nanping, and Vương-Quan to Fuchou. Quickly, they prepared for horses and coaches. Then, together and in the company of their families, they took the same road to their new posts.

They then learned that troubles caused by the rebels had

*Được tin, Kim mới rủ Vương,
 Tiễn đường, cùng lại tìm nàng sau xưa,
 Hàng-châu, đến đó bấy giờ,
 Thất tin hỏi được tức tở rành-rành.
 Rằng: « Ngày hôm nọ giao binh,
 « Thất cơ, Từ đã thu linh trận tiền.
 « Nàng Kiều công cả, chẳng đền,
 « Lệnh quan lại bắt ép duyên Thổ-tù.*

come to an end : peace reigned again in Fukien, and war flames had been put out completely in Chekiang. « Let's profit from this voyage to go and inquire about her and her adventures, » Kim-Trọng proposed to Vương-Quan as soon as he got this news.

It was only when they arrived in Hangchow (235) that they could obtain exact and detailed information about Kiều. « A combat took place a few days ago, » one said. « Defeated by ruse, lord Từ-Hải died in the very heart of the battlefield. As for the lady Kiều, she was ill-requited for her meritorious services. By the order of the chief of the imperial armed forces, she was forced to marry a native mandarin.

(235) The city of the province of Chekiang.

*« Nàng đã gieo ngọc, trâm châu,
« Sông Tiền-đường đó, ấy mồ hồng-nhan ! »
Thương ôi ! không hợp mà tan,
Một nhà vinh-hiến, riêng oan một nàng !*

But, she threw herself into the waters, drowning her beautiful pearl and jade body. That Chientang river is the tomb of the rosy-cheeked beauty. »

Alas ! They did not come here to be united again, but to be separated forever ! All the family were covered with honors and consideration except her. She was the only one who was struck by injustice !

XXVII

*Chiếu hồn, thiết vị, lễ thường,
Giải-oan, lập một đàn-tràng bên sông.
Ngon triều, non bạc trùng-trùng,
Vời trông còn tưởng cánh hồng lúc gieo.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Union of Kim and Kiều

According to the customary rite, one displayed the cult tablet in order to invoke the manes (236) of the departed. An altar was set up in the open air on a bank of the river so as to put an end to Kiều's unjust misfortunes and to help her soul rest in peace. The tidal waves ran boundlessly like tidy silvery-crested mountains. In the distance, one thought it was a white-winged swan plunging into the water like Kiều had done recently.

(236) The soul of the dead.

Tình thâm, bể thâm, lạ điều,
 Nào hồn tinh-vệ biết theo chốn nào ?
 Cơ-duyên đâu bỗng lạ sao ?
 Giác-Duyên đâu bỗng tìm vào đến nơi.
 Trống lên linh-vị chữ bài,
 Thất-kinh mới hỏi : « Những người đâu ta ?
 « Với nàng thân-thích gần xa ?
 « Người còn, sao bỗng làm ma khóc người ? »

How strange the links of blood appeared in this ocean of sorrow !
 And Kim wondered where the soul of his beloved, which might have
 been incarnated into a bird Tinh-Vệ (237), was bound for at this
 moment.

Suddenly, no one knew what event of destiny had guided her,
 Superioress Giác-Duyên appeared before the group, trying to approach
 the altar so as to look at the inscription on the tablet.

« But, » she exclaimed, « where did you come from ? Do you
 have any kinship with this poor woman ? She is still alive ! Why did

(237) Reference is made to the daughter of Emperor Yên-Ti, who was
 drowned in an arm of a sea. Her soul changed into a bird bearing
 this name. Every day, the bird went to nearby mountains to carry
 stones and throw them into the sea as though to fill it up.

*Nghe tin ngờ-ngác rụng-rời,
 Xúm quanh kẻ họ, rộn lời hỏi tra :
 « Đây chồng, đây mẹ, đây cha,
 « Đây là em ruột, đây là em dâu.
 « Thật tin nghe đã bấy lâu,
 « Pháp-sư dạy thế, sự dẫu lạ đường ! »
 Sư rằng : « Nhân-quả với nàng,
 « Lâm-chuý buổi trước, Tiên-đường buổi sau.*

you celebrate her obsequies and weep over her as though she had died ? »

All of them looked quite dumbfounded and upset at this news. They gathered around the bonzess, hastening to introduce themselves and assailing her with hundreds of questions. « Here is her husband, and here are her mother and father. There are her younger brother and sister, and here is her sister-in-law. We have been so sure of her death for a long time. What extraordinary news you have just communicated to us, my Reverend Mother ! »

« She and I, » explained Superioress Giác-Duyên, « have been linked with each other like a kernel and its fruit, first in Ihsien,

