

Dear Mark,

Enclosed are some pages that can be copied and handed out as you best see fit. Also a gift for you. Also I am going to start calling the plants late at night and read to them about locusts and bunnies and such. Hope that is ok.

Love,

Joshua

POEMS & PROSE FOR  
POTTED PLANTS

Like Trains of Cars on Tracks of Plush  
I hear the level Bee -  
A Jar across the Flowers goes  
Their Velvet Masonry

Withstands until the sweet Assault  
Their Chivalry consumes -  
While He, victorious tilts away  
To vanquish other Blooms.

A Bee his Burnished Carriage  
Drove boldly to a Rose -  
Combinedly alighting -  
Himself - his Carriage was.

The Rose received his Visit  
With frank tranquility,  
Witholding not a Crescent  
To his cupidity.

Their Moment consummated  
Remained for him - to flee -  
Remained for her, of Rapture  
But the Humility.

What tenements of Clover  
Are fitting for the Bee  
What edifices azure  
For Butterflies and me  
What residences nimble  
Arise and evanesce  
Without a rhythmic rumor  
Or an assaulting guess.

Bees are Black - with Gilt Surcingles -  
Buccaneers of Buzz -  
Ride abroad in ostentation  
And subsist on Fuzz -  
  
Fuzz ordained - not Fuzz contingent -  
Marrows of the Hill.  
Jugs - a Universe's fracture  
Could not jar or spill.

*Emily Dickinson*



The Verse Record  
of My Peonies  
(*Botan Kuroku*)  
by Masaoka Shiki

*May 9th.*

With my temperature irregularly high recently, my days and nights have become a hell of fire. This morning Haritsu and Sokotsu<sup>1</sup> have come by, bringing a pot of peonies. On the name tag was written, "Thin Ice." They have large flowers, light vermilion in color. At night Kyoshi<sup>2</sup> arrived, bringing Western-style food. I took medicine twice in the daytime and twice at night, but although exhausted by excessive sweating, I fell asleep with difficulty.

Here in tissue paper  
Is the parcel of flowers:  
The peonies.

Borne here to me  
On a jinrikisha, the peonies  
Still swaying.

The gift brought me  
Is peonies tended in a pot:  
Just so my illness.

Glowing brightly,  
A single flower of the peonies  
Lights up the sickroom.

Critical now,  
Bedridden with illness:  
The peony flowers.

<sup>1</sup> Like most of the people mentioned, Fukuda Haritsu (b. 1865) and Samukawa Sokotsu (b. 1875) are disciples of Shiki.

<sup>2</sup> Takahama Kyoshi (1874-1959), Shiki's best-known disciple.

Why not die then,  
In front of the peony flowers,  
Eating up apples?

There is this silence  
About the sickbed as the petals  
Drop from the peonies!

Two flakes fall  
And the shape of the peonies  
Is wholly changed.

Hyōtei came by in the morning. Saemon came in the afternoon and the painter Fusetsu in the evening.<sup>5</sup> The paper cover of these sheets has become a picture with the falling blossoms.

*May 11th.*

In the morning Katsuō and Teiken came by.<sup>6</sup> Not a one of the peony blossoms this morning but was fallen.

The peonies have fallen,  
And what alone is left behind  
Is—Bashō's portrait!

It occurred to me to set aside one large petal from the peonies, but the children got at the fallen blossoms and soon made an end of them.

I took my temperature tonight and discovered it to be almost 104°. Recently it has risen twice a day, as it did yesterday. But today, as formerly, it rose only once.

In three days' time  
The peony blossoms are ended:  
My record in verse.

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<sup>5</sup> Iwaki Hyōtei (1870–1939); Yoshino Dazaemon or Saemon (1877–1920); and Nakamura Fusetsu (dates unknown).

<sup>6</sup> Surnames and dates are unknown for Katsuō and Teiken.



T H E  
L O V E S  
O F T H E  
P L A N T S.

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C A N T O I.

