

# MORE CRICKET SONGS

*Japanese haiku translated by Harry Behn*



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## *Japanese Haiku*

*Translated by Harry Behn*

Here is a new collection of haiku as charming and sensitive as *Cricket Songs*, Harry Behn's first such book, lovingly gathered and translated from the Japanese with the skill and subtle understanding of a poet. Since *Cricket Songs* appeared in 1964, American readers have become more familiar with the three-line haiku verse form in which, as Mr. Behn says, "Everything mentioned is just what it is, wonderful, here, but still beyond."

These haiku are drawn from the work of twenty-nine poets, and their moods range from the gentle amusement of Basho's

"There goes my best hat  
as down comes rain on my bald  
pate, plop! plop! Oh well . . ."

to the quiet excitement of Kikaku's

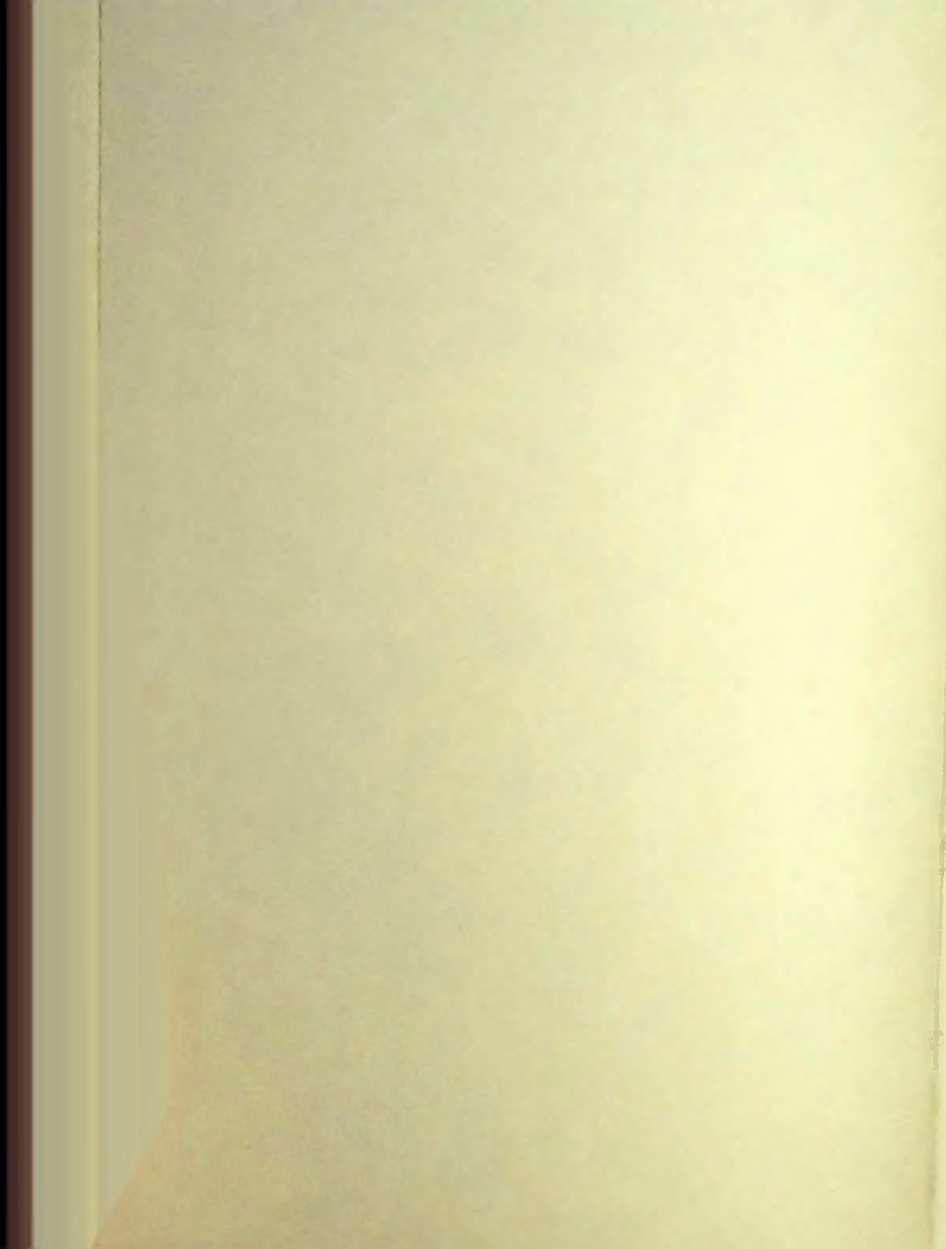
"Who can stay indoors  
on such a day with the sun  
dazzling on new snow!"