« Khi nàng gieo ngọc, trâm châu,
 « Đón nhau, tôi đã gặp nhau nước về.
 « Cùng nhau nương cửa Bồ-đề,
 « Thảo-am đó, cũng gần kề chẳng xa.
 « Phật-tiền ngày bạc lân-la,
 « Đăm-đăm, nàng cũng nhớ nhà khôn khuấy. »
 Nghe tin, nở mặt, nở mày,
 Mừng nào lại quá mừng này nữa chẳng?
 Từ phen chiếc lá là rừng,
 Thăm tìm luống những liễu chừng nước mây.

then on the Chientang. When she threw her pearl and jade body into the river, I had already been there watching for her. I found her at last and took her to my home. Both of us are now sheltered under the protection of Buddha, in a hatched temple situated not far from here. We have experienced peaceful and silverlike clear days. But, she constantly thinks of her family as though nothing could beguile her sorrow. »

Their faces and features bloomed at this revelation. What joy could surpass this one? Since this poor leaf was torn away from the forest, one had always been in search for her at random among the

*Rõ-ràng hoa rụng, hương bay,
Kiếp sau họa thấy, kiếp này hẳn thôi.
Minh, dương, đôi ngả chắc rồi,
Cõi trần mà lại thấy người cứu-nghuyên!
Cùng nhau lay tạ Giác-Duyên,
Bộ hành một lũ, theo liền một khi.
Bể lau, vạch cỏ, tìm đi,
Tình-thâm luống hầy hồ-nghi nữa phần.*

waters, and as far as the forlorn clouds. Everyone had believed that the fallen flower would have lost all its perfume. Everyone had considered this life lost forever for her, and they all had cherished only the hope to see her again in a future existence. Everyone had been so sure that a dark barrier had separated her from this world. And now, the person, whom they had believed to be already under the Nine Springs (238), was found again in this dusty world!

All together, they prostrated themselves before the Superioress. Then, on foot, they immediately followed her, clearing a way through reeds and high weeds. But, inwardly, they still felt half-doubtful

(238) The Next world.

*Quanh co theo giải giang-lân,
Khỏi rừng lau đã tới sân Phật-đường.
Giác-Duyên lên tiếng gọi nàng,
Buồng trong, vội dạo sen vàng bước ra.
Trông xem đủ mặt một nhà:
Xuân già còn khỏe, huyên già còn tươi.
Hai em phương-trường hòa hai,
Nọ chàng Kim đó, là người ngày xưa!
Trông bây giờ, là bao giờ,
Rõ-ràng mở mắt, còn ngờ chiêm-bao!*

of her words as they walked along the meandering bank of the river. Finally, the group emerged from the forest of reeds and found themselves right in the yard of the temple.

No sooner had the bonzess raised her voice than one saw Kiều rush out, her feet like two gold lotus flowers. At first sight, she recognized right away all her family: her old father still in good health, her old mother still alert, her younger brother and sister, both well grown up, and then Kim, her true-love of olden days. She wondered in what period she was living. Kiều stood before them with open eyes, but still

*Giọt châu thánh-thót quén bào,
Măng măng, tủi tủi, biết bao sự tình !
Huyền già dưới gối gieo mình,
Khóc than, mình kẻ sự mình đầu đuôi :
« Từ con lưu-lạc quê người,
« Bèo trôi, sóng vỗ, chốc mười-lăm năm.
« Tính rằng sông nước cát lăm,
« Kiếp này, ai lại còn cầm gập đây ? »*

thinking that she was dreaming. One saw then tears coming to her eyes and dropping like pearls down on her dress. Happy or shameful ? Oh, how could one describe all her feelings at this moment ?

Kiều dropped down and embraced her mother's knees. « Oh, Mother ! » she sobbed out all her misfortunes from beginning to end. « Since your daughter went away wandering in foreign countries, like a drifting duckweed at the mercy of the waves, for fifteen years she thought that she was lost forever under the waters of rivers or under impure sand. Who could think that she would still have a chance to meet you again in this place ? »

Ông bà trông mặt, cầm tay,
Dung-quang chẳng khác chi ngày bước ra.
Bấy-chầy dãi nguyệt, dầu hoa,
Mười phần xuân, có gầy ba bốn phần.
Nỗi mừng, biết lấy chi cân?
Lời tan hợp, chuyện xa gần, thiếu đâu?
Hai em hỏi trước, hân sau,
Đứng trông, chàng cũng trở sầu làm tươi.
Quáy nhau lay trước Phật-đài,
Tái-sinh trần-tạ lòng người từ-bi.

The old man and his wife held their daughter's hands and looked at her. Her features had not changed since the day of her departure. After so many ravages upon her beauty, she had hardly lost three or four tenths of her brightness. What scale could one use to weigh their happiness? How could one depict all their feelings at this reunion? So many things were told to each other from the past to the present! Vương-Quan and Thúy-Vân assailed her with questions. Standing nearby, Kim felt his sorrow melt away to mingle with their common happiness.

