

粵謳

Five Cantonese Love Songs

Translated by Sir Cecil Clementi

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Cecil Clementi was Governor of Hong Kong 1925-1930.

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解心事（一）

心各有事。總要解脫爲先。
 心事唔安。解得就了然。
 苦海茫茫多半是命蹇。
 但向苦中尋樂。便是神仙。
 若係愁苦到不堪。真係惡算。
 總好過官門地獄。更重哀憐。
 退一步海闊天空。就唔使自怨。
 心能自解。真正係樂境無邊。
 若係解到唔解得通。就講過陰隲個便。
 唉。凡事檢點。
 積善心唔險。
 你睇遠報在來生。近報在目前。

Quit Ye the Soul's Sorrow! (1)

Each soul has its sorrow: this ye ought first to quit and cast aside.
 The soul's sorrow galls: quit it, then there is peace.
 Wide, wide is the sea of bitterness: ill-fated be more than half therein:
 But whoso find joy amid the bitter, theirs is an angel-spirit.
 If woe and bitterness pass beyond sufferance, then 'tis an evil shift;
 Though better than that hell which is the judge's gate: it were more grievous far.
 Draw back but a step from your petty grief: ocean widens: heaven's void deepens:
 no need then to fret yourself.
 The soul that can quit its thrall truly is as a land of boundless joy.
 If quittance there be, but quittance be not complete, then exercise yourselves in
 secret charity.
 Aye! But take count of all things:
 The hoard of a good heart brings no hazard:
 Look you! Its far reward is in the life to come, its near reward is beneath your eyes.

解心事 (二)

心事惡解。都要解到佢分明。
解字看得圓通。萬事都盡輕。
我想心事千條就有一千樣病證。
總係心中煩極。講不得過人聽。
大抵癡字入得證深。都係情字染病。
唔除癡念。就係妙藥都唔靈。
花柳場中最易迷却本性。
溫柔鄉裏總要自出奇兵。
悟破色空方正是樂境。
長迷花柳就噲墮落愁城。
唉。須要自醒。
世間無定是楊花性。
總係邊一便風來。就向邊一便有情。

Quit Ye the Soul's Sorrow! (2)

The soul's sorrow is hard to quit: but quit it ye must, till plainly ye part it from you.
The word "quittance", look it round and through, lighteneth wholly a myriad troubles.
Methinks that the soul's thousand sorrows have a thousand phases of malady as their witness:
Though, when the heart-ache is intense, it has no voice for men to hear.
Chiefly the word "frenzy" drives disease in deep: likewise the word "passion" has the taint of malady.
If frenzied thoughts be not discarded, then even magic medicines are of no avail.
In arbours of flower and willow it is most easy to be sense-enthralled.
So from Complaisant Thorp must ye come forth as wondrous warriors.
Probe in conscious knowledge the vanities of beauty, then verily ye are in the happy land.
But if long enthralled by flower and willow, ye will sink down to Sorrow City.
Ah! Needs must ye yourselves awake.
In the world naught is stable: 'tis as the nature of the willow-blossom,
Whose bent is ever to incline that way which the gale goeth.

唔好死

唔好死得咁易。死要死得心甜。
 恐怕死錯番來。你話點死得遍添。
 有的應死佢又偷生。真正生不顧面。
 有的理唔該死。實在死得哀憐。
 我想錯死與及偷生。真正爭得好遠。
 一則被人辱罵。一則惹我心酸。
 大抵死得磊落光明。就係生亦有咁顯。
 你睇忠臣烈女都在萬古留傳。
 自古女子輕生。都係情字引線。
 開頭打破。又要義字為先。
 情義兩全千古罕見。
 唔在幾遠。
 你睇紅樓夢上三姊與及柳湘蓮。