Simple, delicate, serene, and profound, these poems and their illustrations, selected from the paintings of Japanese masters, will bring delight to all readers.

*Illustrated with pictures by  
Japanese masters*

*All ages*

495  
2.9.8.2



MORE CRICKET SONGS

*by the same author*

THE LITTLE HILL

ALL KINDS OF TIME

WINDY MORNING

THE WIZARD IN THE WELL

THE PAINTED CAVE

THE TWO UNCLES OF PABLO

RODERICK

CRICKET SONGS: JAPANESE HAIKU

THE GOLDEN HIVE

CHRYSLIS: CONCERNING CHILDREN AND POETRY

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*Japanese haiku*  
*translated by Harry Behn*

*illustrated with pictures by*  
*Japanese masters*



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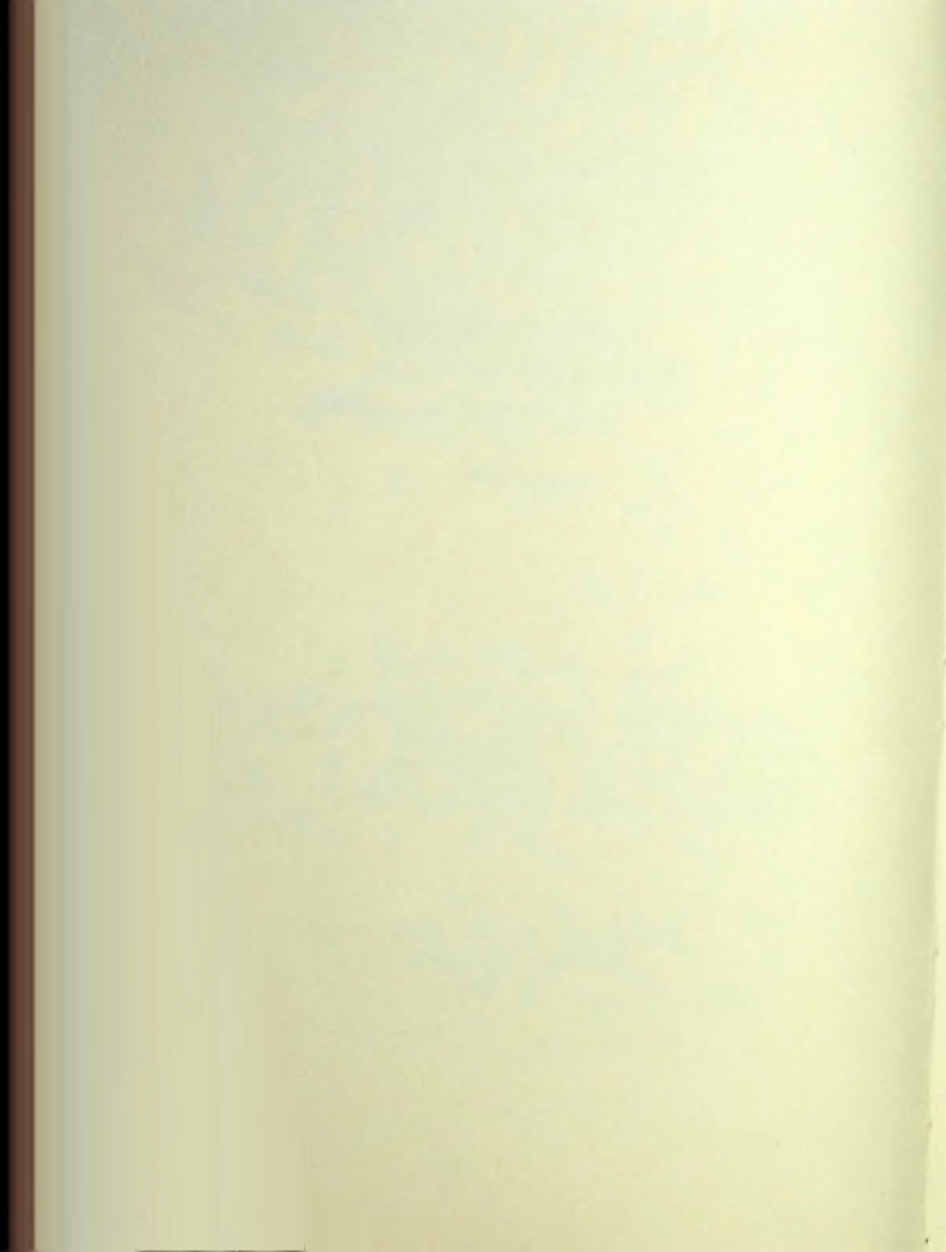
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One star lingering  
low in a mist as slowly  
sun warms the treetops.