Together, they went and prostrated themselves before the altar of

*Kiều hoa giục-giã tức thì,
Vương-ông dạy rước cùng về một nơi.
Nàng rằng: « Chút phận hoa rơi,
« Nửa đời nếm trải mọi mùi đắng cay.
« Tính rằng mặt nước, chân mây,
« Lòng nào còn tưởng có rày nữa không?
« Được rày tái-thế tương-phùng,
Khát-khao đã thỏa tấm lòng lâu nay.
« Đã đem mình bỏ am mây,
« Tuổi này gửi với cỏ cây cũng vừa.*

Buddha, thanking Him for having mercifully granted Kiêu's resuscitation. Then, they hastened to send for a flowery palanquin. Mr. Vương ordered them all to return home together.

« I am now but a fallen flower, » Kiêu said. « Half of my life was spent in tasting all kinds of bitternesses. Thinking that my life was destined for adventures and exile, how could I expect to be found among you again today? The unexpected resuscitation and the happiness of finding you all again have already satisfied all my longings that I have cherished so long. Furthermore, my life has been dedicated to living in this calm temple. So, I think that I have also come of an age to retire among the plants and the trees.

« Mùi thiền, đã bén muối dưa,
 « Mùi thiền, ăn-mặc đã wa nâu-sống.
 « Sự đời, đã tắt lửa lòng,
 « Còn chen vào chốn bụi hồng làm chi ?
 « Dở-dang nào có hay gì ?
 « Đã tu, tu trôi qua thì, thì thôi !
 « Trùng-sinh ăn năng biển trời,
 « Lòng nào nỡ dứt nghĩa người ra đi ? »
 Ông rằng: « Bĩ thử nhất thì,
 « Tu-hành thì cũng phải khi tòng quyền.

Like the ascetics, I am used now to living on rice and salted vegetables and wearing only clothes dyed in dark brown. All the passions of life have died down in my heart. Why plunge me anew into this rosy-dusted world ? What's the use of living this half-lost life ? As a religious woman, I want to stay here to finish my existence. Besides, the services of the person who has saved my life are greater than the sky and the ocean. How could I go away far from my benefactor then ? »

« This is a unique occasion in the past as well as in the present, » replied the old man. « The religious regulations, sometimes, have to yield

*« Phải điều cầu Phật, cầu Tiên,
 « Tình kia, hiếu nọ, ai đền cho đây?
 « Độ-sinh nhờ Đức cao dày,
 « Lập am, rồi sẽ rước thầy ở chung. »*
*Nghे lời nàng phải chiều lòng,
 Già sư, già cảnh, đều cùng bước ra.
 Một đoàn về đến quan-nhà,
 Đoàn-viên, vội mở tiệc hoa vui-vầy.
 Tàng-tàng, chén cúc đỏ say,
 Đứng lên, Ván mới giải-bày một hai.*

to circumstances. If you dedicate the rest of your days to praying for Buddha and the immortals, who then will pay for you your debt to your ancient love and to your filial piety? Should you want to consecrate entirely your life to the salvation of the human beings under the aegis of Him who is very high and powerful, we'll build a temple and invite the Reverend Superioress to come and live with you. »

Hearing these words, Kiêu deemed it advisable to yield to her father's wishes. They all bade adieu to the bonzess, and, together, left the temple.

Upon their arrival at the yamen, they hastened to organize a stately ceremony so as to welcome this full union. Cups of chrysanthemum wine

Rằng: « Trong tác-hợp cơ trời,
« Hai bên gặp-gỡ, một lời kết-giao.
« Gặp cơn bình-địa ba-đào,
« Váy đem duyên chị bước vào duyên em.
« Cũng là phận cải, duyên kim,
« Cũng là máu chảy, ruột mềm chứ sao ?
« Nhưng là rày ước, mai ao,
« Mười-lăm năm ấy, biết bao nhiêu tình !

had already spread their inebriety, when Thúy-Vân stood up and said: « Before Heaven grants this union, a meeting took place only between two persons, and one word has linked them together. But Misfortune fell upon them like an unexpected wave flowing over the firm land, and one tied me with the hymen thread which must be reserved for my elder sister. There must have been a predestined attraction between the black mustard seed and the amber, or between the iron and the magnet (239). And, besides, aren't we of the same blood and the same flesh ? I have always lived in constant hope, and during fifteen years, how much love and affection

(239) See footnote 97,

*« Bảy giờ gương vỡ lại lành,
 « Khuôn-thiết lộa lợc, ðã ðành có nơi.
 « Còn duyên, may lại còn người,
 « Còn vàng trắng bạc, còn lời nguyên xưa.
 « Quả mai ba bảy ðương vừa,
 « ðào non sớm liệu xe tơ kịp thì. »*

I conceived for the absentee. Now, the broken mirror has been fitted back together (240). Heaven which concocted this matter has already chosen one for the other. How wonderful it is ! The link of love is not broken, and my sister is now here. The silvery moon is still there as a witness of their oaths of olden days ! The apricot-fruit comes quite to a nicety in its third or seventh period of its evolution (241). Let's weave immediately the hymen thread while the peach-fruit is still fresh ! »

(240) Reference is made to the story of a man named Su-teh-Yen. The latter, before departing from his beloved Lotchang, broke his mirror asunder, then gave one half of it to the young girl, and kept the other for himself. Later, they met again, and recognized each other by fitting the broken pieces of mirror together.