Error in Death

Ye err in yielding to death so easily: death it behoves to die in heart's sweetness,
 Lest dying amiss ye should say, "Would we could die once more!"
 Some there be that should die, yet they steal life: verily living they regard not their
 fair fame:
 Some there be whose due death is not: their dying is piteous indeed.
 Methinks that truly death amiss and theft of life differ full widely.
 These suffer insult and abuse of men: those edge my heart with sour sorrow.
 Mostly, if a man die pre-eminent and glorious, then even life gives no such lustre.
 Look you! The loyal minister, the faithful wife, in a myriad ages their story endures.
 From of yore, when a girl made light of life, 'twas ever the word "passion" that gave
 the clue.
 When passion's bars are broken down, then must the word "virtue" be set foremost.
 Passion and faith, these two, a thousand aeons rarely see them consummate.
 The proof is not far:
 Ye see it in that which the "Red Chamber Dream" tells of Sister Tertia and of Liu
 Xianglian.*

*Romanization changed to pinyin by *Renditions*.

揀心

世間難搵一條心。
得佢一條心事。我死亦要追尋。
一面試佢真心。一面妨到佢嚟。
試到果實真情。正好共佢酌斟。
嚟嚟吓嚟到我哋心虛。箇箇都妨到薄倖。
就俾佢真心來待我。我都要試過佢兩三勻。
我想人客萬千。真个都有一分。
箇的真情撒散。重慘過大海撈針。
况且你噲搵真心。人哋亦都噲搵。
真心人客你話夠幾箇人分。
細想緣分各自相投。唔到你著緊。
安一吓本分。
各有來因。你都莫羨人。

The Choice of a Heart

In the world it is hard to find a heart:
Can I but win his heart, then even in death will I follow in his quest.
At a glance I would test his heart's truth, by a glance I would foil his fraud.
When I have surely tested his true love, it will indeed be good to take counsel with
him.
Fraud upon fraud! Fraud has made our heart empty: one and all we beware of the
truant.
So, e'en if he come true-hearted to court me, I still will test him twice and thrice
over.
Methinks that of ten thousand thousand guest-gallants they who give true love are
not even one:
True passion's flotsam and fragments are more cruel to seek, than 'twere to dredge
ocean for a needle.
Moreover, if thou canst find a true heart, one and all can find it too.
Between how many maids, then, say you, can a loyal gallant share his love?
Ponder little by little on predestined fate! Each man must meet it face to face.
No need for your hastening.
Be content awhile with your lot.
Each bears the doom of his former life. Do not thou envy any man!

聽春鶯

斷腸人怕聽春鶯。
 鶯語撩人更易斷魂。
 春光一到已自撩人恨。
 鳥呀。你重有意和春共碎我心。
 人哋話鳥語可以忘憂。我正聽佢一陣。
 你估人難如鳥。定是鳥不如人。
 見佢恃在能言。就言到妙品。
 但逢好境就語向春明。
 點得鳥呀。你替我講句真言。言過個薄倖。
 又怕你言詞關切。佢又當作唔聞。
 又點得我魂夢化作鳥飛。同你去搵。
 搵著薄情詳講。重要同佢回音。
 唉。真欲緊。做夢還依枕。
 但得我夢中唔叫醒我。我就附著你同行。

The Spring's Oriole

Whoso is heart-broken dreads to hear the oriole in the Spring-tide.
 The oriole's voice moves men more readily to break their soul in sorrow.
 Once radiant spring has come, already of itself it moves men to repine:
 O Bird! Art thou then the more resolved with the Spring's aid to crush my heart?
 Men say the bird's voice may give forgetfulness of sorrow. So I will even listen for
 a moment.
 Think you that man can scarce compare with a bird: or cannot the birds vie with
 men?
 See! he plumes himself on his speech-craft: aye, he speaks in wondrous wise:
 Amid lovely scenes, he communes clearly with the spring.
 Would that thou, O Bird, couldst in my stead speak a true saying, saying it to yon
 truant!
 But I fear me that, though thou say a word of import and urgency, yet will he feign
 not to hear.
 Would then that my soul could dream itself transfigured, and as a bird fly with thee
 in his quest!
 When I find the truant, I will speak out frankly and hold him to reply.
 Ah! truly desire is instant.
 As I dream still I rest on my pillow.
 But had not my dream's cry awakened me, then as companion had I gone with thee.