HARRY BEHN





Has a drift of snow  
again covered the same small  
lonely hill we knew?

BASHO

There goes my best hat  
as down comes rain on my bald  
pate, plop! plop! Oh well . . .

BASHO

When a cuckoo sings  
on the hill, tea-pickers stand  
stock-still to listen.

BASHO

A dry leaf drifting  
down to earth clings to a strange  
green-spotted mushroom.

BASHO

Low clouds are shattered  
into small distant fragments  
of moonlit mountains.

BASHO



This unimportant  
small gray mountain is lifted  
aloft in a mist.

BASHO

Hidden by darkness,  
even old herons feel safe  
from a hungry hawk.

BASHO





The waves are so cold  
a rocking gull can scarcely  
fold itself to sleep.

BASHO

Trapped in a helmet  
hung in a shrine, a cricket  
chirps his last command.

BASHO

Swallows, spare those bees  
humming westward at evening  
laden with honey.

BASHO

Scattered on the sand  
like jewels, seashells tangled  
in kelp and rubbish . . .

BASHO

馬へん  
ふん



牛月堂

奥の細道  
五筆

The best I have to  
offer you is the small size  
of the mosquitoes.

BASHO

In my house this spring  
morning, there's nothing . . . that is,  
there is everything!

SODO



Wandering, dreaming  
in fever dreaming that dreams  
wander forever.

BASHO

Our old family dog  
trots ahead to show the way  
to grandfather's grave.

ISSA

Back in my home town  
even the flies aren't afraid  
to bite a big man.

ISSA

Restless little flea,  
I guess your night seems as long  
and lonely as mine.

ISSA



Once upon a time  
there was, and is, an old witch . . .  
a dry tuft of grass.

ISSA



If my complaining  
wife were alive, I might be  
out watching the moon.

ISSA



A hundred mountains  
echoed in the jeweled eyes  
of a dragonfly . . .

ISSA

My tired old nag shakes  
his loose skin, scaring away  
a white butterfly.

ISSA

Look at that strutting  
crow in the cornfield . . . as if  
he were the farmer!

ISSA

Swinging, swaying grass  
tossed by a wind. . . Spring has gone  
and the seeds ripen.

ISSA



Here comes our noble  
Mr. Horse! Out of the way,  
you common sparrows!