(241) « The betrothed, despite her age, still looks very fresh and beautiful. »

Diét lời, nàng với gạt đi :

« Sự muốn năm cũ, kẻ chi bây giờ ?

« Một lời tuy có ước xưa,

« Xét mình dãi gió, dầm mưa đã nhiều.

« Nói càng hổ-thẹn trăm chiều,

« Thì cho ngọn nước thủy-triều chảy xuôi ! »

Chàng rằng : « Nói cũng lạ đời !

« Dẫu lòng kia vậy, còn lời ấy sao ?

« Một lời đã trót thâm-giao,

« Dưới dày có đất, trên cao có trời !

« This is a matter ten thousand years old, » Kiêu protested as soon as Vân stopped speaking. « Why evoke it now ? It is true that we did exchange our oaths to each other. But my body was so many times beaten by winds and stained by the storms of life. How ashamed I felt when you spoke of it ! Let the ebb of time take away all those memories ! »

« What a strange language ! » exclaimed Kim. « So are your wishes, but what do you think about your given word ? A contract was seriously entered into by us in the presence of the thick earth

« *Dẫu rằng vật đổi, sao dời,*
 « *Tử-sinh, cũng giữ lấy lời tử-sinh !*
 « *Duyên kia có phụ chi tình,*
 « *Mà toan chia gánh chung-tình làm hai ? »*
 Nàng rằng : « *Gia-thất duyên hài,*
 « *Chút lòng ân-ái, ai ai cũng lòng.*
 « *Nghĩ rằng : Trong đạo vợ chồng,*
 « *Hoa thơm phong nhụy, trăng vòng tròn gương.*
 « *Chữ trinh đáng giá nghìn vàng,*
 « *Được hoa chẳng thẹn với chàng mai xưa !*

and the high sky. No matter how things may have changed and stars may have moved away, in death or life, let's respect the oath we made for eternity ! Our marriage will not deceive our love at all ! Why do you want to divide asunder the burden of our love ? »

« Of course this would be a very happy marriage, » replied Kiều, « for love and affection are common sentiments of everyone ! But, I think that, when one is linked by a hymen thread, the woman must be like a flower with pollen intact, or like the perfect mirror of the moon. Her faithfulness is more valuable than a thousand gold taels. Oh, my lord ! I don't want to feel ashamed

« Thiếp từ ngộ biến đến giờ,
 « Ong qua, bướm lại, đã thừa xấu-xa.
 « Bấy-chầy, gió táp mưa sa,
 « Mấy trăng cũng khuyết, mấy hoa cũng tàn!
 « Còn chi là cái hồng-nhan?
 « Đã xong thân-thể, còn toan nỗi nào?
 « Nghĩ mình, chẳng hổ mình sao?
 « Dám đem trần-cẩu dự vào bố-kính!
 « Đã hay chàng nặng vì tình,
 « Trống hoa đèn, chẳng thẹn mình lấm ru!

before the flowery torch and before my true-love of olden days!
 Since misfortune fell upon your servant, how many times bees and
 butterflies have come to blemish her honor! So often ravaged by
 winds and rains, what moon could keep its mirror intact and what
 flower could keep itself from withering? What remains of the
 beauty of this rosy-cheeked girl? My life is considered finished now.
 What project do you want me to yet undertake? Didn't I feel
 ashamed when I thought of myself? As dust, how should I dare
 take part in wearing hemp trousers and thorn pins (242)? I know

(242) See footnote 68.

« Từ rày khép cửa phòng thu,
 « Chẳng tu, thì cũng như tu mới là!
 « Chàng dẫu nghĩ đến tình xa,
 « Đem tình cầm-sắt, đổi ra cầm-cờ.
 « Nói chi kết tóc, xe tơ?
 « Đã buồn cả ruột, lại dơ cả đời!
 Chàng rằng: « Khéo nói nên lời!
 « Mà trong lẽ phải có người có ta.

my lord, that you love me. But, how can I refrain from feeling
 ashamed before the flame of the nuptial lamps? From now on,
 I'll close the door of my autumnal room. I am not a religious
 woman, but I want to live like a religious one. My lord, if you still
 think of our past love, please forget the conjugal guitar and lute and
 replace them by a game of chess (243). What's the use of speaking
 of love and marriage so as to revive my grief and to stupidly spoil
 your life! »

« How clever you are in pleading for yourself! » retorted Kim.
 « But in such a debate, you must not ignore that there are still other

(240) Friendship.