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**D** E S C E N D, ye hovering Sylphs ! aerial Quires,  
And sweep with little hands your silver lyres ;  
With fairy foot-steps print your grassy rings,  
Ye Gnomes ! accordant to the tinkling strings ;  
While in soft notes I tune to oaten reed 5  
Gay hopes, and amorous sorrows of the mead.—  
From giant Oaks, that wave their branches dark,  
To the dwarf Moss, that clings upon their bark,

B

What

What Beaux and Beauties croud the gaudy groves,  
 And woo and win their vegetable Loves. 10  
 How Snow-drops cold, and blue-eyed Harebels blend  
 Their tender tears, as o'er the stream they bend ;  
 The love-sick Violet, and the Primrose pale  
 Bow their sweet heads, and whisper to the gale ;  
 With secret sighs the Virgin Lily droops, 15  
 And jealous Cowslips hang their tawny cups.  
 How the young Rose in beauty's damask pride  
 Drinks the warm blushes of his bashful bride ;  
 With honey'd lips enamour'd Woodbines meet,  
 Clasp with fond arms, and mix their kisses sweet.— 20

Stay thy soft-murmuring waters, gentle Rill ;  
 Hush, whispering Winds, ye rustling Leaves, be still ;  
 Rest, silver Butterflies, your quivering wings ;  
 Alight, ye Beetles, from your airy rings ;

*Vegetable Loves.* l. 10. Linneus the celebrated Swedish naturalist, has demonstrated, that all flowers contain families of male or females, or both ; and on their marriages has constructed his invaluable system of Botany.

Ye painted Moths, your gold-eyed plumage furl,      25  
Bow your wide horns, your spiral trunks uncurl ;  
Glitter, ye Glow-worms, on your mossy beds ;  
Descend, ye Spiders, on your lengthen'd threads ;  
Slide here, ye horned Snails, with varnish'd shells ;  
Ye Bee-nymphs, listen in your waxen cells !—      30



## THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE FLOWERS

I WISH merely to recall here a few facts known to every botanist. I have made not a single discovery and my modest contribution is confined to a few elementary observations. I need hardly say that I have no intention of reviewing all the proofs of intelligence which the plants give us. These proofs are innumerable and continual, especially among the flowers, in which the effort of vegetable life towards light and understanding is concentrated.)

(Though there be plants and flowers that are awkward or unlucky, there is none that is wholly devoid of wisdom and ingenuity.) All exert themselves to accomplish their



work, all have the magnificent ambition to overrun and conquer the surface of the globe by endlessly multiplying that form of existence which they represent. To attain this object, they have, because of the law that chains them to the soil, to overcome difficulties much greater than those opposed to the increase of the animals. And therefore the majority of them have recourse to combinations, to a machinery, to traps which, in regard to such matters as mechanism, ballistics, aerial navigation and the observation of insects, have often anticipated the inventions and acquirements of man.

It would be superfluous once more to trace the picture of the great systems of floral fertilisation: the play of stamens and pistil, the seduction of perfumes, the appeal of harmonious and dazzling colours, the

concoction of nectar, which is absolutely useless to the flower and is manufactured only to attract and retain the liberator from without, the messenger of love—bee, humble-bee, fly, butterfly or moth—that is to bring to the flower the kiss of the distant, invisible, motionless lover. . . .

(This vegetable world, which to us appears so placid, so resigned, in which all seems acquiescence, silence, obedience, meditation, is, on the contrary, that in which impatience, the revolt against destiny are the most vehement and stubborn.) The essential organ, the nutrient organ of the plant, its root, attaches it indissolubly to the soil. If it be difficult to discover among the great laws that oppress us that which weighs heaviest upon our shoulders, in the case of the plant there is no doubt: it is the law that condemns it to immobility from its birth to its death. Therefore it knows better than we, who disseminate our efforts,

against what first to rise in revolt. And the energy of its fixed idea, mounting from the darkness of the roots to become organised and full-blown in the flower, is an incomparable spectacle. It exerts itself wholly with one sole aim: to escape above from the fatality below, to evade, to transgress the heavy and sombre law, to set itself free, to shatter the narrow sphere, to invent or invoke wings, to escape as far as it can, to conquer the space in which destiny encloses it, to approach another kingdom, to penetrate into a moving and active world. . . .

Is the fact that it attains its object not as surprising as though we were to succeed in living outside the time which a different destiny assigns to us or in making our way into a universe freed from the weightiest laws of matter? We shall see that the flower sets man a prodigious example of insubmission, courage, perseverance and ingenuity. If we had applied to the removal



of various necessities that crush us, such as pain, old age and death, one-half of the energy displayed by any little flower in our gardens, we may well believe that our lot would be very different from what it is.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK



*Consider*

the alliance—  
ships and plants

The take-for-granted bloom  
of our roadsides

Queen Anne's Lace  
Black Eyed Susans  
rode the sea

"Specimens graciously passed  
between warring fleets"

And when an old boat rots ashore  
itself once living plant  
it sprouts.

Lorine Niedecker