ISSA

Warbler, wipe your face  
neatly, if you please, but not  
on the plum petals!

ISSA



Waterfall, only  
a foot high, makes a large cool  
music at evening . . .

ISSA

Who can stay indoors  
on such a day with the sun  
dazzling on new snow!

KIKAKU

A bantam rooster  
spreading his ruff of feathers  
thinks he's a lion!

KIKAKU

There goes a beggar,  
bare, except for his robes  
of earth and sky.

KIKAKU





How can a creature  
as mean as a winter fly  
continue to live?

KIKAKU

The crickets are saying,  
Kosai the poet is dead,  
he no longer sings.

KIKAKU



Late summer evening.  
Wind falls still. Cicadas drone.  
Swallows fly in sun.

SHIKI

Drifting, feathery  
flakes of snow cover the white  
mounds of sleeping geese.

SHIKI

Eleven horsemen  
ride silently, vanishing  
into a blizzard . . .

SHIKI

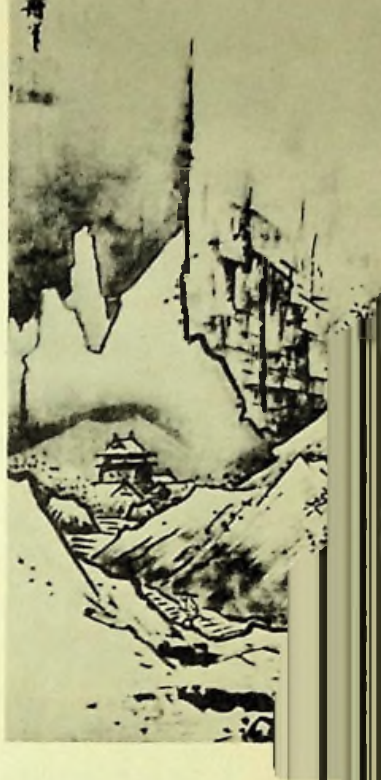
After thunder goes  
rumbling away, the clean, clear  
sky smells of hawthorn.

SHIKI

A full moon comes up,  
and stars, stars uncountable,  
drown in a green sky.

SHIKI





At twilight a bell  
booms softly as I enjoy  
a ripe persimmon.

SHIKI

Perch in my plum tree,  
little warbler! It's an old  
custom of your clan.

ONITSURA

A drowsy breeze sighs  
and the sky's dry shell is filled  
with the voice of pines.

ONITSURA



Hovering above  
the brook, a cloud is shattered  
by a leaping fish.

ONITSURA

"Please don't go!" I called,  
but the fireflies flashed away  
deep into darkness.

ONITSURA



Tangled over twigs,  
a tattered cobweb glinting  
in the dusty sun . . .

ONITSURA

After the goddess  
sang, in silence she became  
a small, shy green bird

ONITSURA



With a whispering  
hiss, an old scarecrow tosses  
straws into the wind.

BONCHO

The ragged phantom  
of a cloud ambles after  
a slim dancing moon.

BONCHO

Cuckoo, if you must,  
cry to the moon, not to me.  
I've heard your story.

SOSEKI

Parched by the shrill song  
of cicadas, I waken  
hot from my noon nap.

SOSEKI

It's not so easy  
to leave this cool green garden  
for a dusty road.

ANON





A breeze stirs at dawn,  
shaking a rain of trembling  
dewdrops to the grass.

ASAYASU

Above the meadow  
a skylark, singing, flies high,  
high into silence.

CHIYO

Now a spring rain falls  
gently . . . the world grows greener  
and more beautiful.

CHIYO



Even a wise man  
can't be sure which end is which  
of a resting snail.