« Xưa nay trong đạo bàn-bà,
 « Chữ trinh kia cũng có ba bảy đường:
 « Có khi biến, có khi thường,
 « Có quyền, nào phải một đường chấp kinh?
 « Như nàng lấy hiếu làm trinh,
 « Bụi nào cho đục được mình ấy vay?
 « Trời còn để có hôm nay,
 « Tan sương đầu ngõ, vén mây giữa trời.
 « Hoa tàn mà lại thêm tươi,
 « Trăng tàn mà lại hơn mười rằm xưa.

persons besides us. At all times, in the duties of a woman, there exist many ways of observing faithfulness: she must know how to adapt the circumstances, whether in case of emergency or in an ordinary one. Sometimes, one doesn't abide rigorously by certain classical principles as you have done, when you had to sacrifice your purity to perform your filial devotion. In such a case, what dust could stain your pure body? Since Heaven still permits us to meet today, let's contemplate the fog as it melts away outdoors and the clouds as they break up in the sky. The would-be withering flower looks fresher to me, and the moon, though on the wane, seems tenfold

*« Có điều chi nữa mà ngờ,
 « Khách qua đường để hững-hờ chàng Tiếu ? »
 Nghe chàng nói đã hết điều,
 Hai thân thì cũng quyết theo một bài.
 Hết lời khôn lẽ chối lời,
 Cái đầu, nàng những ngán dài thở-than.
 Nhà vừa mở tiệc đoàn-viên,
 Hoa soi ngọn đuốc, hồng chen bức là.*

brighter than when it was full. What doubt still haunts you then?
 Do you want to consider me a simple passer-by like one did the
 poor Sou (244) ? »

Hearing Kim's arguments, both Mr. Vương and his wife decided
 to express the same opinion. How could Kiều find words so as to
 decline this proposal ? She bowed her head and sighed submissively.

A grandiose banquet was then organized to welcome this perfect
 union. All about, the flame of torches, like blooming flowers, flowed

(244) Lou-Tcheou, the wife of Sou-Lang, was one day kidnapped by
 Ko-tse-Yi. From then on, she despised her husband, and regarded him
 as a « simple passer-by. »

*Cùng nhau giao-bái một nhà,
Lễ đà đủ lễ, đôi đà đủ đôi.
Động-phòng dìn-dặt chén mời,
Bảng-khuảng duyên mới, ngậm-ngùi tình xưa.
Những từ sen ngó, đào tơ,
Mười-lăm năm, mới bảy giờ là đây!
Tình-duyên ấy, hợp tan này,
Bi-hoan mấy nỗi, đêm chầy trăng cao.*

over the silk curtains embroidered with beautiful roses. Kim and Kiều exchanged their ritual greetings before all the members of the family. The rites were thus accomplished, linking them into a perfect couple.

They were now in their nuptial room, inviting each other to empty the hymen wine contained in small cups made of tortoise-shell. But, in the sweet melancholy of their new union, they could not help thinking with regret of the flavor of their love of olden days. Oh, how could they forget those spring days when the lotus was hardly blooming, so rosy and so beautiful beside the tender peach-fruit? Fifteen years had since gone by, and the instant so longed for came to them at last ! How many events had taken place : first, their love as though predicted by destiny, then their union and farewell ! So much grief suffered to come at last to this happy day ! The night

*Canh khuya bức gấm rủ thao,
 Dưới đèn tỏ dạng, má đào thêm xuán.
 Tình-nhân lại gặp tình-nhân,
 Hoa xưa ong cũ, mấy phần chung-tình!
 Nàng rằng: « Phận thiếp đã đành,
 « Có làm chi nữa cái mình bỏ đi!
 « Nghĩ chàng nghĩa cũ, tình ghi,
 « Chiều lòng gọi có xướng-tùy mây may.
 « Riêng lòng đã thẹn lắm thay,
 « Cũng là mặt dạn, mày dày, khó coi!*

was far spent. Outside, the moon appeared well high in the sky.

Time continued to run far into the night. Beside the brocade curtain with dropped fringes, the rosy cheeks appeared to have more charm in the lamplight. The lovers were found now face to face again. In front of the flower of olden days, the faithful flame seemed to burn anew in the heart of the old bee.

