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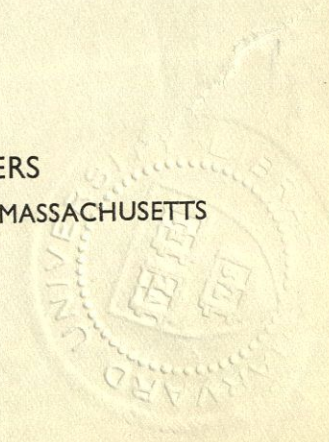
THE
GOLDEN PEACOCK

AN ANTHOLOGY OF YIDDISH POETRY

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

COMPILED AND EDITED BY
JOSEPH LEFTWICH

SCI-ART PUBLISHERS
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TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

JOSEPH LEFTWICH

FIRST IMPRESSION
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1939

FOR MY DAUGHTER JOAN

Of whom I am "most proud
Of that which I compile."

The names of the translators are given at the foot of each poem, or where the poem is translated by the author this is stated in the biographical note. All poems, unless otherwise stated, are translated by Joseph Leftwich.

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Four sides, four heavens, forward, behind,
The tree bows down to every wind.
West wind—the tree bends the way the wind blows.
East wind—it lifts up its head and tosses its boughs.
North wind and south—whichever way the winds go
The tree bends and writhes and twists, high and low,
Under the sun or when the stars gleam in the skies,
Until the autumn on all four sides lies.

The wind pulls and tugs to the south and the tree
Bends as the wind pulls, unresistingly.
Then the north wind comes to whip and flay
And to pull the tree towards his way.
Till the tree decides it is too much now.
He will either this way or the other way bow,

But how at once to bow two ways?
Why must he do this all his days?
Then the tree his roots unfastened, unbound,
And he came crashing down on the ground.

This was in the night, suddenly.
What happened afterwards to the tree?
It lies there in the morning, in everyone's way.
The people crowd round—what happened? they say.
Then a horse and cart came and took him away.
And a new tree was planted in his place the same day

A. Lutzky

Pen-name of Aaron Zuker. Born in 1893 near Lutzk, in Volhynia, Russia. Studied at the Yeshiba. Started writing poetry at the age of 14. Went to New York in 1914, where he became a street-hawker. Published poetry in *Tageblatt* and *Jewish Daily Forwards*. Joined the Army in 1918 and fought at Verdun. Returned to America after demobilisation.

One Two Three

One, two, three; one, two, three.
Couples move about, couples move about.
Know you how they move? Know you how they move?
By the wayside, trees move in the same way,
When you travel by, passing in a train.

One, two, three; one, two, three.
Hear the violin—how it opens roads.
Know you where they lead? Know you where they lead?
Tender girlish arms underneath your feet,
Curling up and round, like a spiral smoke.

One, two, three; one, two, three.
Hear the mandolin, twanging at the strings.
Know you what it does? Know you what it does?
All your days of youth, all the years gone past,
It is crushing them, crushing them to dust.

One, two, three; one, two, three.
Hear the piping reed, hear the piping reed.
Know you what you hear? Know you what you hear?
Dead men underground weep like that, below.
What is it they want? What is it they want?

One, two, three ; one, two, three.
Hear the drum go thump, hear the drum go thump.
Know you what it is ? Know you what it is ?
It is the rumble and the roar, the bustling sound of life,
Deadening your fear, the fear in you of death.

One, two, three ; hear the 'cello sob.
Life is such a coil.
We all must pass away.
And it pains me so. And it pains me so.

Waters

Waters run across the world,
Impetuous,
Powerful.
Slim streaming edges
Sharpen themselves,
Run by
And gleam.
Waters run across the world,
And search.
Run with sun,
With moon,
With darkness—
And shout.
Hills high up,
Valleys deep down.
Waters run about and all round,
Round about and round in rows,
Windingly up and straight down.
A chasing,
A rushing,
A joy into the world.
The greatest song—and more,
Always all together—and more.

Luminous laughter,
Clear flow,
Everlasting holiday.
Waters run across the world,
And laugh.
Seethe and splutter with foamy snow,
Well up and bubble with silver clouds,
Dance and splash themselves with dew,
A spray for spray, and then snap,
A snap and a dance and a seethe,
A seethe and a sing and a say,
A say and a sing and a dash,
A dash and a fall and a rise,
A rise and a fall straight down,
A leap and into the vortex.

A stone—
Waters run along the stone
And braid plaits over it.

Trees—
Waters run past the trees
And part with a loud farewell.

A meadow—
Waters run to the meadow,
And kiss its sides,
Hug it and tremble with joy,
Make promises—and run away,
Run and do not grow tired,
Tell something—but do not tell to the end.
Rest ?
There is nothing on which to rest.
Stay ?
There is nothing with which to stay.
Everywhere is Here,
Every Here is There,
Every There is Further.

A Button

The button thinks—
Take it all in all,
Nobody finds life easy.
You live alone,
Or you are attached.
Alone life is sad,
But the constant round is tedious.
I would rather be sad.
Yet I haven't the courage to break away.
I'll try again.

Storm

Storm in the night

When you kiss,
Bite,
When you stroke,
Smite.

If any resist,
Beat them senseless with your fist.

Those that submit
Deserve to be hit.

Whatever they do,
Make them rue
Their meeting you.

You bring devastation,
To each man and nation.

If you shout or cry,
Surrender, defy,
Ruthlessly
The storm rushes by.

L. Feinberg

Born in 1897, in the Province of Podolia, Russia. Went to school in Odessa. Graduated at Moscow University in literature and philosophy. Started writing Russian poetry at the age of 12. Won first prize in the 1918 All-Russian Poetry Competition. Served three years as an officer in the Red Army. Was captured by Denikin and escaped in 1920, made his way to Palestine and then to the United States. Has taken an American degree. Was principal of Hebrew Institute in Brooklyn. A leader of the Proletarian group in Yiddish poetry in America.

Yiddish

In the grey night of the middle ages,
Amid the flame of auto-de-fé,
Along roads chill and stormy
A people wandered on its way.

As a heart craves for joy that is quenched,
As parched throats for water long,
The dumb people sought a language,
Yearned with a chattering tongue,

Borrowed the yeast from the French,
From the Bible a measure of honey,
That after the fermenting and rising
There should some sweetness be.

A little corn from the Slavs,
A deep bowl from Germany,
And motherly hands kneaded the dough
From which Yiddish came to be.