KYORAI

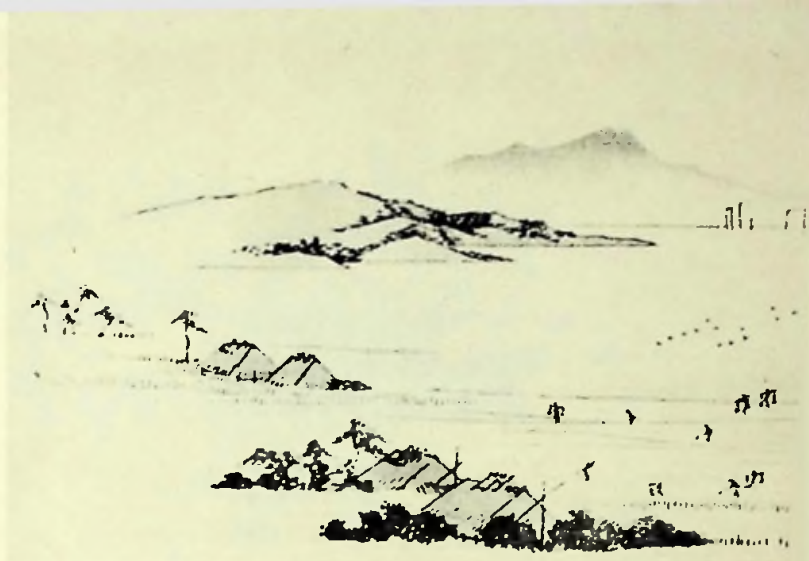
I called to the wind,  
"Who's there?" . . . Whoever it was  
still knocks at my gate.

KYORAI

Beyond stillness, a  
far-off bell drowns the valley  
in cool waves of air.

KYORAI

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There, where the skylark's  
singing crosses the cuckoo's  
dark song, there am I.

KYORAI

Watching a petal  
falling, a baby almost  
looks like a Buddha.

KUBUTSU

Climbing a steep hill  
I saw below, on a tree's  
top twig, a butterfly.

KWASO

Hills have disappeared  
into a haze of snowflakes  
that fall whispering.

JOSO

When cherry trees bloom,  
woodpeckers bustle about  
hunting a dead tree.

JOSO



Pilgrims plod slowly  
over a mountain. . . . Above  
fly the chanting geese.

RANSETSU

Under a small, cold  
winter moon, fields and hills gleam  
bald and white as eggs.

RANSETSU



As New Year's Day dawns,  
twittering sparrows chatter  
like happy people.

RANSETSU

Now that night is gone,  
a haze of dew dusts the fur  
of caterpillars.

BUSON



Deep in a windless  
wood, not one leaf dares to move. . . .  
Something is afraid.

BUSON

Slanting, windy rain . . .  
umbrella, raincoat, and rain  
talking together . . .

BUSON



White and wise and old,  
Fuji rises above waves  
and tides of new leaves.

BUSON

Moon moves down the sky  
westward as tree-shadows flow  
eastward and vanish.

BUSON



Tides of a spring sea,  
tide after indolent tide,  
drifting on and on . . .

BUSON

Clouds of morning mist  
float over the summer hills  
like a painted dream.

BUSON

Flapping into fog  
an angry crow cries hoarsely  
for spring to begin.

GYODAI

The chiming river  
changes its tune as the cold  
bright stars grow brighter.

ROKWA

Who goes there, drifting  
in the starlight, whispering,  
"Shall I light the lamp?"

ETSUJIN





Butterflies, beware!  
Needles of pines can be sharp  
in a gusty wind.

SHOSEN



O that moon last night!  
No wonder everyone needs  
an afternoon nap.

TEITOKU

Under a spring mist,  
ice and water forgetting  
their old difference . . .

TEITOKU



A dry leaf drifting  
down to an icy torrent  
clings to a green rock.

BOKUSUI

A horsefly mutters  
loud in the shining hollow  
of a temple bell.

BOKUSUI



When nightingales burst  
into song, the sparrows fly  
to another tree.

JURIN

Into a forest  
I called. . . . The voice in reply  
was no voice I knew.