« The fate of your servant has already been fixed, » Kiều said to her husband. « What could you make then of this sacrificed body? I know, my lord, that your past love is still carved in your mind. So, I have deferred to your will so as to accomplish a little my duties as a wife. But, inwardly, I feel ashamed of myself. And surely people will not stand when I show

« Những như áo-yếm vành ngoài,
 « Còn toan mở mặt với người cho qua.
 « Lại như những thói người ta,
 « Vớt hương dưới đất, bẻ hoa cuối mùa.
 « Cũng dơ giở nhuốc bày trò,
 « Còn tình đâu nữa, là thù đẩy thôi !
 « Người yêu, ta xấu với người,
 « Yêu nhau, thì lại bằng mười phụ nhau.
 « Cửa nhà dù tính về sau,
 « Thì còn em đó, lọ cầu chi đây ?

my shameful face. It's true that you'll show me all the appearances of your affection ; but, on my part, how dare I appear beside you shamelessly. Are you going to imitate certain persons who like to gather the incense fallen on the ground or to pick flowers when the season is on the wane ? How horrible it is to see that I'll have to display my shame before the public ! This would not be a token of your love but a hostile act instead ! I might make you ashamed if you loved me. To love each other now is tenfold worse than to deceive each other. If you think of the future of your home, my younger sister

« *Chữ trinh còn một chút này,*
 « *Chẳng cầm cho vững, lại giày cho tan !*
 « *Còn nhiều ân-ái chan-chan,*
 « *Hay gì vầy cái hoa tàn mà chơi ? »*
Chàng rằng : « Gắn bó một lời,
 « *Bỗng không cả nước, chim trời lữ nhau.*
 « *Xót người lưu-lạc bấy lâu,*
 « *Tưởng thề-thốt nặng cũng đau-đớn nhiều !*
 « *Thương nhau sinh-tử đã liều,*
 « *Gặp nhau còn chút bấy nhiêu là tình.*

is there. Why address yourself to the elder one ? This is the little faithfulness that still remains in my heart. Why not respect it instead of trampling it under your feet ? Loves can be found everywhere to satisfy your heart, my lord ! What's the use of beguiling the time caressing this withered flower ? »

« One word had linked us together, » replied Kim. « Suddenly we were separated from each other like the fish from the bird. How could I tell you all my sufferings during your long exile ? And I thought that, after exchanging such serious oaths with me, you should have suffered a great deal in breaking them. We made a decision



Xót người lưu-lạc bấy lâu. . .

How could I tell you all my sufferings during your long exile ?

« *Chừng xuân tơ-liễu còn xanh,*
 « *Nghĩ rằng chưa thoát khỏi vành ái-ân.*
 « *Gương trong chẳng chút bụi trần,*
 « *Một lời quyết hẳn muốn phần kính thêm.*
 « *Bấy lâu đáy bể, mò kim,*
 « *Là nhiều vàng đá, phải tìm trăng hoa ?*
 « *Ai ngờ lại hợp một nhà,*
 « *Lọ là chân-gối, mới ra sắt-cầm ! »*

because we thought that we could love each other forever. Now, we meet again, and I find nothing missing in the sincere love that we have conceived for each other. The tender willow always looks so green, as in the time of our spring days : no, we haven't been freed yet from the links of love ! Oh, my limpid mirror ! No one can find on you the least dust of this world. I swear to you that my respect for you does nothing but increase. For so many years I looked for you at random, like one groped for a needle at the bottom of a sea. I did it for the sincere love to which I have dedicated my whole life, and not for frivolous ones. Who could think that we should still have this happy day under the same roof ? So, I don't think it necessary that we must share the same blanket or the

Nghe lời sửa áo, cài trâm,
 Khẩu đầu lay tạ cao thâm nghìn trùng :
 « Thân tàn gạn đục khơi trong,
 « Là nhờ quân-tử khác lòng người ta.
 « Mấy lời tâm-phúc ruột-rà,
 « Tương-tri đường ấy, mới là tương-tri !
 « Chở-che, đùm-bọc, thiếu gì ?
 « Trăm năm danh-tiết cũng vì đêm nay ! »

same pillow so as to become like the guitar and the lute (245). »

Hearing these words, Kiều put her dress straight, pinned her hair, then prostrated herself on the ground so as to thank the Very High One. « If pure water can be separated from the mud of my tainted life, » Kiều said to her husband, « it is because of you, my generous lord, whose soul is not like that of other persons. Your words really came from the bottom of your heart. Understanding each other to such a degree is really understanding each other. Oh, my protector ! Oh, my shelter ! What can I desire more ? My life has found honor and virtue again because of this night. »

(245) The guitar and the lute stand for a good understanding between the spouses. The above verse means, « We'll live together like husband and wife, but without bodily intercourse. »

*Thoát thôi, tay lại cầm tay,
Càng yếu vì nét, càng say vì tình.
Thêm nến giá, nổi hương bình,
Cùng nhau lại chúc chén quỳnh giao-hoan.
Tình xưa lai-láng khôn hàn,
Thong-dong, lại hỏi ngón đàn ngày xưa.
Nàng rằng: « Vì mấy đường tơ,
« Làm người cho đến bây giờ mới thôi !*

They joined their hands anew after this short talk. The more they loved each other for their wisdom, the more enamoured they became. Kim lighted another candle and added more incense to the perfume-brazier. Then, together, they emptied new cups of ambrosia wine so as to celebrate their happiness.

