

# The Golden Year of Fan Ch'eng-ta

Translated by Gerald Bullett

On this and the following pages we present a random harvest from the fruits of Mr. Bullett's experiment—being 8 out of a total of 60 poems in Fang Ch'eng-ta's paean to the four rural seasons. These are reproduced by permission of Mrs. Rosalind Bullett, from the Cambridge University Press book.

## EARLY SPRING

Today, with lifting heart and bow'd back,  
Of rice-seed we open the first sack.  
The thunderquake, which puts an end to drouth  
And draws a blind over the crested south,  
Is filling the fields with water, drop by drop,  
And all the signs foretell a decent crop.  
See, there, how the wallowing tide  
Slaps at the bridge's underside.

## 春日

吉日初開種稻包  
南山雷動雨連宵  
今年不欠秧田水  
新漲看看拍小橋

## LATE SPRING

## 晚春

三旬蠶忌閉門中  
鄰曲都無步往蹤  
猶是曉晴風露下  
采桑時節暫相逢

For thirty days, jealous of visitors,  
The silkworm lives unseen, behind shut doors.  
Even the nearest of neighbours will refrain  
From making footprints in the dusty lane.  
Only on golden mornings, when the breeze  
Scarce stirs the dew that lingers in the trees,  
They come together to gather the mulberry leaf,  
With serious smile and conversation brief.

# 范成大四時田園雜興

*SUMMER*

Sons in the fields all day, daughters at evening  
 Spinning hemp and weaving,  
 These with nimble fingers and strong arms  
 Contrive to keep things going on our farms.  
 This little grandchild, five years short of twelve,  
 As yet can neither spin nor deeply delve:  
 Yet even he, even so,  
 Under the mulberry his melon-seeds would grow.

## 夏日

晝出耘田夜績麻  
 村莊兒女各當家  
 童孫未解供耕織  
 也傍桑陰學種瓜

蝸蟾千萬沸斜陽  
 蛙黽無邊聒夜長  
 不把癡聾相對治  
 夢魂爭得到藜牀

Shadows extend, under the slanting sun:  
 The cicadas' bubbling noise goes on and on.  
 The night falls, but frogs, too wide awake,  
 Cannot forbear their automatic croak.  
 Use now the art of being dull of sense,  
 And so by feigning find indifference:  
 How else may the dream-soul, each mortal has,  
 On viewless wing approach my bed of grass?

*AUTUMN*

Through the new-built yard, smooth as looking-glass,  
 Group after group of busy workers pass:  
 For the threshing of rice-grain they come together,  
 Taking advantage of fine frosty weather.  
 Rustic voices, joking, singing, rumbling,  
 Are like a remote thunder's gentle grumbling;  
 And all night long, till the first glimmer of dawn,  
 The rhythmic beat of the flail goes on and on.

## 秋日

新築場泥鏡面平  
 家家打稻趁霜晴  
 笑歌聲裏輕雷動  
 一夜連枷響到明

Rich store of pulse and corn, this thriving year,  
 Crams to the brim our jars of earthenware.  
 By heaven's gift of good fermentable grain  
 We tread already the royal way of wine,  
 Though hardly knowing, liquor still so new,  
 If yet to add our leafings of bamboo.  
 And now the Day of Double Brightness comes,  
 With autumn's festal flowers, chrysanthemums.

菽粟瓶罍貯滿家  
 天教將醉作生涯  
 不知新滴堪蕪未  
 尙贏糠覈飽兒郎

### WINTER

#### 冬日

放船閒看雪山晴  
 風定奇寒晚更凝  
 坐聽一篙珠玉碎  
 不知湖面已成冰

Let the boat take me leisurely where it will,  
 So of these snow-bright slopes I have my fill.  
 The wind falls, is still. Cold and fine,  
 The evening air grows ever more crystalline.  
 The rhythmic pole makes music in my ears  
 Like breaking jade or shatter of pearly spheres:  
 By which I guess the water's shining face  
 Already wears a brittle sheet of ice.

In village highways, when the year ends,  
 Each winter sees a festival of friends.  
 Good neighbours won't neglect, for anything,  
 The ritual of the mutual visiting.  
 In long, linen garments, white as snow,  
 From house to wooden house the old men go.  
 "Give you good den," they'll say. "Twas made at home,  
 This gown of mine: wove on our own loom."

村巷冬年見俗情  
 鄰翁講禮拜柴荆  
 長衫布縷如霜雪  
 云是家機自織成