OTSUJI



A wintry blizzard  
has captured its first victim . . .  
our local scarecrow.

KYOROKU

Resting from the noon  
sun, bees hover in the still  
shade of a wind-bell.

GONSUI

Hands flat on the ground,  
a dignified prince of frogs  
rumbles a poem.

SOKAN

Snow, softly, slowly,  
settles at dusk in a dance  
of white butterflies.

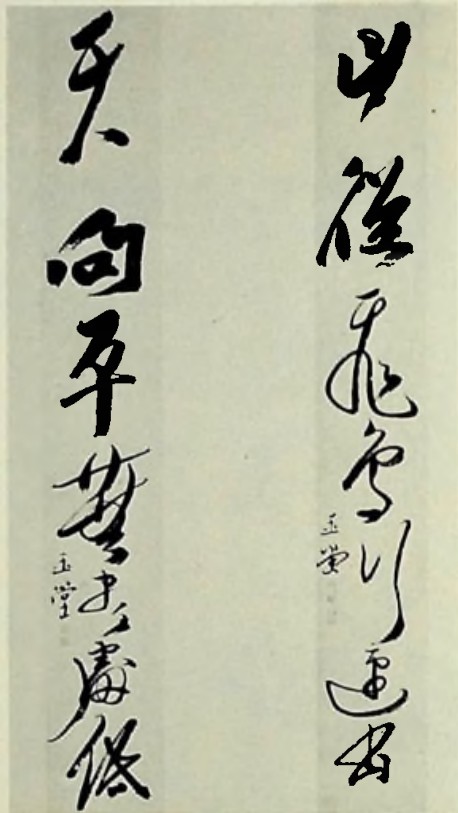
OE HARU

Small bird, forgive me.  
I'll hear the end of your song  
in some other world.