How could they restrain their love of olden days that was flowing now back again in their hearts. Sweetly, Kim asked Kiều to play again the pieces of music to which he had listened once previously.

« It was because of a few tunes of those silk chords that

« *Ấn-nấn thì sự đã rồi !*
« Nể lòng người cũ, vâng lời một phen. »
Phím đàn dìu-dặt tay tiên,
Khói trầm cao thấp, tiếng huyền gần xa.
Khúc đầu đầm-ấm dương-hòa !
Ấy là hồ-diệp hay là Trang-sinh ?

we all were deceived until this day (246), » replied Kiêu. « But it's too late to regret it now. However, to defer to your will, my dear friend of olden days, I want to play them once more. »

Her fairy fingers started dancing on the guitar strings. The smoke of incense seemed to rise and settle down following the flow of high and low notes coming from the musical instrument. What a beautiful piece of music, as warm as spring air ! Was this a butterfly or young Tchouang-Sin himself (247) ? And what was this second

(246) From the beginning to the end of the story, one can, in fact, notice a kind of undefinable influence of the music on Kiêu's destiny. The piece « Cruel destiny » was repeated, in particular, in diverse circumstances of her life.

(247) A poem written in the Tang period, about a young man named Tchouang-Sin. The latter, in one of his sleeps, dreamed that he was changed into a butterfly, and when he woke up, wondered whether he was a man or a butterfly.

Khúc đàu êm-ái xuân-tình !
Ấy hồn Thục-đế hay mình đồ-quyên ?
Trong sao châu rõ duềnh quyên !
Ấm sao hạt ngọc Lam-diền mới đông !
Lọt tai nghe suốt năm cung,
Tiếng nào là chẳng nẻo-nùng xôn-xao.
Chàng rằng: « Phổ ấy tay nào ?
« Xưa sao sầu-thảm, nay sao vui-vầy ?

piece of music which sounded as sweet as spring love ? One wondered whether this was the manes of Emperor Chou or the cries of a cuckoo which was soaring somewhere in the sky (248) ? The notes flowed as limpid as pure pearls dropping into a pool of water bathed in the moonlight, and as warm as pearls of dew which had just condensed on the mount Lan-tien (249).

Kim listened attentively to the performance of the five-tone scale. Every tune seemed so stirring and so moving to him. « But, these pieces have the same air as that of the ancient ones ! » he exclaimed

(248) This emperor died of grief for losing his States. His manes reincarnated into a cuckoo.

(249) The name of a mountain in the region of Shansi. A poem, written in the Tang period, compared the mist which covered it at sunrise to small bright pearls.

« *Tê vui bởi tại lòng này,*
« *Hay là khổ-tận, đến ngày cam-lai ?* »
Nàng rằng: « *Vì chút nghề chơi,*
« *Đoạn-trường tiếng ấy hại người bấy lâu!*
« *Một phen tri-kỷ cùng nhau,*
« *Cuốn dây từ đây, về sau cũng chừa.* »
Truyện trò chưa cạn tóc-tơ,
Gà đà gáy sáng, trời vừa rạng đông.

admiringly. « With the same hands, why did they sound so sad previously and so gay today ? Did moodiness or gaiety come from your heart, or because of the coming of happy days after so many misfortunes ? »

« It was because of my poor talent that such mournful airs had caused so many misfortunes in our life, » replied Kiều. « Now, since we have understood each other so well, I want to roll up the chords and not to touch them any longer. »

They had not poured out all their inmost sentiments and all the stories of their lives when cocks' crows rose from outside, announcing the break of day.

*Tình riêng, chàng lại nói sòng,
Một nhà ai cũng lạ-lùng khen khéo.
Cho hay thực-nữ chí cao,
Phải người sớm muộn, tối đào như ai ?*

Kim told the whole story of their intimate decisions made last night to all the family. Everyone looked surprised at the news, and could not help praising openly such a marvelously virtuous and noble woman. Truly, she was not a person who liked to exchange peaches in the morning and plums in the evening like certain other women (250).

(250) A consecrated expression used to designate the inconstancy, frivolity of a love less serious than that between Kim and Kiều.

