

The Pine-Trees in the Courtyard

A.D. 820

Below the hall

The pine-trees grow in front of the steps,
Irregularly scattered,--not in ordered lines.

Some are tall and some are low:
The tallest of them is six rods high;

The lowest but ten feet.

They are like wild things

And no one knows who planted them.

Their roots are sunk in the terrace of white sand.

Morning and evening they are visited by the wind and moon;
Rain or fine,--they are free from dust and mud.

In the gales of autumn they whisper a vague tune;
From the suns of summer they yield a cool shade.

At the height of spring the fine evening rain

Fills their leaves with a load of hanging pearls.
At the year's end the time of great snow

Stamps their branches with a fret of glittering jade.
Of the Four Seasons each has its own mood;

Among all the trees none is like another.
Last year, when they heard I had bought this house,

Neighbors mocked and the World called me mad--
That a whole family of twice ten souls

Should move house for the sake of a few pines!
Now that I have come to them, what have they given me?

They have only loosened the buckles of my care.
Yet even so, they are "profitable friends,"

And fill my need of "converse with wise men."
Yet when I consider how, still a man of the world,

In belt and cap I scurry through dirt and dust,
From time to time my heart twinges with shame

That I am not fit to be master of my pines!

--PoChui