ANON

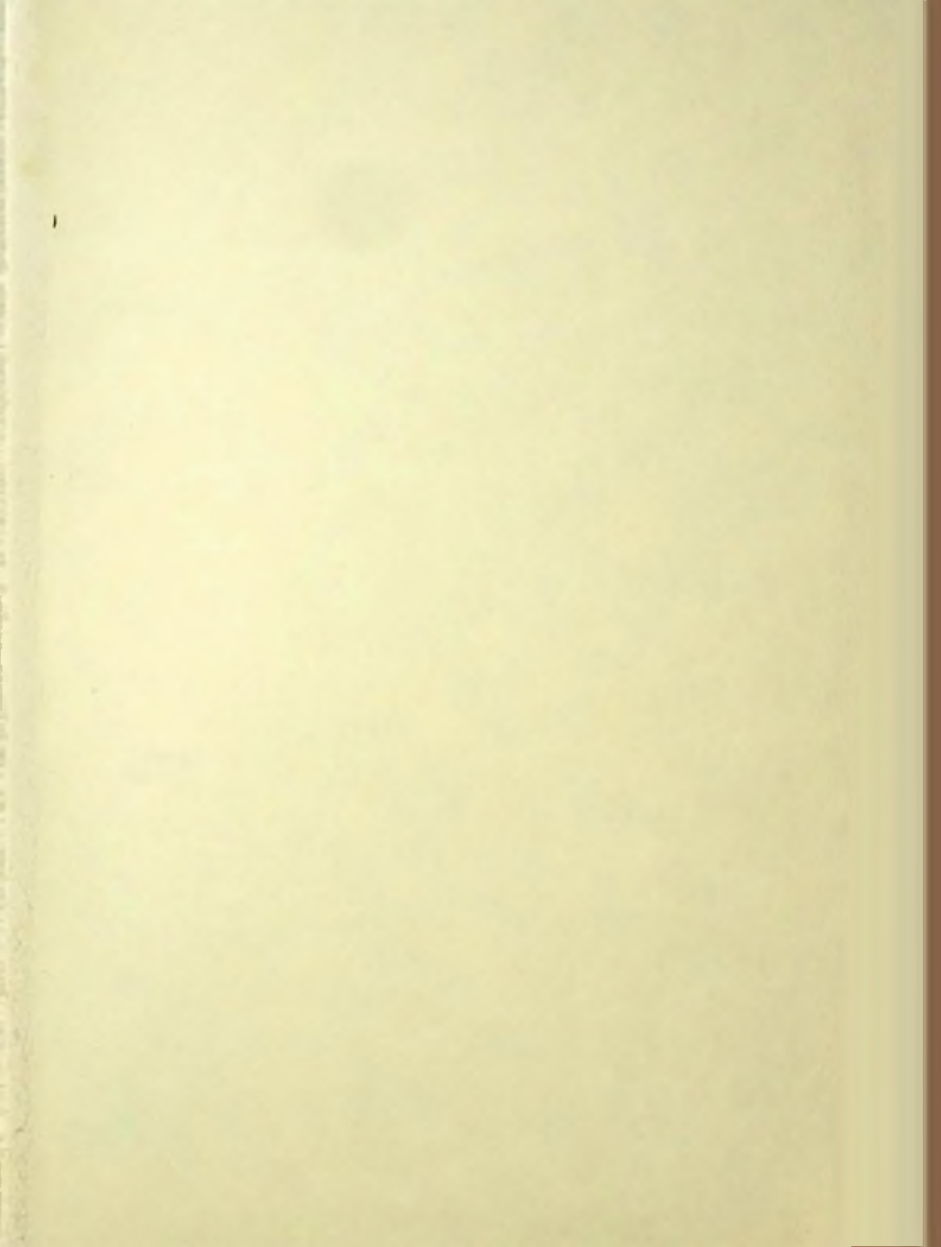


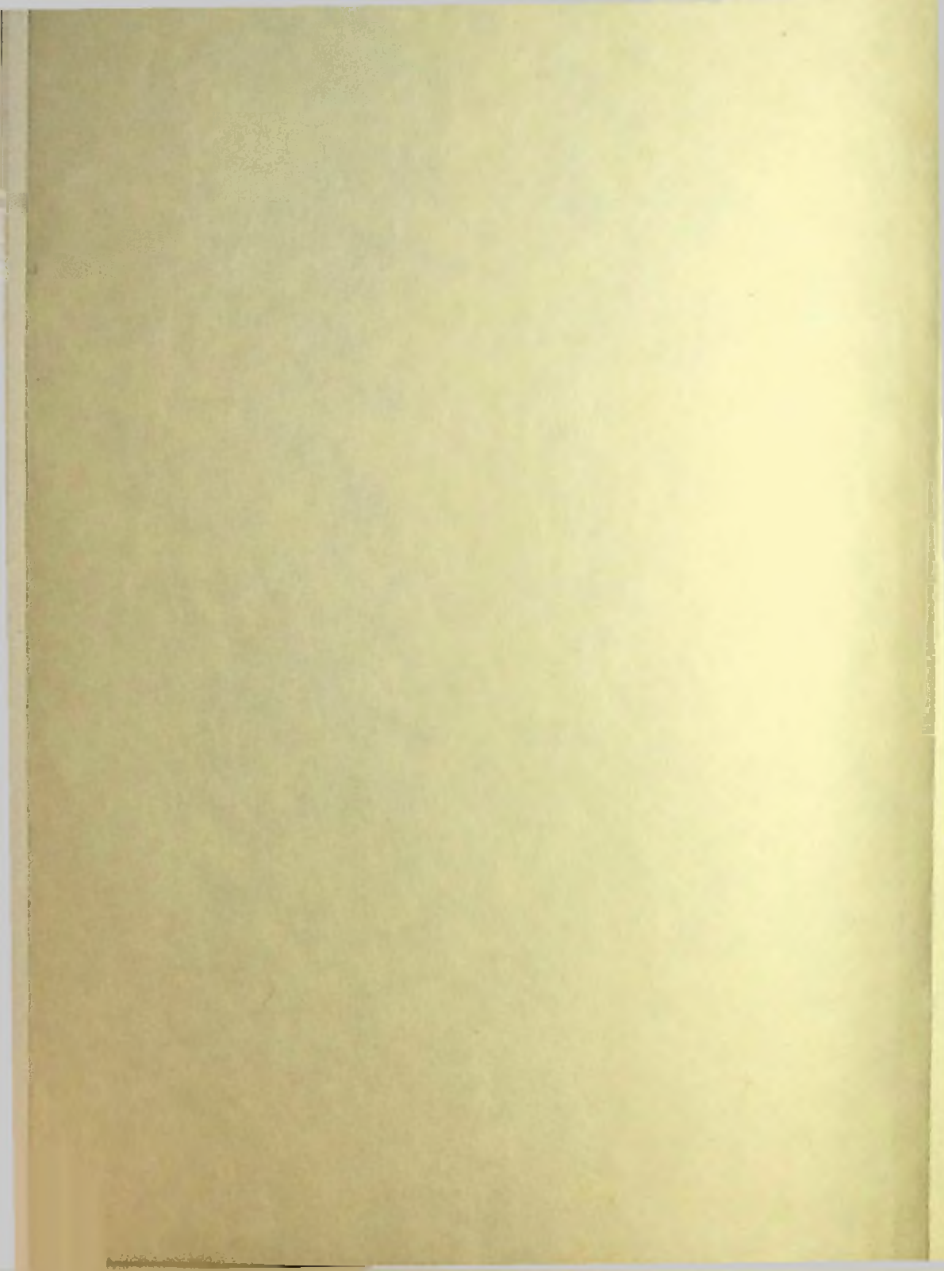




The pictures are especially Zen, most of them now treasures in old monasteries. They were photographed by Prescott Behn from books in the New York and Boston Public Libraries.







# CRICKET SONGS

## *Japanese Haiku*

*Translated by Harry Behn*

Out of years of research and study comes this collection of Japanese haiku, translated by a man whose own poetry is part of the heritage of childhood. In these brief, non-rhyming poems, the small marvels of nature are seen pure and new as a child sees them. The joys of a spring rain, the silence of deep pools, the watchfulness of small animals—all are conveyed in these verses as delicately and intimately as a whisper. The accompanying pictures, chosen from the works of Japanese masters, heighten the beauty and simplicity of the haiku. Mr. Behn, whose work includes *The Little Hill* and *All Kinds of Time*, has created a book that will delight young readers and perhaps stimulate them to write their own haiku.

*Illustrated with pictures selected from  
Sesshu and other Japanese masters*

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.  
757 Third Avenue  
New York, N.Y. 10017

*All ages*



*What reviewers have said about CRICKET SONGS:*

"Harry Behn's collection of 84 classic haiku makes a small, exquisite book. The format is appropriately simple, illustrated with paintings from the Japanese masters. Sensitively chosen, these poems are so humorous, honest and high-spirited that few children will remain unmoved."—BARBARA WERSBA, *New York Times Book Review*

"... a book to treasure. A collection of gems from an exquisitely heady form of Japanese poetry, with illustrations chosen from Japanese masterpieces, it is truly for all ages because of its simplicity and depths."—MARK TAYLOR, *Los Angeles Times*

"This is a distinguished book, a permanent contribution to the poetry shelves."—*San Francisco Examiner*

"This is a lovely little book which should interest adults as much as children and may stimulate some readers to create their own haiku."—*The Booklist*

"The purity and precision of such delicate imagery is the hallmark of the haiku in the skilled hands of Harry Behn, poet and author of 'The Little Hill,' 'The Wizard in the Well,' and 'Roderrick.' Japanese prints enhance the pages, making 'Cricket Songs' a book of rare charm and distinction—qualities not necessarily found together."—*Chicago Tribune*

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