*Hai tình vẹn-về hòa hai,
Chẳng trong chăn gối, cũng ngoài cầm thơ.
Khi chén rượu, lúc cuộc cờ,
Khi xem hoa nở, khi chờ trăng lên.
Ba-sinh đã phỉ mười nguyên,
Duyên đôi-lúa cũng là duyên bạn-bầy.*

EPILOGUE

Two perfect sentiments — love and friendship — reunited these two spouses. They spent their time, not sharing the same blanket and the same pillow, but like friends, playing the lute and reciting poems. Sometimes, they spent hours emptying cups of wine, occasionally playing chess, sometimes contemplating blooming flowers, or sitting side by side, enjoying the beautiful scene of the moonrise. Now, both of them had performed all the ten vows made since three existences ago. They were thus tied to each other, not only by a link of marriage, but also by a link of friendship.

*Nhớ lời, lập một am mây,
Khiến người thân-tín nước thầy Giác-Duyên.
Đến nơi đóng cửa, gài then,
Rêu trùm kẽ ngạch, cỏ lên mái nhà.
Sư đà hái thuốc phương xa,
Mây bay, hạc lánh, biết là tìm đâu?
Nặng vì chút nghĩa bấy lâu,
Trên am cứ giữ hương dầu hóm mai.*

Remembering their promises, they had a temple built in a well isolated corner. Then they sent a trusty messenger to Superioress Giác-Duyên so as to invite her to come and live with them. But upon arriving at the spot, the messenger found the doors closed and bolted. Moss had covered the chinks of the walls, and grass had grown as high as the roof of the temple. The bonzess had gone to a very forlorn region to gather medicinal herbs and plants. Where could one find a traveling cloud or a wandering crane?

In memory of the long friendship between her and the religious woman, morning and night, Kiêu devoted herself to the care of incense and oil in the temple:

*Một nhà phúc lộc gồm hai,
 Nghìn năm dằng-dặc, quan-giai lẫn-lần.
 Thừa gia chẳng hết nàng Vân,
 Một cây cù-mộc, một sản quế-hòe.
 Phong-lưu phú-quí ai bì,
 Vườn xuân một cửa, để bia muôn đời.*

Ever since then, the family was laden with riches and happiness. Happy years seemed to come to them endlessly, and Kim had many times obtained higher official grades. Thúy-Vân entirely devoted herself to the care of the home, like a bent tree (251) surrounded with many sophoraes and cinnamon-trees (252). Very few persons could equal them in sufficiency, opulence and honors. And the memories of this family,

(251) A poem compares princess Tai-Tse, of the Tcheou dynasty, well known for her kindness toward her inferiors, to a bent tree, stretching its branches to support climbing plants.

(252) Under the Han dynasty, a man named Yeou-Yu-Kiun, in Yenchan, had five sons. All the latter were very bright in tests. One called them the five cinnamon-trees of Yenchan.

Under the Sung dynasty, a man named Ouang-Yeou had three sons. He planted three sophoraes in his courtyard, and predicted that his sons would occupy posts as high as these trees. As a matter of fact, all the three sons became ministers. One called them the three sophoraes of the Ouang family.

*Ngắm hay muốn sự tại trời,
Trời kia đã bắt làm người có thân,
Bắt phong-trần, phải phong-trần,
Cho thanh-cao, mới được phần thanh-cao.
Có đâu thiên-vị người nào,
Chữ Tài, chữ Mệnh đời-dào cả hai.
Có tài, mà cậy chi tài?
Chữ tài liền với chữ tai một vần.*

where reigned gaiety and happiness, would remain immortal for ten thousand ages.

Let's meditate, and we shall comprehend that everything does come from Heaven, for Heaven has condemned men to live and sealed their fate. If we are condemned to live a life full of adventures, we must accept it. If we are granted a pure and noble life, we shall be pure and noble. Heaven is partial to no one. Genius and destiny would be too much if they went along with each other. When you are endowed with a talent, don't rely too much on it, for the word « tài, » which means talent, rhymes

*Đã mang lấy nghiệp vào thân,
Cũng đừng trách lẫn Trời gần, Trời xa.
Thiện-căn ở tại lòng ta,
Chữ tâm kia mới bằng ba chữ tài!*

with the word « tai, » which means calamity. Since each of us has a burden to carry, let's carry it and not accuse Heaven of what might happen to us. The principle of good comes from our souls, and a good heart is much worthier than all the talents.

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ERRATA

Page	Line	Errors	To Be Read
33	3	t mes	<i>times</i>
33	4	millenn ums	<i>millenniums</i>
75	2	I ve	<i>live</i>
97	8	injustly	<i>unjustly</i>
129	6	makeup	<i>make-up</i>
152	2	It	<i>If</i>
153	5	oat	<i>oath</i>
185	4	Weihsien	<i>Ihsien</i>
194	2	I	<i>If</i>
195	7	becauseof	<i>because of</i>
200	1	adsence	<i>absence</i>
200	9	wis	<i>wise</i>
222	8	Hoan-Thur	<i>herself</i>
405	4	at hatched	<i>a thatched</i>
411	5	ife	<i>life</i>
413	4	Misfortune	<i>misfortune</i>

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